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Criminal policing, systemic racism, anti-social policies: supporting a legitimate revolt

30 June 2023, by **Christine Poupin, Olivier Besancenot, Pauline Salingue, Philippe Poutou**

An anti-racist, anti-authoritarian revolt

For years, those in power have been strengthening the police and racist arsenal: police violence is increasingly regular and deadly, at demonstrations and in working-class neighbourhoods. With rare exceptions, the perpetrators of this violence enjoy organized impunity.

In the police force, it is the far right that sets the tone. Remember that “angry” police organizations demonstrated on the Champs-Élysées, and that they are still demanding more freedom to kill.

Macron and Darmanin are collaborating and contributing to all this by supporting and reinforcing this impunity, and through the many racist and freedom-destroying laws that strengthen the police and the far right: the separatism law, security laws, etc. Not to mention the authoritarian management of Covid and the repression of social and environmental movements.

The mobilization of working-class

neighbourhoods is an opportunity for the working classes as a whole and for the world of work: it paves the way for a social mobilization for justice, against police repression, against the authoritarian power that also expressed itself through the anti-democratic methods used during the movement on pensions, with the 49-3, the 47-1, etc. This authoritarianism is at the heart of the social movement. This authoritarianism has been at work for years, with bans on demonstrations and violent episodes of repression, as well as the dissolution of the CCIF (Collectif contre l'Islamophobie) and Soulèvements de la Terre. [1]

Justice for all!

Justice means, first and foremost, justice for Nahel, for Zyed and Bouna, for Adama, for Alhoussein, for the three young people in the 20th arrondissement of Paris who were hit by a police car, for all the victims of police violence, for the people maimed in the protests. The guilty parties must be punished, and the victims and their families must be compensated.

We must put an end to preventive detention and release the young

people imprisoned as a result of the demonstrations of recent nights. Let's not forget that all the responsibility for these events lies with the government.

Public transport must be re-established in the neighbourhoods, and any state of emergency or curfew must be rejected.

The police must be disarmed immediately.

And (minister of the interior) Darmanin must resign.

Beyond that, we need social justice: the anger we are seeing today is at the same time the expression of a much deeper revolt, against racism, against the stigmatization of people living in working-class neighbourhoods, against racialized people, against Islamophobia, against poverty that is growing, particularly as a result of inflation, low wages, job insecurity, attacks on unemployment insurance, the destruction of public services, etc.

Supporting and

extending the revolt

Make no mistake about it: while Macron's government is increasingly repressive, it is not the only one in the world to act in this way. Repression is the rulers' only response to the

economic, ecological, social and political crisis into which they have plunged the world.

The NPA calls on people to mobilize alongside angry young people, to gather in front of town halls, every evening if necessary, to express our rage and our demands. It calls on the organisations of the workers' movement, trade unions, associations

and parties to meet as soon as possible to discuss how to build a mobilization on the scale and in the forms that will support the current revolt, obtain justice and launch a counter-offensive against the anti-democratic and anti-social power of Macron and his government.

30 June 2023

India's Modi Receives Royal Treatment from Biden

28 June 2023, by **Malik Miah**

Modi, who tries to avoid unscripted moments and has presided over a steady decline in press freedom in his country, has never held a solo news conference and often avoids questions by deferring to others on stage with him.

Biden and Modi each answered the same two questions - one from an Indian journalist who asked Modi about climate change, the other from a Wall Street Journal reporter who pressed Modi on human rights concerns. It was the first time Modi had fielded a question at a news conference since he came to power in 2014.

Biden said the United States had passed a major climate change plan in Congress but ignored the question about India's human rights situation.

The news conference was a scaled-down affair compared to those that usually are held as part of a state visit. Even so, Modi's advisers were far from thrilled with the idea. Administration officials advised his team that taking questions from the media was standard protocol for White House state visits.

Modi took full advantage of the pomp and circumstance to strength India's world stats without ever giving any concession to Biden's foreign policy

and goals. At an unusual press conference for both, Modi welcomed Biden's bow to India by reconfirming his own positions on issues like Ukraine (for neutrality and negotiations) and not in support of U.S. "rules-based democracy." He falsely claimed India is a "democracy" that does not discriminate against ethnic or caste minorities.

Modi/BJP's Rightwing Policies

Some twenty years ago, Modi was denied a visa to enter the United States for his anti-Muslim pogroms in the state of Gujarat where he was chief minister. The ban was only lifted in 2014 when his party, the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party or India's Peoples Party) took control of Parliament.

The BJP's rightwing policies adhere to Hindutva, Hindu nationalist ideology. It has close ideological and organizational links to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), formed in 1925.

The RSS rejects secularism, which it claims is a foreign, Western concept. Its initial objective was to provide character training and instill "Hindu discipline" in order to unite the Hindu

community and establish a Hindu nation. It identified with fascist movements in Europe such as Italy's Mussolini's Fascist Party.

The RSS sought to spread the ideology Hindutva to "strengthen" the Hindu community and promotes an ideal of upholding an Indian culture and its civilizational values. Hindutva is cultural nationalism that extends to all Indians regardless of religion. [What does "extends" mean? Rule over?-MM]

U.S. Goal: Get Modi to Support Anti-China Containment

The Biden administration ignored this history and current reality. Its focus is getting India on board of the US-Indo-Pacific goal of containing China.

While India (now the world's most populous country) and China have had border conflicts for decades and are economic competitors, both have solid ties with Russia. Russia is India's largest oil provider as of 2023 and is its main supplier of military hardware.

Both giants are members of BRICs (the developing economies of Brazil,

India, Russia, and China) and support the policies of the Global South, which seeks ways to go around the U.S. and Western imperialism's domination of finance and trade.

Modi made clear India has no intention of changing its global policies particularly toward Russia and China. However India has already banned Huawei and Tik Tok. Modi does not back the aggressive U.S. policy regarding Taiwan and in fact has no official relations with Taiwan.

Biden announced some economic deals that are normal during state visits. For example, India airlines are buying new Boeing airplanes. The deal was first announced in February and is its largest order ever in South Asia. Biden commented that this will build the U.S. economy.

Biden also said GE will build jet engines for India's military jets. This was a big win for Modi since GE agreed for the first time to transfer its technology to Indian firms. It comes as the United States targets Chinese tech companies for "stealing" U.S. technology. Yet Congress must approve the deal.

Who is Mahendra Modi?

In an opinion piece by Maya Jasanoff, a Harvard professor of history and Indian American, writing in the June 22nd New York Times described Modi's government as an electoral autocracy. The share of wealth held by the top one percent now stands at 40.5%, thanks to crony capitalism. Meanwhile basic food prices and unemployment rises.

Modi developed a reputation as a business-friendly "reformer" with no patience for either the red tape or the corruption that had rotted the Indian bureaucratic state. But it is the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat and his party's role in it while he was the

party's chief minister that reveals the real face of Modi.

The violent riots that were clearly organized by supporters of the BJP and followers of the RSS led to over 1,000 Muslims deaths, the massive rape of women and girls and over 150,000 people displaced, homes and mosques destroyed. What led to the riot, the death of Hindu pilgrims on a train, was eventually ruled as an accident. Yet Modi blamed Muslim terrorists.

The British government investigation said that Modi was "directly responsible" for the "climate of impunity" in which the violence took place.

Although BJP was turned out of office in the 2004 state elections, neither he nor the party was held accountable.

Today, Modi is the twice-elected prime minister of the world's most populous country. He has vast public support from the Hindu population, which is 80 percent of the country.

His government has enacted laws and policies that target Muslims, including changes to citizenship rules that disadvantage Muslims. His government revoked the special status of Kashmir, a Muslim-majority region contested by India and Pakistan. In August 2019 when the new order was imposed Modi urged more Hindus to move there.

But it would be a mistake to think only Muslims are under threat in India. Modi has attacked the rights of other non-Hindus. His government has used emergency powers to hold dissidents under murky antiterrorist laws.

Modi's supporters argue that it is no coincidence that India is reaching its zenith after eight years of muscular, Hindu-centric rule. Modi will almost certainly run for office again in 2024. If he wins and serves a third term, he will become the longest-serving prime minister since India's first, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his daughter, Indira

Gandhi. (It was Nehru who set the blueprint for a secular, democratic, multiethnic India.)

Modi's Diplomatic Win

During the Biden-Modi news conference, the chants of protestors could be heard, but both ignored them. Modi insisted there was no discrimination in India and argued that democracy is in India's DNA.

"There's absolutely no space for discrimination," he insisted, which must have been news to his detractors.

Two most prominent Muslim members of Congress, Detroit's Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian American, and Minnesota's Ilhan Omar, a refugee from Somalia, refused to attend Modi's speech to Congress and the state dinner. Cori Bush of Missouri as well as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Jamaal Bowman from New York also boycotted his speech to Congress.

In her New York Times analysis Jasanoff compared the problems facing the United States and India:

"Similarities abound: an out-of-touch elite, widening economic inequality, easily mobilized ethnic grievances, a changed information landscape. One especially sobering area to compare is the resilience — or lack thereof — of a once independent judiciary, which Mr. Modi has been angling to undercut.

"Like the United States, India is an extraordinary, diverse, plural democracy with incredible talent and potential — and there is much, in principle, to unite these nations for the good. But as the president of one stumbling democracy joins hands with a prime minister bent on hobbling another, the project of global freedom seems one step closer to collapse."

Source: [*Against the Current*](#).

Prides and workers' struggles in a time of backlash

27 June 2023, by **Hélène Marra**

This year's Pride season in Italy coincides with the rise of reactionary and far-right ideas that pose a real threat to the preservation of the rights of women and LGBTI people and to the conquest of new rights. The blocking of the Zan law against homophobia, the Padua public prosecutor's appeal against the civil registration of the children of homosexual couples and, finally, the annulment by the Milan court of the registration of a child born abroad through surrogate motherhood, all contribute to creating an atmosphere of terror.

Prides and struggles to counter the reactionary wave

Despite this context, seven prides brought together hundreds of thousands of people across the country. The dominant feelings were anger and pride, but also fear for the future. Many same-sex couples no longer plan to spend their lives in Italy.

It's a feeling shared by many sectors of society. On 24 June, a

demonstration of 10,000 people took place in the capital to support the call of a broad network of unions, parties and movements against the policies of Meloni's government. Unsurprisingly, the extreme right-wing alliance is protecting employers and intends to pass on the social costs of the crisis to workers and the working classes.

Last Saturday's demonstration was also an opportunity to step up the collection of signatures for the proposed popular initiative on a minimum hourly wage of €10.

Demanding the right to health and halting the advance of neoliberal policies

Another central demand is the defence of public hospitals after decades of reforms that have gradually dismantled public structures and transferred resources to the private sector. According to Agenas (Agenzia per i servizi sanitari regionali), there is a shortage of at least 2,500 specialists in emergency services. The staff shortage affects all services and

the resources of the PNR (National Recovery Plan), opening the doors wide to the private sector, which is not leading to an improvement in the situation.

Some people are calling for us to become social partners in the process of mobilising to defend public health.

We need to counter the advance of the private sector, and denounce the scandalous private clauses on supplementary health care included in the collective labour agreements signed by the various categories.

Supplementary health care is a real robbery for workers, who pay three times over: firstly, because the inclusion of private supplementary health care serves to keep wages low, among the lowest in Europe; secondly, because supplementary health care is fiscally advantageous for the employer; and thirdly, because it forces those who use it to pay out of their own pockets.

Faced with this situation, the reaction of the trade unions remains timid and does not allow them to engage in a coherent and structural struggle to counter the advance of liberal and reactionary policies.

27 June 2023

"Prigozhin's March": What Was It All About?

26 June 2023, by **Posle**

There's no doubt Prigozhin is a war criminal and an opportunist pursuing his personal interests. In the months

leading up to the mutiny, Prigozhin made numerous statements bashing the Russian military leadership trying

to take control of Wagner units staffed by both former Russian prisoners and retired army officers. Yevgeny

Prigozhin, who owes his career to Putin's patronage and has extensive connections in the state security apparatus, has turned out to be the most aware of the regime's weaknesses and the vulnerability of Putin's "chain of command." Generals Surovikin and Alekseev, who have played key roles in the so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine, publicly called on Prigozhin to "come to his senses" and "resolve the matter peacefully." Most of the army stood in silent neutrality toward the rebels. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, whom Prigozhin demanded to meet, never commented on what was happening and disappeared. Note that the leaflets distributed by Wagner not only called for their resignation, but also for an immediate court martial for Shoigu and Gerasimov on accusations of the brutal treatment of soldiers, poor supplies to the army, and concealing the truth about the course of the war.

On the morning of June 24, Vladimir Putin delivered an urgent five-minute address to the nation. He called Wagner's rebellion a "stab in the back" of the Russian army but did not mention any specific actions to crush it down. Putin highlighted the moral and political dimensions of the mutiny and called it a betrayal deserving of the harshest response. He blamed the mutineers for putting Russia on the brink of civil war and military defeat. Yet, the Russian president did not mention any names, revealing his poor preparedness and uncertainty about the situation. Several thousand-armed columns of the Wagner fighters crossed a vast distance in less than a day and voluntarily stopped 200 kilometers short of Moscow. At the same time, President Putin, presumably, rushed out of the capital, recording his addresses from his remote country residence in Valdai. Regional governors and pro-Kremlin

politicians swore allegiance to the president and the constitutional order on social media only a few hours after the mutiny's outbreak.

Predictably, some forces, factions, and citizens did not follow the president's call to resist the traitors and expressed their support for the rebels. These include neo-Nazis on both sides of the front: the Russian Volunteer Corps fighting alongside the Ukrainian armed forces and the Rusich sabotage group, which has been engaged in armed conflict with Ukraine since 2014 as a Russian proxy. Prigozhin responded unambiguously to Putin's message. He stated that the president was "wrong" about Wagner's betrayal, called himself and his fighters "patriots of the motherland," accused Moscow officials of corruption, and refused to back down. Seeking to expand his support, Prigozhin voiced two hallmark claims of the anti-Putin opposition: Russian regions should oppose Moscow for expropriating the country's resources and the Russian leadership is made up of crooks and corrupt officials and should be exposed and brought to justice.

Despite Prigozhin relying solely on the armed units, the program he announced was supposed to lend popular legitimacy to the coup d'état. People in Rostov-on-Don cheered Wagner's fighters as heroes, demonstrating that Prigozhin's slogans could gain mass support. The attempted Wagner mutiny also revealed the unwillingness of the security services to actively intervene in the situation.

Prigozhin's "march of justice" ended as unexpectedly as it began. The Belarusian dictator Lukashenko brokered an agreement between Wagner and the Kremlin. According to its terms, Prigozhin was to withdraw his units and the mutineers were to be spared punishment for their alleged "feats of arms." The agreements with

Lukashenko also seem to include secret provisions granting Wagner certain autonomy and defining the framework for further relations with the military leadership. The deal was guaranteed by the "word of the President of Russia," as Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov later stated. In other words, the public is kept in the dark as to the terms and content of these unofficial agreements. Although all Russian military units and ordinary citizens were called upon to participate in the mutiny and to resist the rebels, the crisis was resolved by a conspiracy between two war criminals with the Belorussian autocrat playing the role of both a broker and an umpire.

While the consequences of these events are difficult to predict, it's already clear that they have forever changed Putin's political system. If this attempted military insurgency was so successful, why can't this example inspire future attempts to build on its success? Contradictions within Russia's elites have spilled over from the media into the reality of Russian cities and the armed forces. The whole world has witnessed that they were (temporarily) resolved outside any legal framework with the compromise guaranteed by Putin's "word." In Russia, the rule of law has given way to mafia codes. Words backed up by violence are stronger than the prosecutor's office or even the president's declarations of imminent punishment. The war unleashed by Putin's regime is becoming an ever more apparent threat to its stability and will inevitably result in its eventual collapse. What form will this breakdown take? And could Russia's intimidated and disempowered masses come to the fore? These questions remain open.

26 June 2023

Source [Posle](#).

The War Comes Home to Russia; Could it

Open the Way to Revolution?

25 June 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

The conflict between Putin and Prigozhin, the two dominant figures in the prosecution of the war on Ukraine, demonstrates the depth of crisis in both the military and political situation in Russia. Their conflict, which could become not just a military uprising but perhaps the beginning of a civil war, makes possible both a victory for Ukraine if it can take advantage of the events to drive the Russians out of all of their territory, and also could lead to the toppling of Putin.

Russia experienced two similar moments, one when after losing the war with Japan of 1904-95, a revolutionary movement developed among returning soldiers, workers, and peasants that threatened to overthrow Tsar Nicholas II. And then again, as World War I continued to slaughter millions, in 1917 Russian soldiers began to march home, peasants and workers rebelled, and Nicholas was overthrown by a liberal government in February and that

government, as the revolution deepened, overturned by a coup by the Bolshevik Party in October.

In 1941, however, when Hitler's Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the Communist dictators Joseph Stalin took advantage of the crisis to strengthen his strangle hold on Soviet peoples. Stalin not only survived, but after the war extended his rule and the Communist system to the Baltic State and Eastern Europe. The war did not come home to overturn either Stalin or the bureaucratic Communist state.

Today, the circumstances are very different than in either of those cases. While Russia in 1917 had had thirty years of revolutionary organizing by anarchists and socialists who had constructed bases among the country's working people, today in Russia the revolutionary left is tiny. Every critical thinker or activist has either been imprisoned or fled the

country, as half a million have. As best we know, no public demonstrations have yet taken place against Putin. There is the danger that a sector of the society, disgusted with Putin, might turn to the vile Prigozhin and his murderous Wagner mercenaries.

And unlike 1941, Putin's rule, unlike Stalin's, was not preceded by twenty years of repression and even more severe repression in which at least 100,000 died and hundreds of thousands of others went to the Gulags.

History has shown, in Russia and everywhere else, that ordinary working people can and will intervene from below to resist oppression and exploitation and to assert their desire for peace and justice. Until they do, we stand with the Ukrainians in their war against Russia and with the Russian people in the struggle for democracy and peace.

24 June 2023

Deeper than ever, the crisis leaves capitalism out of breath

24 June 2023, by **Éric Toussaint**

Éric Toussaint : Yes. All the warning lights are flashing: there is a very significant economic slowdown (stagnation in the Eurozone in the last quarter of 2022-first quarter 2023) without any reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental damage; the drastic effects of the ecological crisis, especially as manifested by climate; a huge increase in public and private debt; high inflation and loss of buying

power for the working classes; rising job precarity; the explosion of inequality, with the colossal increase in private ownership and the revenues of the richest 1%; a falling Human Development Index in many countries, especially of life expectancy, the North included; harsher trade wars; [a serious world food crisis](#); wars in Europe, in Sudan, in the Horn of Africa, in the Arabian Peninsula, in the East of the DRC, and more; a rise in

authoritarian forms of government practice (ever harsher repression of protest, the sidelining of legal process, etc.); attacks on basic human rights such as the right to abortion; increasingly restrictive and lethal migration policies; electoral successes of the far right, and so on.

The only economic sector that has seen enormous progress in productivity is the military sector.

This is a major crisis of the globalized capitalist system, the worst crisis since those of the years 1914-1945.

CADTM : At what phase of the crisis is the world economy now

Éric Toussaint : There is no sign yet of the end of the tunnel. Things are going to get worse: speculative bubbles may burst at any moment producing a sudden aggravation of the economic situation. There may be even more serious warlike incidents than the present ones. There is every reason to believe that climatic and environmental catastrophes will worsen. The health crises are not over, far from it. Governments and central banks are taking no measures calculated to give humanity a chance to come out of the crisis, quite the opposite. The concentration of strategic tools of production and finance in the hands of an ever-smaller number of large private share-holders continues in the energy sector, extractive industries, the marketing of food and other raw materials, in the pharmaceutical sector, the banking sector, etc.

CADTM : What are the causes

Government and central bank policies of injecting massive liquidities and the rapid increase in debt have maintained or led to the emergence of new financial bubbles.

Éric Toussaint : Despite the enormous accumulation of wealth by the richest 1%, and despite the colossal gains of a series of large corporations particularly in the food and energy sectors, "Big Pharma", the shipping industry and the arms industry, globally profit rates are not high enough to enable Big Capital to launch a huge wave of productive investments.

One should never lose sight of the fact that Capital seeks to maximise its profits. When it cannot do so, it concentrates especially on speculation. This is one of the contradictions inherent in the

capitalist system.

Apart from the big companies that make extraordinary profits by taking advantage of crises such as pandemics, energy shortages, and wars, the majority of companies are confronted with falling profits and falling productivity, despite aggravated conditions of exploitation of the work-force and increased job insecurity.

There is also a problem regarding the supply side of goods: confinement measures during the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020-2021 (up to and including 2022 for China) led to breakdown in the supply lines. The semi-conductor sector, with production concentrated in a small number of countries, has run into production problems and has trouble in meeting demand. This phenomenon is accentuated by the trade and technology war between the United States and China. We are seeing a phase where Washington is becoming more aggressive in trying to limit China's economic and commercial expansion.

In the real-estate sector, supply is outstripping demand. There was a new phase of over-investment in building construction relative to solvent demand. This was the case in the United States, Great Britain and China. It has been particularly obvious for commercial buildings (offices and commercial premises). A speculative bubble developed between 2018 and 2022, triggering a new mortgage crisis.

Government and central bank policies of injecting massive liquidities and the rapid increase in debt have maintained or led to the emergence of new financial bubbles. This is evidenced in stock-market capitalization, the debt bond market, in the housing sector of several countries, in the markets for raw materials and in cryptocurrencies. The 180 degree turn in policy since 2022, passing from Quantitative Easing (QE) to Quantitative Tightening (QT), has triggered great financial insecurity. In short, the decision by governments and central banks to raise interest rates to fight inflation is leading to stagnation, perhaps even a recession,

and to further financial crises, without managing to reduce inflation in any significant way. Indeed, the financial crisis that has already led to the bankruptcy of several cryptocurrency firms in 2022 and of four major banks in the United States and Europe in March 2023 could well resurface causing further banks to collapse or serious financial accidents in other areas such as the stock-markets, the property sector especially commercial property, the bond sector and so on.

For more on this topic, please read :
<https://www.cadtm.org/Does-the-US-F...>

CADTM : Is there a new debt crisis in the South?

Éric Toussaint : A new debt crisis is affecting a whole series of countries of the South for example, in Asia (Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh), in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana, Zambia), in North Africa (Tunisia, Egypt), in the Near East (Lebanon), in Latin America (Argentina), in the Caribbean (Puerto Rico, Cuba), and more. Some of those countries have suspended payments, or did so previously, as in the case of Sri Lanka. Further suspensions of payments are likely.

Generally speaking, this crisis is triggered by a succession of external shocks which have a serious impact on the economies of the South. These external shocks result from actions and events in the North:

1. There was the Coronavirus pandemic that started in the North (China, Europe, North America) before spreading to the South. The effects of the pandemic on debt are clear: increased public indebtedness to fund the fight against the pandemic and a reduction of resources in hard currencies required to ensure repayment of external debt. The latter was largely due to the abrupt fall in tourism

from 2020 until 2022 as some economies have become highly dependent on tourism, for example Sri Lanka and Cuba.

2. The war caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine had significant effects. Cereal and fertilizers rocketed prices whereas a whole series of countries of the South had become net importers of cereals and chemical fertilizers under pressure from organizations like the World Bank, the IMF and governments of the North to concentrate on other types of agricultural production, such as tropical fruits, coffee, tea, cotton and transgenic soya for cattle-fodder. This huge increase in the price of imported cereals and fertilizers led to a shortage of financial resources and thus to problems repaying debt and the unsustainable accumulation of fresh debts to be able to carry on importing. The war in Ukraine has also caused an increase in the fuel prices; yet a large number of countries of the South import fuel. For countries like Egypt, Sri Lanka and Tunisia which import both cereals and fuel the debt

situation has become unsustainable.

3. The third major external shock comes from the effects of climate change and the environmental crisis. This is particularly true for Pakistan which fell victim to catastrophic floods in 2022.
4. The fourth major external shock has been the cost of rescheduling debt, caused by the unilateral decision of the Federal Reserve of the United States, the European Central Bank and the Bank of England to massively increase interest rates. Countries of the South that were borrowing at annual interest rates of 3 to 6% are now confronted with rates for fresh loans climbing to between 9 and 15%. This too is unsustainable.

CADTM : They say that the IMF has changed. Is that so?

Éric Toussaint : The IMF's policies have not changed, any more than those of the World Bank. They are as pernicious as ever. And because many countries in the South have once more been obliged to resort to IMF loans, they have to apply even more stringently antipopular neoliberal policies.

In this context, it is important to give full collaborative support to the [CADTM's call for a counter-summit in Marrakesh from 12 to 15 October 2023 on the occasion of the IMF's and the World Bank's Annual General Assembly](#).

The call :

<https://www.cadtm.org/Call-for-a-gl...>

CADTM: Why do you say that this is the worst crisis since 1945?

The ecological crisis is the product of two centuries of capitalist production as the dominant system

Éric Toussaint: Since 1945, there has never been a crisis on such a scale and with so many facets as the current crisis. The ecological crisis and its climate dimension are on a scale never seen before. The ecological crisis is the product of two centuries of capitalist production as the dominant system. In the space of two centuries, this mode of production has profoundly affected and degraded life on the planet, and we have now reached a critical point. We can add to this the health crisis from which we are just emerging and which could rebound. This health crisis has caused more than 7 million deaths. Its scale is also linked to the capitalist system itself. Let's add that, compared with 1945, the nuclear arsenal has proliferated, and the level of international tensions could lead to a holocaust. From other points of view, the capitalist crisis is indeed the most serious since 1945, particularly in terms of economic collapse. The trend towards more authoritarian and violent forms of government is affecting all continents to varying degrees. The global rise of extreme right-wing forces is the strongest since 1945. Repeated violations of human rights are on the rise, particularly with regard to migration and the right to asylum. Faced with these facts, we must not give up; we must redouble our efforts to bring about a genuine self-emancipating revolution.

Source *CADTM* 20 June 2023 :

Translated by Vicki Briault.

Two Shipwrecks Reveal the State of the World

23 June 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

Those who died on the Titan have names. Stockton Rush, chief executive and founder of OceanGate, was the pilot of the Titan. Hamis Harding was a British businessman, chairman of Action Aviation based in Dubai, and an explorer. Paul-Henri Nargeolet was director of underwater research for RMS Titanic, Inc., an American firm that owns the rights to the wreck of the Titanic. And finally, Shazad Dawood and his 19-year-old son Sulem Dawood were scions of one of Pakistan's wealthiest families.

The four passengers paid \$250,000 each for the macabre adventure of descending to 12,500 feet below the surface to see the wreckage of the Titanic where 1,517 people died after the ship hit an iceberg in 1912. The vessel went missing on June 18. The U.S. and Canadian coast guards did everything possible, dispatching ships and planes to locate and save those five. But debris found on June 22 indicates that the submersible vessel apparently imploded.

By contrast, many of those who died when the Andrianna capsized on June

14 still have no names. The ship, an overloaded fishing vessel, sailed from Libya to Italy, carrying between 400 and 750 migrants from various countries. Some 104 were rescued, hundreds of others remain unaccounted for, many of them women and children who were below decks. There were Egyptians, Syrians, Pakistanis, Afghans, and Palestinians among the survivors and perhaps other nationalities among the dead. These passengers were mostly poor people heading for Europe in the hope of finding a way to make a better living and take care of themselves and their families.

But many European governments don't want any more immigrants, particularly poor people of different nationalities, colors, religions, and languages. With rightwing governments in power in several European countries, all semblance of solidarity has disappeared. The Greek Coast Guard saw that the vessel was in trouble but declined to assist it.

Here, then, is the split screen reality of those who sail the high seas. The

rich can pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for an undersea adventure, while the poor spend the last of their savings to crowd onto an overloaded fishing boat in hopes of getting to Europe and finding a job. Governments mobilize their resources to rescue the rich, but turn their backs on the poor in distress. The sinking of these two vessels should lead Europeans and people around the world to examine their consciences.

What would it have been like if the million dollars that those four individuals spent to visit the Titanic had been spent instead on helping those several hundred migrants? Let's take it one step further. There are about 45 million migrants in the world today, driven by climate change, economic crises, and oppressive governments. Taxing the global rich, who clearly have more money than they need, could provide considerable resources for addressing this migration crisis.

23 June 2023

Source: *Foreign Policy in Focus*.

Shipwreck in Greece: Why were half those onboard Pakistanis?

22 June 2023, by **Farooq Sulehria**

Initially, when the news broke, the mainstream media in Pakistan ignored it. The tragedy only got attention when the Pakistani origins of the dead were reported. Suddenly, it was headline news. The Federal

government also took "notice" of the tragedy. However, neither the mainstream media, nor government spokespersons have answered the simple question: why were so many Pakistani citizens onboard the ship

that sank to the bottom of Mediterranean?

In general, the government has blamed the rackets involved in human trafficking. A few arrests have been reported. Irritatingly boring, but

expected, statements have been issued by the ministers and bureaucrats to condemn human trafficking. The mainstream media, meantime, have been busy blaming the victims. The “chattering classes” ensconced in palatial villas, echoing the heartless media discourse, are also holding the “risk-taking” youth responsible for mindlessly boarding the ship and paying exorbitant sums of money to the mafias.

The fact of the matter is that poverty and an utter lack of hope drives young people to hand over their parents’ life savings to human traffickers and hop on overcrowded boats leaving the Libyan coast in the dead of night. It is not that the government or the media and chattering classes lack the knowledge about obscene poverty all around or the absence of hope in the country’s darkening future.

By blaming the victims or pointing fingers at the people-smugglers, the apocryphal “One percent” in control of the government and media absolve themselves. A few savvy ones, acquainted with postcolonial theories imbibed during their student days on Western campuses, also mention “Fortress Europe” in their tweets.

Fortress Europe, no doubt, is the prime suspect in the shipwreck under discussion (more in a while). However, Fortress Europe operates in Pakistan, like other countries on the periphery, in connivance with the native One percent. This One percent is equally responsible for the 300 or so coffins to be dispatched from the Mediterranean to Islamabad. Following is the indictment of Pakistan’s One percent who connived with Fortress Europe in the shipwreck conspiracy.

Pakistan’s One percent:

Pakistan’s richest 1% own 16.8% of the wealth.

The richest 10% own 25.5 %.

The poorest 40%’s share of wealth is 25.5%.

This inequality is structured, systematised. One mechanism of this

systemic inequality is the elite capture of the country’s resources.

The benefits and privileges enjoyed by different vested interest elite groups (constituting the idiomatic One percent), amount to Rs2.66 trillion (US\$17 billion) annually. The taxation system is the largest source of benefits. Almost 50% of the \$17-billion in benefits the elite enjoys, occurs through the tax system (benefitting the landed class, traders and high-income individuals).

The landed elite, for instance, is granted a tax break of Rs195 billion (\$1.5 billion) annually (US\$1 was equal to Rs150 at the time of the study quoted here).

Rs468 billion (more than US\$2 billion) in tax revenue is lost owing to tax exemptions granted to the corporate sector. Similarly, large traders and high-net-worth persons are awarded tax concessions worth Rs612 billion (\$2 billion) respectively. Rs1275 billion tax concessions are granted on an annual basis. Another method benefitting the One percent (the primary beneficiary being exporters) is price mechanisms, accounting for 26%. Likewise, privileged access to land, infrastructure and capital (the military being the primary beneficiary) accounts for 24% of the Rs17 billion collective class privilege.

Ironically, the corresponding cost of social protection programs is roughly Rs600 billion (US\$2 billion). Roughly 10% — if health is excluded — of the population is covered by a social protection net. “... if just 24 percent of the privileges of the powerful were diverted to the poor, this would double the benefits available to poor Pakistanis,” claimed a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study.

But how many poor are there? At least 32% in a country of 220 million people are poor. Based on the UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI), in 2021-22, Pakistan ranked 161st out of 192 countries. According to the UNDP’s multidimensional poverty index, 38.3% — based on a 2017–18 survey — face multidimensional poverty, 21.5% face severe multidimensional poverty, while 12.9%

of the population is vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. The intensity of deprivation is 51.7%.

Inequality as panacea

In the 1960s, a policy of “functional inequality” (à la Simon Kuznets) was introduced. In other words, a strategy of unequal growth, accentuating inequality, was deployed in order to enable the capitalist class to accumulate more capital so that the rich had a higher level of savings.

These savings, it was assumed, would be invested into industry, resulting in higher economic growth. As far as inequalities were concerned, Simon Kuznets’ theory was deployed to project an optimistic future: market mechanisms would in time overcome the inequality during the initial stages of unequal growth. This policy has “persisted to this day”, claimed Pakistan’s noted economist Akmal Hussain in his recently published tome.

The result of these policies in the 1960s has recurred almost every 10 years: exports based on primary goods and low-value-added agricultural-based manufactures do not keep pace with the import requirements of a rapidly growing manufacturing sector. This, in turn, leads to the following two consequences. Firstly, a balance of payments crisis occurs since growth after an initial spurt slows down. Secondly, to overcome economic slowdown, foreign aid was/is deployed. This is one critical way Fortress Europe enters Pakistan to trap the country into forever-ballooning debt.

Enter ‘Fortress Europe’

Negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were underway at the time of writing these lines. Perhaps, when 300 Pakistanis were handing over Rs2.3 million (US\$7000) each to the human traffickers for their fateful journey, the IMF-Pakistan negotiations were also underway.

Pakistan has been begging for months for a \$1-billion tranche. To secure \$1 billion, Pakistan paid \$12 billion during the first half of the 2021–22 financial year (FY).

Pakistan's total external debt and liabilities have reached \$127 billion (41% of gross domestic profit). Meanwhile, its sovereign bonds have

lost more than 60% of their value, exports have declined to 7%, remittances have dropped to 11%, and foreign direct investment has dropped to 59%. Amid this situation, its external debt repayment obligations are \$73 billion over 3 years (FY 2023–25). Presently, foreign exchange reserves have been reduced to \$4–5

billion. Pakistan pays more than \$1 billion a month in debt repayments and interest on public debt.

While the capital in the name of “debt retirement” is welcomed in Fortress Europe, Pakistan's labour is left to drown in the Mediterranean.

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Anti-Trans Legislation, a Form of Reproductive Injustice

21 June 2023, by [Shui-yin Sharon Yam](#)

As of March 2023, 105 bills have been introduced to attack trans rights. These bills render gender-affirming care and education inaccessible or outright illegal for trans youths. By criminalizing life-saving treatments for trans youths, these laws significantly disrupt their lives—especially the lives of trans youths of color who are already more likely to be targets of violence.

While anti-trans bills are promoted by the right as an attempt to “protect the children,” they do just the opposite: gender-affirming care has been shown to [lower the rate of depression and suicide](#) among trans and nonbinary youths by respectively 60% and 73%. These proposed bills and legislations have palpable [negative effects](#) on the mental health of trans and nonbinary people. In addition to causing direct harm to trans youths, anti-trans legislation and sentiments uphold a white supremacist framework and perpetuates reproductive injustice.

The gender binary is a social construction deployed by white colonizers and slaveholders to dehumanize Black, Indigenous, and people of color. While this was not universal, many non-Western precolonial societies did not abide by a rigid binary sex/gender system. Their multi-gender or genderfluid systems were [weaponized by white colonizers](#) to justify domination.

Black, brown, and Indigenous people, meanwhile, were portrayed as animalistic and primitive for their lack of differentiation between the sexes. [Indigenous communities](#) that embraced gender and sexual fluidity were violently forced to conform to the colonizers' racial and gender hierarchy. Indigenous people who did not identify as either man or woman, and did not perform gender the way settlers expected were brutally persecuted; some were even targeted for [extermination](#).

As a racially specific category, gender had also been used during to support chattel slavery: seen as not conforming to the [white gender binary](#), Black people were deemed less-than-human, and thus exploitable. Anti-trans violence — including the current onslaught of anti-trans bills—therefore, cannot be separated from the sordid history of colonialism, racism, and antiblackness.

While anti-trans right-wing politicians and activists claim to protect America's children, their goal is to preserve the primacy of middle-upper class cishet white families. As demonstrated by the arguments made by author Abigail Shrier and the like, anti-trans activists are most concerned with preserving the assigned sex and fertility of white trans boys from middle-class families. Their concern is based on the white supremacist and

heteropatriarchal concept that wealthy cis white women ought to be producing more white babies to sustain the nation.

Meanwhile, people of color—especially those who are poor, queer, and trans—are marked as unfit parents. Their reproductive desires and family configurations are either not recognized by the state, or violently denied. Anti-trans legislation and sentiments, hence, are intricately tied to a white nationalist agenda.

Defending trans rights is a matter of reproductive justice (RJ). The [reproductive justice](#) framework, championed by Indigenous women, women of color, and trans and queer people, maintains that it is a human right to maintain one's personal bodily autonomy, to have children, to not have children, and to parent one's children in a safe environment.

In addition to violating trans people's right to bodily autonomy, anti-trans legislations that deny gender-affirming care and render schools a hostile space make it difficult for parents of trans youths to keep their children safe. Gender-affirming care and education is not a threat to children—rather, it is lifesaving.

We need collective and coalitional actions to fight against anti-trans legislation, as trans justice is

intimately connected with reproductive and racial justice. Supporting grassroots reproductive justice organizations such as the

Kentucky Health Justice Network, Forward Together and SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective is now more important than

ever.

Source: *Against the Current*, No. 224, May/June 2023.

People's lives as a compass. Echoes of the Bloco de Esquerda congress

20 June 2023, by **Vasco Barata**

Internally, the defence of a free and public National Health Service, the defence of the end of the labour laws of the Troika and the fight against real estate speculation led the Bloco de Esquerda to vote against a State Budget without a trace of left influence.

That vote was used by the Partido Socialista [Socialist Party (PS)] in collusion with a right-wing president of the Republic, to bring forward the election of 2022 and obtain an absolute majority. The electoral campaign was marked by inaccurate polls that predicted a majority for the right Partido Social Democrata (Social Democratic Party) and Iniciativa Liberal (Liberal Initiative) with the extreme right (Chega). Fear of this played a role and gave the PS an absolute majority.

At the January 30, 2022 election, the Bloco de Esquerda went from 19 to 5 deputies, defeated, but not irrelevant, as it remained firm and in a position to fight. A year later, the "political stability" promised by the PS has resulted in a succession of dismissals as well as small, medium and large scandals in the government, putting on the agenda the possibility of the dissolution of parliament, something unthinkable just a year ago. Instability is also the outlook for people in a country going through a multiform crisis, with speculative attacks on housing, generalised impoverishment due to inflation and a bankrupt National Health System. The battle fought, and lost, in the 2021 budget negotiations is now revealing itself as a possibility for the future. In Portugal

there is a left alternative that does not abdicate its obligations.

The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 also tested the left. Today it might seem that solidarity with the Ukrainian people should have been an obvious policy. It was not. Much of the international left remained ambiguous or even aligned with Moscow's "special operation". We are told - and rightly so - that this war is complex. NATO has been putting pressure on Russia for many years and the excesses committed by Kyiv are well known. But you cannot deal with complexity by forgetting what is simple: it is not because it is hostile to the United States that a regime like Putin's ceases to be imperialist or becomes anti-imperialist; respecting the right to self-determination means denouncing the invader and supporting the invaded, whether in the Sahara, Timor, Gaza or Ukraine. The BE's position followed the anti-imperialist tradition of Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg: the right to self-determination belongs to the people, no matter how reactionary their leaders and their alliances may be. By taking a clear position of solidarity with the Ukrainian people from the very beginning, the Bloc emerged with its credibility bolstered.

These were the decisions that allowed the BE to have a political debate at the congress on the essentials of people's lives and without existential dramas. Catarina Martins leaves the position of party coordinator with her authority intact, proof of which is the emotional reception she received to her final speech as coordinator, and is replaced

by Mariana Mortágua, who, dubbed by the press as a "more radical" figure, takes over position. The economic elite has never forgiven Mariana for her role in denouncing the system in parliamentary interventions, nor for the "Mortágua tax" on luxury real estate (the only anti-speculation measure approved by the PS during the *geringonça*.) [2]

More than in the polls (which indicate a constant rise in support for Bloc), it is the streets that show that only the left has an answer for the country. Recent times have been marked by important demonstrations: from the struggle of teachers, who fight for the recognition of their professional career to the largest demonstration for the right to housing, to extremely significant demonstrations in defence of the National Health Service or relevant sectoral struggles, the left appears in the streets, unlike an extreme right that, promising to occupy these same streets, can't manage to leave the walls of parliament.

In this cycle of mobilisations, the Bloc made a difference last January, when it was the only parliamentary party present in the first of the great teachers' mobilisations, called by a minority union after a long period of apathy from the unions under the hegemony of the Communist Party. We are not the only party that defends the demands of the teachers, but the moment was defining because it became clear that the Bloc is the only party that proposes resistance to the government with a strategy of unity in the fight. This also occurred in the

various initiatives against inflation, in the movement for the right to housing, in the collaborative efforts in defence of the National Health Service and in the union struggles in which we have responsibilities.

Now is the time to unite these struggles and build an alternative. We are aware of the intention of the right

and extreme right to unite to achieve power and of the need to combat this danger, just as we know that it is the absence of response from the absolute majority of the Socialist Party that feeds the right's dream of power. Our path is different. It is that of hope based on proposals for a good life for people. A life that guarantees that the basics: housing, salaries, pensions,

access to health and education are not a luxury.

8 June 2023

*Original translation from Portuguese to Spanish for **Viento Sur** by Manuel Fortes. Translation to English by David Fagan for **International Viewpoint**.*

Pensions mobilization: perspectives in chiaroscuro

19 June 2023, by **Léon Crémieux**

On the other hand, for the social movement, the results are necessarily a mixed bag. The 14th day of mobilization on 6 June, almost two months after the law was promulgated, saw 250 protests. This day, with an average of two-thirds fewer demonstrators than on 1 May, was the lowest in terms of the number of demonstrators - 281,000 according to the police and 900,000 according to the CGT union federation - since the beginning of the movement. But this number, even if reduced, reflects the persistent rejection of this law and the will to fight the government's reforms. Moreover, the latest polls still indicate a rejection of the reform by a large majority and support for the movement, even if a very large majority has always thought that Macron would succeed in passing his law.

The *Intersyndicale* trade union coordination had called for this day of action on 6 June because two days later a bill proposed by the independent parliament group LIOT, seeking to vote for the return of the retirement age to 62 was scheduled for voting in the Assembly. This last institutional battle did not take place, the government made every effort to ensure that the deputies use the strings of the Constitution (in this case Article 40), to ensure that this vote did not take place, invoking inadmissibility. Here again, it was the

support of the LR group that meant, unprecedentedly, that a bill proposed by the opposition was buried for "lack of funding of the measure" while the Assembly's Law Commission had already deemed it admissible. The last act therefore did not take place. Obviously, Macron did not want the only real vote of MPs on pensions since January to be a vote to reject his law. Even without impact - because the reactionary majority of the Senate would have blocked this initiative - the display was unbearable for Macron and his government.

The last meeting of the national *Intersyndicale*, on the evening of 15 June, reaffirmed its unity, its opposition to the pension reform and its commitment to act on other issues, from the autumn, but without formulating a common social demand vis-à-vis the government or the employers or any concrete call to prepare a new mobilization of the hundreds of thousands of workers and activists in the movement since the beginning of January.

Now, the trade union movement, the social movement, the NUPE (Nouvelle Union populaire écologique et sociale, an alliance of left parties) and the radical left are therefore confronted with their responsibility in the coming months. Because the government intends to accelerate its policy of social and democratic attacks and,

paradoxically, Marine Le Pen has the wind in her sails in the opinion polls, to the delight of most editorialists who see the left thus marginalized!

Perspectives

Important questions arise: First, how can a social movement create the balance of power sufficient to block a governmental attack on the popular classes? From this point of view, the balance sheet of the last six months is obviously contradictory. The movement had a very significant strength, uniting the vast majority of employees, with support from the great majority of the entire population. The *Intersyndicale*, operating necessarily on the basis of consensus so as not to break up, followed the orientation of the major days of mobilization (14 from January to June), with the aim of exerting sufficient pressure on the government and the elected deputies in the assembly. So, a battle of opinion counting on the fact that his isolation in the country would force Macron and his prime minister Borne to back down. But the government knew that they had institutional tools that could allow them to override it, despite their minority situation in the Assembly.

If there was any hope that the votes in the Assembly would block Macron, it was necessary to count on the crisis of

the Republican right (the LR), torn between its desire to assert its opposition to Macron and its fundamentally neoliberal orientation, in accordance with this reactionary bill. The LR candidate for the 2022 presidential election (Valérie Pécresse) had campaigned herself on raising the starting age to 65. So, on the institutional terrain, the social movement still came up against a majority of reactionary deputies, even if the RN maintained a posture of rejection of the law. The movement could not therefore put most of its hopes in these crises within the right and in parliamentary objectives.

The alternative posed to this orientation of the *Intersyndicale*, in January, by Solidaires and, less clearly, by the CGT was the prospect of the development of strikes, the renewable strike, to “bring the country to a standstill,” counting not only on a battle within public opinion but on direct pressure on the employers by blocking economic life. Many thought that the movement could walk on both legs, with sectors entering renewable action and others participating mainly in the big days of strike. Ambiguity will not have served the movement. It was not easy for a good part of the professional sectors to start together on renewable action. Not so much for financial reasons (many employees without being in a renewable strike movement will have been on strike for many days between January and June). The essential question was that at no time did the *Intersyndicale* give as an objective, as a signal to all employees, a common departure on renewable strike even if only for one or two weeks. It therefore did not give confidence in acting together in this direction, and the days of strikes and weekly demonstrations quickly became contradictory with embarking on renewable strikes.

Many hard-fought strikes in the private sector in recent months, especially for real wage increases, have lasted several weeks, in companies without high unionization and low wages, and most often without a common union front. But determination resided there, coming from the feeling shared by the strikers of these companies that they could win by blocking the company, by

imposing their force, everyone pushing in the same direction. Few sectors alone have the strength to block the economic life of the country, on the other hand the addition of several hundred companies can give a collective strength, create a balance of power and a new political situation of confrontation that could have allowed the bill to be rejected. Everyone felt that we were close to creating such a situation on 7 March with the deliberately ambiguous formula of the *Intersyndicale* to “bring the country to a standstill”, coupled with the call from seven CGT federations to embark upon renewable action, and with the call from Solidaires in the same direction. Targeting renewable strikes at the same time, on the maximum number of enterprises was certainly not an easy task to achieve, and here weigh the consequences of all the attacks decimating the forces of the trade union movement, just as trade union divisions weigh in many enterprises. But this perspective was obviously the most realistic in the face of a government all the more rigid on this law because it is weak politically, even if it would not have been easy to implement. We must discard the naïve idea of millions of employees being ready to fight but gagged and hampered by the union bureaucracies. Moreover, the weakness of general meetings in workplaces contrasted with the massiveness of the demonstrations.

Today the page is turned and there will be many debates on balance sheets, especially in the CGT, Solidaires and the FSU, unions which supported both the demand for the renewable strike and the fight for the maintenance of the inter-union front. The trade union movement can boast of having taken an important social and political place in the country, clearly improving its confidence rating among employees and gaining 100,000 new members since January 2023, especially among private sector employees in small companies.

But it will be necessary to make progress on these issues, because the sole commitment of the *Intersyndicale* to maintain itself and to open other fronts, affirmed in the declaration of 15 June, will obviously not be enough. Since mid-June, the social movement

has not died, the forces that focused on the question of the age of retirement are still active and present, but they have lost their common point of convergence.

The question remains that of building an offensive by the popular classes to block reactionary social attacks which, like those on pensions, worsen living conditions; the construction of a front that puts forward urgent social demands, without hesitating to target the distribution of wealth, the questioning of capitalist rules imposed in the workplace and society as a whole. This front will therefore not be possible with as a single reference a national inter-union coordination of all the confederations, several of which espouse and have espoused neoliberal policies. If the leadership of the CFDT, the CFTC and the CGC have clearly fought the pension reform, they often accept the imperatives dictated by the employers or the government, as was the case in February with the national interprofessional agreement “on the sharing of added value” which in a context of major inflation, has completely ruled out the question of wage increases to focus on bonuses, profit-sharing and savings plans. Similarly, several conflicts over wages have been victorious, whereas in the case, for example, of the textile company Vertbaudet, a minimum NAO (compulsory annual negotiations) agreement had been signed in March by the CFTC and the CGC, granting 0 euros of increase and two bonuses for a total of 765 euros net. The strike of more than two months of the workers, supported and mediatized by the CGT, and in particular its new General Secretary Sophie Binet, made it possible to obtain real wage increases, from 90 to 140 euros net, with the hiring of 30 temporary workers on permanent contracts.

So, creating new dynamics of mobilization and building a social confrontation with the government will require building units based as closely as possible on urgent requirements by trying to rally the broadest trade union front through mobilization. It also implies developing links and coordination with associations of the social movement defending and mobilizing around urgent requirements, on

environmental damage, women's rights, housing, discrimination and racist attacks. Maintaining and expanding the social climate created over the past 6 months by giving it the objective of mobilizing on all urgent social issues. This is important because, if the strength of the popular mobilization for six months was based on social anger, the incessant attacks suffered, often only the activists of the CGT, Solidaires and the FSU regularly made the link, on the ground, with the other urgent social demands, insisting on a different distribution of wealth targeting capitalist profits and their tax exemptions.

Macron and his government therefore continue to move forward and want, to escape their isolation and go beyond the question of pensions, to divert social anger from the government and the employers by targeting immigrants or the most precarious, and by polarizing on issues where the Macronists can make alliances with LR and the RN, without fear of parliamentary paralysis. Thus Macron, Borne and interior minister Darmanin have embarked on a social war against the popular classes on several grounds, including social security and housing, most often with a reactionary front of the deputies of Ensemble (Macronists), LR and the RN. Thus, the pernicious law on housing, the Kasbarian-Bergé law which is a veritable declaration of war against precarious tenants shattering the few protections in case of unpaid rents and allowing multiplying of accelerated evictions. This while the question of social emergency is indeed that of the access of the working classes to social housing.

A formidable mechanism is at work. The permanent rise in credit rates and the decline in the purchasing power of working-class families has, on the one hand, stopped the small current that made it possible, for those who had the means in previous years, to acquire housing or to move from social housing to the more expensive private stock. At the same time, the construction of social housing (HLM) in 2021/2022 was 25% lower than the 250,000 officially planned, and already largely insufficient. Indeed, 2.3 million families are waiting for social housing, and there are at least 300,000

homeless and 4.1 million poorly housed in France. So, faced with a social issue of primary importance, the government is choosing to punish tenants and criminalize the homeless. Not only did this alliance of the right and the extreme right vote through a villainous law that will affect single-parent families and therefore women most, but it also voted for the right of landlords to increase rents by 3.5% in 2023 after the 3.5% voted through in 2022, while the NUPES proposed a rent freeze. Despite its claims of popular opposition, the RN still takes the side of the propertied classes.

Similarly, in recent days, the government has also decreed a decrease in the coverage of dental care by social security from 70 to 60%. They are also criminalizing the popular classes targeted by the hunt for social security fraud: "abuse of sick leave, unjustified benefits" with an obvious background of racism targeting Maghrebian bi-nationals and the "abuses" of state medical aid which benefits irregular migrants and represents 0.5% of public health spending. Both the RN and the government target immigrants, whether legal or not, and working-class "fraudsters" while corporate tax evasion (not to mention legal "optimization") represents 80 to 100 billion per year, the absence of social security declarations by companies 20 to 25 billion, and an amount equivalent to fraud on the VAT statement. Similarly, competing with the RN and the LR to flatter the reactionary electorate, Darmanin wants to introduce in a few months a new law to fight against immigration (the 30th since 1980).

This reactionary course goes hand in hand with the development of an authoritarian and repressive state policy that expands its repressive arsenal with new limitations on the rights to demonstrate and assemble, the use of anti-terrorism laws and exceptional police mechanism to attack democratic rights (including algorithmic video surveillance by drone cameras planned for the 2024 Olympics) The latest environmental demonstrations, after those against the megabasins of Sainte Soline, took place against the Lyon-Turin TGV link, on the weekend of 17-18 June. More

than 5,000 people gathered in the Maurienne valley in Savoie. The titanic €30 billion project is planned to double the Fréjus tunnel, artificializing 1,000 hectares of farmland and imposing an annual drainage of 60 to 135 million m³ annually. While the demonstration was supposed to bring together hundreds of activists from Switzerland and Italy, the government used the arsenal of anti-terrorism laws to block the access of seven buses of Italian environmental activists thanks to the arbitrary IAT (administrative ban on entering French territory) act of the Minister of the Interior that bypasses any judicial intervention and does not even have to be justified. Clearly, today the government would like to cut off the legs of the network of social struggles around the climate movement, whose dynamic, combativeness and impact among youth have increased in the heat of the mobilization against the pension reform. The absurd threat brandished by Darmanin of the dissolution of the Soulèvements de la Terre (which includes the Confédération paysanne, ATTAC, the Union syndicale Solidaires, Alternatiba) illustrates the government's fear of the political place taken by this movement.

The movement against the pensions reform has been the most powerful social movement, the has mobilized not broadly, since 2010. It was of unparalleled depth, especially in small towns, in rural areas, often left out of previous social mobilizations but already very active during the *gilets jaunes* movement in 2018. It was motivated by the frontal attack against the popular classes represented by the postponement of the retirement age to 64 years which will have the concrete effect of a precariousness of employees close to retirement age and an increased reduction in their pension, the loss of the two best pensions, especially for those who have worked in arduous jobs.

But beyond that, all the social suffering of everyday life has consolidated this mobilization so deeply and so durably: suffering at work, arduous and long transport, deplorable housing conditions and attrition of social housing, low wages and cost of living increased by the

pandemic and inflation, impossibility of providing for health care, difficulties of daily life with the clear cuts in local public services, the proliferation of “online services” making it more difficult to carry out the slightest administrative procedures. Also, for families the increasingly expensive care of the elderly, the exorbitant cost of nursing homes often in lamentable conditions, the difficulty of installation and employment of young people. It is therefore a social issue, a global social question, therefore a political question concerning the place and the defence of the interests of the popular classes that has been asked, expressed, often relayed by this movement. The challenge has therefore been and still is to give political visibility, a materialization to this class issue by tracing a political alternative based on the fight against these social attacks and therefore for alternative, anti-capitalist choices, based on the satisfaction of social needs.

One is struck by the ardour with which capitalist ideologues have been firing on all cylinders in recent weeks to fight, even crush, any “deviant” inclination from the official neoliberal doxa. The NUPES is targeted daily as irrational, incompetent, submissive to leftism and Islamism, having no economic credibility. The TINA (There Is No Alternative) dear to Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s now has a prominent place, especially among the spokespersons of Macronism and the editorialists of generalist media owned overwhelmingly by a few capitalist billionaires. Reactions are sometimes epidermal. This was the case following the words of director Justine Triet, after winning the Palme d’Or at this year’s Cannes Film Festival. She dared to make a speech denouncing “the shocking way in which the government has denied the protests against the pension reform.” In the aftermath, she castigated “the commodification of culture that the neoliberal government defends.” While all the professional unions shared and supported this speech, it was spectacular to see the speed and violence of the hostile reactions coming from the government and the neoliberal acolytes. It was all the more important to try to discredit her speech since the prestige of the

Cannes Film Festival is one of the cultural vectors in which the “intellectual elite” is supposed to share the discourse of the ruling class. The spectre of the 1968 Cannes Film Festival was obviously still in the memories of some.

More surprising were the reactions to a report written by financial inspector Selma Mahfouz and economist Jean Pisani Ferry, one of the mentors of the young Macron. This report on the financing of the ecological transition, coming from this neoliberal economist, dared to evoke, given the urgency and importance of the necessary financing, the implementation of an “exceptional tax for the wealthiest 10% of French people”, a tax paid once corresponding to the amount of 5% of their financial wealth. This would raise EUR 150 billion immediately. To have dared to target rich households who own half of the total net wealth (real estate and financial) is obviously intolerable. Only the “leftists” of the NUPES could have such proposals. Thus, betrayed by one of their own, Borne and her finance minister Bruno Lemaire immediately and sharply dismissed this hypothesis, judging it contrary to the government’s entire policy of reducing the tax burden.

These two examples are indicative of the desire to assert that there is only one possible response to financial and social questions. This desire requires the effort to discredit not only anti-capitalist discourse but even the anti-neoliberal discourse adopted by those on the streets in recent months and by part of the trade union movement, the NUPES and the radical left. In particular, it is important to discredit the NUPES as not being able to represent an alternative to neoliberal policies, and even being a more dangerous option than the RN. From this point of view, the instruction is widely followed by the editorialists of the major media to indulge in “NUPES bashing” and prevent this political alliance appearing credible for the next elections. In another complementary register, the nostalgics of the social-democratic left play a little music aimed at discrediting the leftists of la France insoumise and Europe Ecologie Les Verts, privileging societal issues

(understanding LGBTQ+ movements, climate, feminist and anti-racist movements) to the detriment of “serious” daily concerns supposed to be those of the popular classes. However, within those classes, all the suffering of everyday life is increased when you are a woman, often with the lowest wages and head of single-parent families, often subjected to violence, harassment and discrimination at work; when you are from a postcolonial generation, suffering the discrimination of everyday life, spatial relegation, state racism and police violence. These social issues are not societal concerns outside the popular classes, but integral parts of the daily problems of millions of men and women. The same is true of environmental concerns, which testify to an urgency experienced there also by the popular classes in particular.

A political alternative

But the question of a political expression based on social needs, global, outlining an alternative to neoliberal policies is indeed a point of weakness of the current situation. It is true that the anti-neoliberal left, the NUPES, is discredited daily in the media and has difficulty making a coherent voice heard, beyond the caricature it suffers. It is also true that government circles and their supporters have clearly chosen to demonize the RN, treating it as a serious and responsible opposition, opposed to the “dangerous ecoterrorists and Islamo-leftists of la France insoumise.” Despite all its limitations, the NUPES appears alone in the rejection of neoliberal policies. This is obviously not the case with the remnants of social democracy that some would like to resuscitate. But neither is this the case, obviously, with the RN which, like Georgia Meloni, is totally devoted to these neoliberal policies, following Macron on many of his reactionary laws, adding only the poison of more racist discrimination.

The main danger thus becomes for the defenders of the system, the possible emergence of a force making the junction between social demands and

a political alternative. From this point of view, France has a particular situation in Europe, the strength of the recent social movement and the presence of the NUPES placing the country for the moment against the current situation elsewhere, with a left that maintains a significant electoral strength, predominantly anti-neoliberal. Hence, everything has been done to ensure that the RN appears in the media and polls as the only winner of recent months (even if in reality, according to the latest polls, the NUPES would progress and obtain the relative majority in the event of early elections).

Unfortunately, this growth and the difficulties on the left are not the only reflection of media manoeuvres. There is obviously a deficit, which has been present since the autumn. Already analysed widely, it came from the inability to achieve a common, unitary, union, social and political front. The NUPES, rather than worrying about its common responsibilities in such a

situation, rejects any common activist organization in the cities and regions, la France insoumise is suspicious of any idea of internal democratic organization and functioning, and no initiative, outside the National Assembly, is taken to promote common rallies of local or national dimension. Rather than looking for a common expression today, each component of the NUPES, apart from LFI, seems mostly concerned with a particular expression in the upcoming European elections. This situation leads to criticism within the LFI, to a common call for unity among the leaders of the youth organizations of the NUPES, in several forums. In any case, the leaders of the NUPES, after this social movement, seem unable to take initiatives for common social and political proposals against Macron, reinforcing the limits of their electoral agreement. Within the radical left, several hundred activists from the NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste) and the feminist, trade union, ecologist, antiracist and associative

movement have just called for a process of local and regional meetings for the holding of a social forum for early July "to build in the long term a new democratic and pluralist force."

All in all, building a unitary, union, social and political common front will have to be the task of the hour, to make credible a political alternative fighting neoliberal policies. The program of this alternative is very much present in the demands made in the combative trade union currents, notably in the CGT, Solidaires and the FSU, in the activist associations of the social movement. La France insoumise and the NUPES had become the spokespersons for many of its demands during the last elections. But the question now is building a common activist melting pot, capable of organizing, debating and being the basis of the mobilizations to be built.

18 June 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint**.

"We need human solidarity": report from Kalamata after deadly shipwreck

18 June 2023, by Pete Radcliff

In Kalamata, the 102-104 surviving refugees from the shipwreck are housed in a warehouse awaiting to be moved to one of Greece's refugee camps.

Contrary to BBC reports, there are a great mixture of refugees, many speaking Arabic.

I have been talking to many local people and some political activists. All in support of the refugees. All asking the same question: "how if the location of the boat was known and that it was in distress, could this happen?"

The former Prime Minister Tsipras was here this morning. The details of his response are still awaited.

There is a mixture of anger at the EU and UK leaving Greece in the lurch of taking the bulk of the growing flow of desperate refugees. But also a degree of apology for Greece's response: "what can Greece do when the rest of Europe do nothing?"

After the recent election which the left (Syriza) lost, there is a low morale. But the anger with what happened over the past two days is huge.

There is a certain degree of cynicism about the incoming government's response. About whether an enquiry will reveal what the Greek border police's responsibility is.

The faith is not with politicians, but

more with relief and sea rescue agencies. Several times I heard "we need human solidarity", "solidarity between people". They are right, but we can't let politicians off the hook. We need a political campaign across Europe for free movement.

And that can't be a campaign for passing the buck but of doing immediate relief and political action, as much as we can, everywhere. No refugee turned back or left to die. No leaving of Greece or any country to carry the weight. This horror must be stopped.

15 June 2023

Source: [Labour Campaign for Free Movement](#).

Open Letter to the parties and organizations of the São Paulo Forum

17 June 2023, by **Collective**

Daniel Ortega and what is left of the Sandinista Front present themselves as leftist and anti-imperialist, but, far from that proclaimed discourse, many years ago they began a process of abandoning their principles, through corruption, alliances with the worst right wing forces of the country, strengthening of a neoliberal model that increases the already enormous inequalities and misery of the population, and concentration of political and economic power in his family and close associates.

In April 2018, after riot squads assaulted elderly people protesting against social security reforms, groups of university students took to the streets and university campuses, being repressed with bullets by police, who in three days killed 56 people, crimes verified by human rights organizations that arrived in the country in May, the first ones to do so since Daniel Ortega returned to power in 2007.

Protesters mobilized massively, demanding democracy, justice, electoral reforms and the departure from power of Daniel Ortega and his wife Vice President Rosario Murillo; they erected barricades and roadblocks, which were demolished weeks later by police and paramilitary forces in the so-called "Operation Cleanup". The IACHR documented that in these operations, the number of dead increased to 355, there were 2,000 wounded, 770 prisoners who faced judicial proceedings without guarantees and more than 200,000 refugees.

The government's narrative that the whole thing was a "failed coup d'état financed by US imperialism" is countered with forceful reports from international organizations, which documented and denounced the

innumerable human rights violations and pointed out crimes against humanity committed by the Nicaraguan authorities, reports recently ratified by the Group of Experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council. [3]

Since then, Nicaragua has been living in a de facto state of siege, without freedom of mobilization, assembly, organization, expression, information or association. All opposition political parties, independent media, more than 4,300 civil organizations defending various rights (feminist, environmental, trade union, sexual diversity, children's, community and centers caring for the elderly and disabled) were closed down.

Numerous centers were invaded, turned into government offices and their assets confiscated, including the building of La Prensa, a 96-year-old newspaper that resisted the former dictatorship. They went to the extreme of closing down the Nicaraguan Academy of Language, the Nicaraguan Academy of Sciences and even the Nicaraguan Red Cross.

In 2019, by means of an Amnesty Law (which left unpunished many crimes committed by the State), many political prisoners were released. This generated the expectation that, in 2021, an electoral year, agreements assumed in the 2019 dialogue would be complied with, that they would create an independent Electoral Council and elections would be held with guarantees.

In June 2021, the regime ordered the arrest of all opposition candidates and dozens of political and social leaders, commentators and journalists. To perpetuate himself in power, Ortega used Somocista tactics, eliminating the opposition and carrying out a farce with those who agreed to play along.

Thus, in 2021 he proclaimed himself elected for the third consecutive time, claiming 75% of the votes and in 2022, he awarded himself 100% of the mayoralties. Specialized agencies estimated abstention at more than 80%.

In 2022, the police state continued to strengthen itself in the country and the more than 300 political prisoners remained subjected to torture and violation of their elementary rights: held incommunicado, without regular visits, without being able to read, write or engage in any form of distraction. Extreme conditions of isolation were applied to the heroine Dora María Téllez and the feminist Tamara Dávila. Priests and Bishop Rolando Alvarez were also imprisoned. Retired General Hugo Torres, hero of the Sandinista struggle, died as a political prisoner.

No political prisoner yielded to coercion and blackmail. The national and international pressure for the freedom of all was decisive so that on February 9, 2023, Ortega and Murillo released 222 people and sent them to the United States. The same day, in an unconstitutional and neo-fascist manner, they stripped them of their nationality. The following day, after refusing to be exiled, Bishop Alvarez was sentenced to 26 years and locked up in a cell for highly dangerous prisoners.

Six days later, 94 more Nicaraguans were stripped of their nationality and political rights, declared traitors to their country and fugitives from justice, and expropriated of their property and pensions, among them writers such as Sergio Ramírez and Gioconda Belli, journalists such as Carlos Fernando Chamorro, Bishop Silvio Báez, human rights defenders such as Vilma Núñez, ex-commanders

such as Luis Carrión and Mónica Baltodano and feminists such as Sofía Montenegro.

The repression against the Catholic Church is insane and highlights the will to eliminate it from Nicaragua. This has resulted in the exile of dozens of priests, including 18 Denationalized priests. They confiscated all their property and means of communication, annulled their social support organizations, expelled religious orders and occupied parochial schools. In addition to spying on them, they banned their celebrations and blocked the bank accounts of all the Dioceses.

Five years later, the lying "coup attempt" narrative used by Ortega and Murillo has been distorted. Ortega is the worst of the neoliberal dictators. With his policies and aggressions they try to strengthen themselves in power and inherit it to their children, as the Somozas did. Nothing justifies continuing to suffer their repression.

That is why we ask the parties and organizations that make up the São Paulo Forum to denounce and condemn the regime of terror in Nicaragua, which is incompatible with the principles of a left that claims to be an alternative to the injustices of

the world in which we live. You cannot be anti-imperialist by annihilating all civil society and suppressing all freedoms. We only ask that you raise your voice in favor of human rights in Nicaragua and for the remaining 70 political prisoners, and that those in government also do so in the organizations where they have representatives, such as the United Nations, the OAS and ECLAC.

We, the undersigned, are part of the political prisoners who spent almost two years in prison, we are part of those who have been exiled, deprived of our nationality and repressed by the Ortega regime for denouncing its atrocities.

June 15, 2023.

From exile we sign:

Sergio Ramírez Mercado Former Vice President of the Republic- Writer - Denationalized

Gioconda Belli Poet Denationalized

Dora María Téllez Former Guerrilla Commander. Historian - Former prisoner and Denationalized

Luis Carrión Cruz Former Commander of the Revolution. Economist - Denationalized

Mónica Baltodano Former Guerrilla Commander. Social Scientist. Denationalized

Ernesto Medina Former Rector of UNAN León - Denationalized

Carlos Fernando Chamorro Journalist. Director of Confidencial and Denationalized

Sofía Montenegro Journalist and Feminist - Denationalized

Oscar René Vargas Writer, Sociologist and Economist - Former Prisoner and Denationalized

Julio C. López Campos Former Director of RRII FSLN, Political Scientist - Denationalized

Azahalea Solís Constitutionalist and Feminist Lawyer - Denationalized

Irving Larios Former Prisoner - Economist - Denationalized

Héctor Mairena Lawyer - Denationalized

Patricia Orozco Journalist and Feminist - Denationalized

Haydeé Castillo Social Scientist. Denationalized

Discredited government cracks down in Senegal

16 June 2023, by **Paul Martial**

Ousmane Sonko, Macky Sall's main opponent, has just been sentenced to two years in prison following his trial in Dakar. The sentence sparked spontaneous protests across the country. For 72 hours, the demonstrators were subjected to ferocious repression.

Blood and fear

The death toll rose to 23, including three children, either from asphyxiation due to the massive use of tear gas, or from bullets.

Numerous images show civilians armed with rifles and wearing balaclavas among the forces of law and order, even though the prefecture of police tried at a press conference to

pass them off as demonstrators.

The Red Cross reported that it had treated 357 injured people, including pregnant women. The civil society organisation "Y'en a marre" denounced the hundreds of arrests and the ill-treatment to which some were subjected while in detention.

The police have used arrested demonstrators as human shields against stone-throwing, not hesitating

to take a child, as shown in an al-Jazeera video that has been widely relayed on social networks.

Like dictatorships, the Senegalese authorities have cut off the internet in an attempt to weaken the protests.

Power hanging on

In 2021, Ousmane Sonko was accused by a young massage parlour employee of repeated rape and death threats. Sonko denied the accusations. At his trial in absentia, the opposition politician was acquitted of these charges, but was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for corruption of young people, leading to ineligibility.

This offence, which many Senegalese have discovered, carries a penalty of up to five years' imprisonment. The offender is punished for debauching a young person under the age of 21. At the time of the incident, the young masseuse was twenty years old.

For the vast majority, this is a manoeuvre by the government to prevent Sonko from standing in the

2024 presidential election. Especially as Macky Sall is no stranger to this. He has used the courts to remove his main rivals Karim Wade and then Khalifa Sall.

Another source of tension, and not the least, is Macky Sall's clear desire to run for a third term by exploiting the change to the Constitution. He had pledged to serve only two terms.

In the eyes of the population, the President of the Republic is prepared to do anything, including putting the country to fire and blood to stay in power.

Alternation or alternative

At a time when living conditions are worsening for the majority of Senegalese, and when the only prospect for young people is to risk their lives in a perilous emigration, the corruption of the ruling elite is becoming unbearable. Sonko's strength lies in his criticism of these abuses. Sonko, a former tax inspector,

was disbarred for denouncing tax fraud by the ruling elite.

While the vast majority of the Senegalese left has supported Ousmane Sonko from the outset, it must not abandon its values. Sonko in no way questions the system; his programme aims to favour Senegalese employers in international competition. His nationalism is in no way linked to social emancipation.

In 2000, the Senegalese left supported Abdoulaye Wade, who claimed to be a liberal, in order to put an end to decades of power subservient to France. His authoritarian government will be remembered for its large-scale corruption. The left emerged weakened from this episode.

The left obviously has a role to play in mobilising against Macky Sall's affairist government, but it must also make its voice heard, the voice of workers and peasants. Not forgetting the lessons of the past means taking care to build its own organisations, because in future battles to defend the working classes, the Left will only be able to rely on its own strengths.

Berlusconi - godfather to Trump and Johnson

15 June 2023, by **Dave Kellaway**

What a spectacle last night on Italian TV's main channel! All men in suits, some with black ties, respectfully agree on what a great man Berlusconi was and how he changed Italian politics. Really, what the Clean Hands prosecutor team had done to expose corrupt old parties like the Christian Democrats or the Socialists was okay, but they had gone too far in pursuing him in over 30 legal cases. Maybe this great man was not wrong in talking about a conspiracy against him. Even his old opponent from the Italian Communist Party, D'Alema, did not rock the boat.

No mention of the Mafia links that explain his meteoric rise or his financing of the corrupt prime

minister Bettini Craxi, who legislated in favour of his new private TV stations. All this is hardly surprising given that the new hard right government now controls appointments to the public broadcaster and Berlusconi's Mediaset empire is still alive and strong. The latter ran a headline on all its screens saying Grazie Silvio (thanks Silvio).

The leadership of the socially liberal Democratic Party, the PD, has postponed its leadership meeting out of respect. The supposedly more progressive leader, Elly Schlein, looks much like the old team. The Italian state is scandalously giving him a state funeral tomorrow. True heroes

and martyrs in the fight against the Mafia, like the assassinated prosecutors Falcone and Borsellino, must be turning in their graves. How can Matterella, the Italian president, preside over such a charade when his own brother was murdered by the Cosa Nostra? A number of Berlusconi's closest collaborators have been convicted of association with the Mafia. It is widely accepted in Italy that the only logical explanation of Berlusconi's sudden emergence as a big property magnate was the result of dirty money coming his way. It is difficult to win, as he did, all the electoral districts in Sicily without a little help from organised crime.

Silvio Berlusconi was Prime Minister

three times and has the post-war record for the longest single term served. His fortune is estimated at around \$7 billion dollars, and he is on the top ten Italian rich list. He faced 30 different legal indictments for conflict of interest, corruption, false accounting, and illegal sexual conduct. Only one was made to stick, and he was convicted of a 'brutal sentence' that consisted of having to do community service in an old people's home for one day a week for a year. While in office, he passed several laws that specifically protected him from the charges he faced. His conviction meant he was barred from office for a period, but he returned and was elected as part of the present government coalition. His party, Forza Italia, is very much the junior partner, with only around 7% of the vote.

Today a friend and comrade, Franca, sent me a few words in a text. She says:

Death does not cancel the real history of somebody even if it falsely exalts it has a legacy. The institutional chorus of praise is a scandal.

He introduces an 'anything goes' attitude in everyday life that was particularly negative for women.

He brought in the cult of the leader, populism, individualism, hatred for taxes - 'they are the hands of the state in your pockets' - drastic privatisation of the economy and extreme machismo.

What was Berlusconi's real impact and legacy?

He constructed a new hegemonic coalition for Italian capital following the deep crisis of the Christian Democrat and Socialist Party regimes that had governed from the war to the 1980s. Prosecutors from the Clean Hands team had exposed just how corrupt the party system was in Italy. In the vacuum that followed, the

property tycoon and media millionaire stepped up to create a new sort of company party built completely around him and his money and then promoted by his TV empire.

The vacuum existed because the main reformist party that led the labour movement, the Italian Communist Party, had consistently sought a historic compromise and coalition government with the corrupt Christian Democrats and had actively held back a vigorous, radical workers movement on the offensive in the 1970s. The ultra left and violent episode of the Red Brigades and their armed struggle strategy further destroyed the development of a possible left alternative.

Berlusconi looked new and different because he was not a career politician at a time when all politicians were seen as corrupt. His new TV stations challenged the rather staid and conventional programming of the state broadcaster. A lot of its programming was trashy and based on exploitative exposure of women's bodies, but it built up a big audience. It was all about feeling good about being a consumer in a capitalist society that everyone could be part of. In the absence of a left alternative, he played the hero entrepreneur who could get things down better than all these lawyers or academically trained politicians. He would give people what they wanted and not make them feel guilty about it. For the business community, including the self-employed or small owners, he promised to deregulate a notorious bureaucratic system of regulation.

The average Italian also associates Berlusconi with two other things: football and his many sexual affairs. Being the owner of one of the most successful sides of the time, Milan, certainly helped build his popularity and his image as a winner. As we have seen with Johnson and Trump, a reputation as a womaniser is not a negative among many voters.

Certainly, Berlusconi was the forerunner of right wing populists like Trump and Johnson in the astute way he used the mass media. Owning a fair chunk of it helped him, of course, but Trump had a media presence through

his successful TV show. Johnson came from a journalistic background and had a clever team that exploited social media. As an outsider from the traditional political class, he was less reticent about respecting the rules of political debate and language. Like Trump, Berlusconi made outrageous promises, like the number of jobs his government would generate. Vulgar, incendiary language was routinely used so Berlusconi could joke about Schulz, a German MEP taking the role of a concentration camp Kapo in a film, or Obama being well suntanned. Quite often, he has been filmed telling obscene, misogynist jokes. He once said that for a woman to get on, she should look for a rich man.

Even more dangerous has been the way Berlusconi has tried to treat the political and legal processes like a market where he can make deals. So the independence of the judiciary is challenged. Just as Trump or Johnson today declare a conspiracy of the judiciary and state against him, Berlusconi regularly said there was a left wing, communist plot by the prosecutors. Unfortunately, the TV shows running non-stop about his death today are giving credence to the idea that the state prosecutors went too far. Johnson also tried to sidestep the rules restricting what a government can legally do during the Brexit process. Today, these right wing populists are also keen to restrict our democratic rights to protest.

Today his final partner, Marta Fascina, who is also an MP, is fighting over who will inherit the ownership of the party symbol. This company-style party was basically a marketing organisation to promote Berlusconi with no real democratic structures. Most commentators think it will disintegrate. Renzi (Italia Viva), Salvini (La Lega), and Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia) are circling like vultures to pick up the 7% of the electorate that his party still represents. They are outdoing themselves by praising his legacy and whitewashing his crimes.

Many years ago, Berlusconi was a member of the P2 Masonic Lodge, which operated like an illegal state within a state to protect capitalist interests against the threat of a leftist government. Today, there is a lot less

need for such an operation since the hard right controls so much of the national and local Italian state.

Perhaps that is the old scoundrel's greatest legacy.

13 June 2023

Source [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#).

Cornel West for President? What Does the Left Think? Part 1

14 June 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

"I have decided to run for truth and justice, which takes the form of running for president of the United States as a candidate for the People's Party," West announced on Twitter. "I enter for the quest for truth. I enter for the quest of justice. And the presidency is just one vehicle we pursue that truth and justice."

The Movement for a People's Party, led by former Bernie Sanders staffer Nick Brana, was formed in 2017 as a leftist pressure group aimed at getting Bernie Sanders to leave the Democratic Party and run an independent political campaign. When that effort failed, the People's Party became an independent political party. In December of 2020, the PP announced that both West and media personality Jimmy Dore had joined the new party. The party claims to have 150,000 members, but it appears on the ballot of only one state, Florida. The American journalist [Chris Hedges has said](#) that he will arrange a meeting between West and the Green Party to see if they might back West. In the 2020 presidential election the Green Party was on 31 state ballots.

To say that West's campaign on the PP ticket is a long shot vastly exaggerates its possibilities. Yet what its impact will be is not yet clear.

West's candidacy will take place in the left lane of American politics usually occupied by other groups such as the Green Party and the Democratic Socialists of America. The Green Party, founded as a party concerned with the environment and social justice, runs candidates for president and vice-president every four years.

The Democratic Socialists of America backs both some Democratic Party and some independent candidates. In 2016 and 2020 DSA endorsed Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party primary and many DSA members worked for him. But in both 2016 and 2020 DSA declined to endorse the Democratic Party candidates, Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden, though some DSA members worked for and voted for them. We spoke to leaders of both organizations to see what they thought of West's bid.

A View from the DSA

Asked about his view of West's decision to run for president on the People's Party tick, Justin Charles, a Black New York City activist and a member of DSA's National Political Committee (NPC), said, "I'm glad that he's running, though I wish he wasn't running on the People's Party, because my experience with them has been that they're not serious. They don't seem all that serious about party building. Jimmy Dore, who is associated with them, is like a snake oil salesman."

Charles is perhaps too kind to Dore. Dore, a stand-up comedian and media personality, has been a promoter of various conspiracy theories, such as that [Syria did not carry out chemical weapons attacks on its civilians](#); he suggested that the Democratic Party National Committee was responsible for [the death of Seth Rich](#), a DNC employee; and he has [spread misinformation](#) about the COVID

pandemic.

Asked how he thought DSA would react to the campaign, Charles said, "A lot of people in DSA have respect for Cornel West. He can speak to this moment with more insight than Biden. And that's a good thing."

Yet Charles thought it unlikely that DSA would endorse West. "His candidacy will have an effect on things we do and so it certainly warrants a discussion. I'm all for a discussion, but I don't think it's likely that the NPC would take any action on it. I don't think DSA will endorse anyone for president. I will not be on the NPC when this issue comes up; my term will be up."

A Green Party Take on West

Howie Hawkins, the Green Party presidential candidate in 2020 who is still deciding whether to run in 2024 was quite critical of West and the People's Party. "Cornel West shows poor judgment tying himself to Nick Brana's online grift, the People's Party. They have no organized base to do ballot access petitioning. It is doubtful he can raise money to pay for petitioners in up to 50 states and DC."

Hawkins thinks that West will not be able to stand the heat of an election campaign. "I doubt whether West will stick it out as the anybody-but-Trump (or the next far-right Republican) pressure mounts. He's been flip-flopping on this question for years. After supporting Ralph Nader [Green

Party candidate] in 2000, he was an outspoken opponent of Nader's 2004 run as an independent candidate in part because of the left-liberal backlash against Nader and the Greens for supposedly electing George W. Bush.

"After supporting Sanders in the primaries, West flipped to Jill Stein in the general in 2016. In 2020, he flipped back to the Democrats, publicly opposing my run and calling for a vote for Biden because of the left-liberal backlash against Stein and the Greens for supposedly electing Trump. He's never had a principled commitment to independent working-class politics, or been part of an organization trying to do that. Always more a figure in letterhead coalitions, from Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC, predecessor of DSA) to various top-down NGO or academic issue campaigns. For him, inside or outside the capitalist Democratic Party has always been a question of immediate tactics around candidates, not a question of building independent working-class organization and power."

Hawkins also criticizes West's platform. "He has not been consistently anti-imperialist and in solidarity with Ukrainian people's fight for independence and survival. He has supported Medea Benjamin's approach of demanding U.S. imperialists impose a ceasefire and settlement negotiated with Russian imperialists for land-for-peace to carve up Ukraine between Russian and Western spheres of influence. His neutrality between Russian aggressors and Ukrainian self-defense is morally bankrupt complicity in Russian

imperialism. Not a good look for a Christian preacher."

Nick Brana and the People's Party

The People's Party maintains its progressive program, but it has taken some stands and suffered some internal conflicts that call its ideals into question. The PP recently made a move to the right, forming an alliance with the rightwing Libertarian Party for demonstrations—Rage Against the War Machine—held on the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine calling for an end to U.S. military support for Ukraine and a stop to Ukraine's war for its sovereignty against the Russian aggressor.

Party leader Brana wrote on Twitter on Feb. 20, 2023, "Rage Against the War Machine was incredible! Thousands of people rallied and our march stretched several blocks. We brought left and right together to stop this war in Ukraine. The anti-war movement is BACK!" This is what is sometimes called a "red-brown" alliance, nominally leftist parties joining with rightist parties, now a disturbing phenomenon around the world. Whether the PP will establish closer ties with the Libertarians or other rightwing groups is not clear.

Brana, who has led the party since its founding, has also faced serious charges. [Last year he was accused of sexual assault](#) against Zana Day with Paula Jean Swearengin saying she had witnessed the event. All three were PP leaders. With Brana still leading the party, a ten-member investigative

committee was formed (Brana and his father were members). One of the committee's members says that several on the committee, "[believed the accuser](#)," but then three of its members were expelled from the party. So far as we know, no legal charges appear to have been filed against Brana.

Zana Day, the alleged victim of the assault, wrote on Twitter on July 10 last year, "The Board majority, staff, and Vols [volunteers] were removed to cover up. Multiple stories, with even audio recordings, show the People's Party and the abuser lying about the investigation." The People's Party has posted statements claiming that the allegations against Brana were part of a smear campaign and an attempt at a liberal takeover of the party. Whatever may be the truth, the handling of the matter was far from ideal.

Brana and the PP now turn to the work of building Cornel West's campaign, getting him on the ballot in the 49 states where the PP is not yet on the ballot, raising the millions of dollars or finding the tens of thousands of members it will take to get petition signatures, and then fighting to have their views heard and to make West a strong candidate. It will be all uphill from here.

Part II of this article will compare Cornel West's PP campaign to that of other Black politicians on the left such as Shirley Chisholm, Angela Davis, and Jesse Jackson as well as looking at the larger political questions such a campaign raises.

June 12, 2023

Source [New Politics](#).

Making Everything a Feminist Issue: Argentina's Feminist Movement

13 June 2023, by [Camila Valle](#)

In Argentina, 30,000 people were disappeared by the dictatorship, in very gruesome ways. One of the more notorious examples being what we call death flights, when people, after having been kidnapped and placed in the camps, were drugged, undressed, and loaded onto planes or helicopters, and then thrown into bodies of water. At the same time as they were repressing, murdering, and sequestering people, the dictatorships were also restructuring the country economically.

They implemented financial reforms, austerity policies, the expansion of credit and debt, and the consolidation of big corporations and banks. So, for a place like Argentina, from its very beginning neoliberalism wasn't cloaked in the language of individual rights or any kind of progressivism—it was very much coupled with the kind of extreme direct, repressive violence that some in the US and Europe have characterized as a degeneration of a more "classic" neoliberalism.

Fast forward to 2001 and 2002, Argentina experienced the largest debt default by any country ever at the time. It went through a deep crisis, where the majority of the population was thrust into deep poverty, and society had zero political stability; if neoliberalism had any political legitimacy before then, it was totally gone at that point.

In December of 2001, five presidents came and went, and there were massive uprisings. Millions took to the streets, and the expression that the revolt took was against all traditional political parties—the slogan of the uprising was "everyone must go" (which I think everyone can relate to)—and this process of an entire society plunged into crisis while also fighting back on a very broad scale, also meant that new political possibilities were opened up.

There were factory occupations, worker, union, student, unemployed movements, neighborhood assemblies, queer and trans organizing, mutual aid networks. Everything was being challenged from below, and that organizing laid the groundwork of future struggles, all of which had women as protagonists.

So this is the context of social crisis and struggle in which people grew up, this is the history that is carried both individually and collectively, and is a key component of the mass feminist movement that emerged in Argentina over the last five to ten years.

The twenty-first century in Argentina is in many ways defined by a crisis wrought by neoliberalism. This crisis is best understood as a profound crisis of social reproduction. It is sustained by a brutal increase in feminized work, super-exploitation, the privatization of public infrastructure and services, and the restriction of their scope.

These changes have forced tasks of social reproduction (things like caring for children, the sick, and the elderly as well as work to provide food and education) into the private sphere to be carried out overwhelmingly by women, by queer and transgender people, as unpaid and obligatory labor. This vast privatization of social care has forced lower-income sectors to go into debt to pay for necessities from food to illegal abortions. So, at the same time that the country went into external debt to imperialist institutions like the International Monetary Fund, working class and poor people went into massive personal debt.

To justify all this privatization, marketization, and austerity, the state has invoked "family values," reinforcing traditional gender roles with the idea that social reproduction is the responsibility of the nuclear cis-heteropatriarchal family. Thus, economically and ideologically, neoliberalism worked to consolidate a structure of obedience, forcing us to shoulder the costs of austerity individually and privately, and to accept and normalize all the moral and ideological baggage that entailed.

It was just a matter of time before all this detonated massive resistance, which drew on the deep wellsprings of opposition over the last few decades. In 2015, the Ni Una Menos movement, which translates to Not One Less, a movement against femicide and gendered sexual and domestic violence, exploded in Argentina.

It was triggered, like many movements around violence, by specific cases that were reported in the media. One of them was the femicide of Daiana Garcia, a 19 year old who was found by the roadside in a small city in the province of Buenos Aires, with her remains stuffed inside a trash bag.

Three months later, Chiara Paez, a 14 year old and a few weeks pregnant, was discovered buried in the garden of her boyfriend's home. She had been beaten to death by her boyfriend after being forced to take medication to terminate her pregnancy. He confessed and admitted that he was helped by his mother.

In response to the murders, thousands of people took to the streets, there was a hashtag, there was an explosion of discussions around gendered violence among people, friends, in school, as well as on social media. Twenty-four hours after the big march ended, the government announced that a registry of femicides would be set up to compile statistics.

The next year, after another femicide came to light, the Ni Una Menos collective organized the first national women's mass strike, which consisted of a one-hour work and study stoppage in the early afternoon, with protesters dressed in all black. These protests became region-wide and spread and gained international momentum. There were other strikes and demonstrations in many other countries like Chile, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Spain, and Italy.

Amid the economic crisis, Ni Una Menos, and other movements, such as the abortion movement—which had been organizing for years—really took off as a very concrete struggle with demands, with a horizon, with an effect on mass consciousness. The latter eventually culminated in the legalization of abortion as a right and service as part of the country's healthcare system. The day of the victory in December 2020 was a day of mass celebration.

This struggle exemplifies how feminism in Argentina takes on a distinct collective and class dimension.

It's not just about my body, my choice, it's not about an individual right, even though those are important. The struggle rests on an understanding that my body does not exist separate from other bodies. It does not exist separate from what happens to the land, water, the planet, Indigenous struggles, police violence, and austerity imposed by our government to pay the International Monetary Fund for a debt we were not responsible for. What the feminist movement was able to do was make everything a feminist issue.

We can see this broadening that became characteristic of contemporary feminism in Argentina as a weaving together of all these different ways the Argentinian people

have experienced crisis and violence, and a weaving together of how they have experienced themselves as primary agents of political change. It has opened up new ways of thinking about what was happening in society—how we think about gender, violence, work, disenfranchisement, dispossession—and began breaking down the almost binary understandings of the domestic and the public, the streets and the neighborhoods.

I want to emphasize the importance of this because when we think about how to build a mass movement, we are often taught to think about its conciliatory element, that massivity always requires political compromise.

And while I'm not saying that there weren't or aren't debates or internal dynamics or that certain arguments didn't have to be made, I am saying that, on the whole, in Argentina, the opposite was true. The feminist movement was everywhere, both fighting around what are considered "traditional" feminist demands like gendered and sexual violence or abortion, and at the same time—and often because—it was meeting, organizing, and fighting around other demands, which are also feminist but are not traditionally thought of in that way. The key is to make everything a feminist issue.

June 12, 2023

Source: [Spectre](#).

Christian fundamentalism: a reactionary crusade in Africa

12 June 2023, by **Paul Martial**

Recent events in Uganda, where President Museveni enacted a law against homosexuals, highlight the role of Christian Right organisations in the USA, which have consistently supported homophobic campaigns in that country. An investigation by the "openDemocracy" website shows that, since 2007, these organisations have spent 280 million dollars funding activities outside the USA.

Evangelical churches and the American right

Nearly \$53 million has been devoted to African countries, most of which have a profusion of so-called evangelical churches. Deeply reactionary, they are opposed to equality between men and women, sexual relations outside marriage, contraception, abortion and, of course, homosexuality.

Based on this ideology, ultra-conservative circles in the United States and these churches worked together. In the 2000s, Janet Museveni, the wife of the Ugandan president, led a campaign for sexual abstinence, presented as the solution to the spread of HIV. At the same time, President George W. Bush launched his President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Ultra-conservative elected representatives successfully campaigned for sexual temperance to be one of the plan's central strategies, citing Uganda's alleged successes. In 2005, two-thirds of PEPFAR funds were used to promote abstinence.

Moral activists

Experts believe that the March 2009 meeting in Kampala on "The Gay Agenda. The Whole Hidden and Dark Agenda" was responsible for Uganda's first anti-homosexuality law. It was attended by the American leaders of

Exodus International and Defend the Family, anti-gay organisations.

Some organisations, such as Human Life International and Heartbeat International, intervene directly in African countries. Under the guise of humanitarian aid, Heartbeat has developed maternal health centres. Their aim is to persuade young girls and pregnant women to give up abortion. In Uganda, these centres discourage young girls from using contraception by advocating abstinence.

Family Watch International is leading campaigns in at least ten countries on the continent to ban sex education. This association organises training courses for senior government officials in African countries to teach them how to negotiate projects aimed at restoring moral order.

Political agenda

Ultra-conservatives in the USA rely on African evangelical churches to maintain the patriarchal order. These churches do not care that certain organisations such as the World Congress of Families have links with the European far right.

In countries where a growing

proportion of the population is faced with poverty, insecurity and a lack of prospects, evangelical churches serve as spiritual and sometimes material refuges. They attract millions of people and are becoming a political issue for the African governments in power. Many of the continent's governments are influenced by evangelical churches through ministers or even presidents who are members.

While the harmful role played by Islamic fundamentalists supported by the Gulf States in Africa is rightly highlighted, the role of evangelicals supported by the extreme Christian right in the USA, with similar political agendas, should not be forgotten.

8 June 2023

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

Biden Signs Debt Ceiling Bill, But Working People and Poor Pay for It

11 June 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

Biden demonstrated that he could reach a bipartisan compromise working with House Speaker Republican Kevin McCarthy. McCarthy also enhanced his reputation, proving that he could lead the Republican House and pass legislation without his extreme rightwing. The passage of the bill suggests Biden's presidential campaign will hew to the center and draw the left behind him in his wake.

Senator Bernie Sanders, veteran leader of the progressives, voted against the bill writing to his supporters, "At a time when this country is rapidly moving toward Oligarchy, with more wealth and income inequality than we've ever experienced, I could not in good conscience vote for a bill that cuts programs for the most vulnerable while refusing to ask billionaires to pay a penny more in taxes. Wall Street and corporate interests may be enthusiastic about this bill, but I believe it moves us in exactly the wrong direction."

And he criticized the bill for its failure to deal with climate change. "At a time when climate change is an existential threat to our country and the entire

world I could not, in good conscience, vote for a bill that makes it easier for fossil fuel companies to pollute and destroy the planet by fast-tracking the disastrous Mountain Valley Pipeline. When the future of the world is literally at stake, we must have the courage to stand up to the fossil fuel industry and tell them, and the politicians they sponsor, that the future of the planet is more important than their short-term profits."

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Progressive Caucus that opposed the bill, said, "Work requirements. Cuts to programs. I would never - I would never - vote for that." Yet, she commented revealingly, Democrats had to provide some votes for the bill to prevent a default that could lead to a catastrophic economic crisis, though others like herself needed to hold Republicans' feet to the fire by voting against the bill. She said that while she opposes the deal, "we're going to work as a team to make sure that we prevent default."

As the debt ceiling issue has indicated, Biden is a moderate who seeks a centrist political position, which requires keeping his left opposition in line. The bipartisan vote for the debt

ceiling bill linked to the budget was a victory for Biden's centrist politics. He declined to invoke the Fourteenth Amendment which would have allowed him to raise the ceiling without a congressional vote, as the progressives had suggested. Instead, he negotiated with the Republicans and made concessions in the form of modest cuts in social and environmental programs. Once they were sure that Biden had enough bipartisan votes, some Progressives symbolically voted against. Progressives could vote against the bill as a matter of principle, a symbolic vote, but their votes had no political impact.

Biden can now argue that he can work with Republicans to overcome divided government, that he can bring the country together. All of this suggests that in this coming presidential election, whatever their reservations, the progressives, though they will demand improvements in social programs, will end up backing Biden and working for his reelection. He can count on them. The political system remains in place, and appears to be stronger than before.

4 June 2023

The strike as a tool of feminist struggle: the example of Vertbaudet

10 June 2023, by **Anti-capitalist Feminists**

It was finally at the end of 75 days of strike, on the evening of Friday 2 June, that an agreement was reached: the strikers were victorious and the management acceded to their demands, namely an increase in wages (from 90 to 140 euros per month, depending on seniority), the hiring of 30 temporary workers on permanent contracts and no prosecution of the workers who had been on strike.

Two and a half months of struggle

Despite often more than ten years of service for most of the employees working for Vertbaudet, it was for the first time, on March 20, that they had gone on strike. Faced with a wage agreement that provided for a "0% per cent increase", simply granting a bonus of 650 euros (which would have had no impact on the calculation of pensions), the workers, who spend the day standing up, testing, preparing and packing pushchairs and sleeping bags ordered online, stopped work to demand a wage increase of 150 euros net, and the hiring of temporary workers to relieve the enormous workload.

Between a management that did not shrink from any dirty tricks to attack the strike (intimidation and threats of dismissal, instrumentalization of non-striking employees to denounce striking workers who would supposedly "tarnish" the image of the company, etc.) and the police violence that marked the movement (violent dismantling of the picket line, which led to a striker being taken to the accident and emergency service, assault on a trade unionist outside her home by plainclothes police), the strikers did not give up and managed

to impose a real relationship of forces that ended up forcing the management to crack.

The strike was also marked by the arrival on the picket line of Sophie Binet, the newly elected General Secretary of the CGT, thus giving a wider echo to the struggle of the workers. This support was strengthened in particular through the organization of a demonstration in Paris on 23 May, during which Binet said she wanted to "nationalize" the conflict if no agreement was reached by the leadership by May 26, thus announcing that she could launch the entire CGT into battle. A threat that seems to have played a role, since Vertbaudet announced a few days later the conclusion of an agreement that acceded to the demands of the strikers.

An important feminist victory

As Sophie Binet (who spoke about the struggle of women for economic independence) rightly pointed out, as did the collective behind the tribune in support of the strike published on 23 May in *Le Monde*, this struggle is also a feminist issue. The low wages of the workers, despite decades of seniority, and the contempt of the management in the face of the demands of the strikers are inseparable from the fact that the workers employed by the company are mostly women. However, as many feminist studies have already shown, the gendered organization of work does not only lead to symbolic sexist discrimination, but also makes women workers economically precarious: whether through the wage devaluation of jobs considered "female", or through the double working day that often forces women

into part-time work, they find themselves economically dominated, and often dependent on a partner's salary to survive.

Concerning the Vertbaudet struggle, the historian Fanny Gallot, a specialist in gender inequalities in working conditions, explained to *Médiapart*: "In these professions, the organization of work is based on the idea that women have no skills, that being meticulous is natural for them and is only an extension of their role as mothers. They are unqualified, their professional skills are considered as being simply natural, and, as a result, they are underpaid."

However, this precariousness of so-called female jobs has proved all the more unbearable for working women as inflation has caused the cost of living to skyrocket. It is therefore not insignificant that many of the strikers are single mothers, in a particularly precarious situation, whose salaries no longer enabled them to survive or take proper care of their children. If the success of the Vertbaudet strike is a victory for the working class, it is also a feminist victory, and it recalls, even though the circumstances were different, the success of the domestic workers of the Ibis-Batignolles hotel in Paris who, after 22 months of struggle, including eight months on strike, had managed to make the giant Accor company give way.

The strike as a tool of feminist struggle

If we support every year the strikes of March 8, driven by the international feminist strike movement, and relayed in Belgium by the March 8 Collective, we always recall the need for the

feminist movement not to be satisfied with one-off actions, but to build throughout the year a relationship of forces in order to give substance to feminist demands. With their 75 days of strike, crowned by a resounding victory, the workers of Vertbaudet give us an important lesson in the power of the strike to defend our rights.

In a context where the violence of neoliberalism seems to lock down social struggles, and where the capitalist class is determined to wage war on workers, the strikers of Vertbaudet have shown by their unfailing determination that it is only collectively that we can make the employers' powers waver, and that the strike remains an important means of struggle to make our demands heard. This victory must not be an end, but only a beginning, and give strength to other sectors to use the weapon of the strike to put forward feminist demands in the struggles for better working conditions.

The story of the struggle at Vertbaudet obviously echoes in Belgium the mobilization of the employees of Delhaize, women and men, against the restructuring plan announced on 7 March by the management of the company. Similar mechanisms can be observed in both cases: cashiers are mostly women and also suffer from having their jobs de-

qualified, viewed with contempt and low paid. At the same time, they are also at the forefront of this struggle against the voracity of the management.

Obviously, the multiple legal attacks on the movement, such as the ordinances prohibiting picketing, make it more difficult to strike. But another lesson of Vertbaudet is the importance of giving the movement a mass character, going beyond the workers of the company itself and demonstrating a more general solidarity. It is thanks in particular to the support of the CGT and the demonstration on 23 May that the strikers could build the relationship of forces that enabled them to win. In the same way, the struggle at Delhaize must not be limited to the workers of the company, but obtain the widest support of all the other sectors in struggle to establish the relationship of forces.

Mark the date of 16 June for the "Tribunal of political courage"

That the strike is a tool of feminist struggle is also shown by the movement initiated by the League of

Domestic Workers, organized around the Brussels MOC (Christian Workers' Movement), which has been bringing together undocumented workers for several years to support them in their demands for legal access to work, the possibility of filing complaints in case of abuse and violence, as well as access to Actiris training. On 16 June 2022, International Domestic Work Day, League workers went on strike (despite the difficulty of doing so when you do not have papers) in order to put forward these demands and challenge the political world during a "Parliament of domestic workers".

On 16 June 2023, they will be on strike again, and present at the Place Poelaert in Brussels for a "tribunal of political courage", in order to judge the lack of political courage of the Brussels Ministry of Employment, represented by Bernard Clerfayt, regarding the working conditions of undocumented workers. We will be there with the Anti-capitalist Feminists, and we look forward to seeing you for this important event, which will be an opportunity to hear the testimonies of domestic workers and support their struggle.

7 June 2023

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

La France insoumise, a political current with feet of clay that dominates the left

9 June 2023, by **Patrick Le Moal**

It is a shift of the centre of gravity of the left towards radical political, social and ecological positions, without being anti-capitalist.

The impact of the

2022 presidential and parliamentary elections

LFI have achieved this by coming close to being present in the second round of the 2022 presidential election in France. But this election

was very special. The alignment of the term of office of the president and the parliament from 2000 onwards was designed to give the president all the political levers. On the left, given the score of the far right (more than 30%), many votes were cast in the first round for the candidate who was likely, according to the polls, to prevent far right leader Marine Le Pen

from being present in the second round. It is by benefiting from this “useful vote” that LFI has electorally crushed the social-liberal PS, while keeping the PCF and ÉELV at the lowest levels.

If the national political impact is the product of the presidential election, the means to exist financially and politically throughout France depend on the parliamentary elections. Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s choice to boost the Nupes prevented Macron from obtaining an absolute majority in the Assembly, a first in 20 years, and limited the advance of Le Pen’s Rassemblement National (RN). At the same time, it froze the balance of forces in favour of LFI which has 67 deputies (17 in 2017) while allowing the PS and the PCF to maintain their representation (32 and 12 respectively), and the ÉELV to have a parliamentary group (16 MPs instead of 1 in 2017).

These results considerably increase the resources LFI will have for the years to come, both political and material: its financing by the state will exceed 4 million euros per year, not to mention the resources of the deputies who pay 12% of their allowance and have parliamentary attachés: the apparatus of LFI has changed scale.

LFI within the institutional left

This sequence marks an evolution in the positioning of LFI. In 2016, Mélenchon staged meetings with theorists of “left populism” such as Chantal Mouffe. If he has retained from this current the place of affects in politics as well as the vital role of the leader, the nature of the electoral programme is fundamentally different from Laclau’s theories. “L’avenir en Commun” (“The Common Future”), which largely repeats the 2017 electoral programme, presents more than 80 key measures and nearly 700 proposals, it “is the fruit of a laborious work of ideological harmonization between different sensitivities, traditions and currents” and with many interlocutors outside LFI. This is a far cry from the relationship to the Laclau programme: “the unity of the

group is [...] the result of an articulation of requests. But this articulation does not correspond to a stable and positive configuration that could be grasped as a unified whole.”

Mélenchon never broke the mould of the French left. LFI, resulting from the decantations of the institutional left, is a construction well adapted to the political system, impregnated by French republicanism, breaking with social liberalism, with structuring ecological positions.

The Nupes and its components

The small mobilization in the second round did not stop abstention in the parliamentary elections in working-class neighbourhoods. In parliament, the Nupes is an intergroup that brings together four independent groups (FI, PS, PCF, Greens), which do not always make the same choices, the same votes. In reality, there are no Nupes structures open to all, organizing unity from below, anchoring it in popular milieus. It remains only an electoral agreement.

EELV held its congress in December 2022 (12,700 members, 5,600 voting) which did not reject the Nupes, but the majority wants to rebalance the balance of power during the European elections in 2024 and is preparing an autonomous presentation. The current defending an anchorage to the left was clearly defeated, with less than 20%.

The congress of the PS in January 2023 (41,000 members, 23,200 voting) was a relative defeat for the party’s First Secretary, Olivier Faure, who had negotiated the entry into the Nupes. The party is split in two between his orientation and that which brought together many historical leaders opposed to any agreement with LFI and others who are for unity on the left, but under the leadership of the PS. The PCF congress in April 2023 (41,000 members, nearly 29,900 voting) was a victory for national secretary Fabien Roussel who had led a campaign with a workerist profile, reactionary on ecological and societal issues, on a

text that rejects the “erasure” of the PCF by associating identitarians, orthodox nostalgics for the USSR and supporters of a union of the left with the PS with a vote of 82%, marginalizing the supporters of unity with LFI.

But none of these parties is questioning this framework in the immediate future for two reasons. First of all, the extremely rare context of trade union unity in the mobilization in defence of pensions pushes in the direction of unity: whoever appears against this aspiration would be crushed. Secondly, the current parliamentary instability raises the possibility of a dissolution of the Assembly. All those who have gained MPs with the Nupes would then have too much to lose if it disappears.

LFI is at a pivotal moment. Structured around the presidential election, it is led, by its dominant position, to transform itself if it wants to maintain its leadership and consider becoming hegemonic on the left.

Absence of democratic structuring in LFI

When LFI was created in 2016, it presented itself as something other than a party, a “gaseous” movement, without national democratic structuring, without congress, without votes. Anyone can join, in a few clicks, without paying membership or dues. Hundreds of thousands of people have done so, perhaps 500,000 since its inception. During elections, tens of thousands of people make donations, which are not dues, or are “cyber-activists.”

Members join a local “Action Group” whose ideal number is set at 11 members and should not exceed 15. More than 2,800 action groups have been announced. How many members is difficult to say, since there is no congress with votes as moments of truth.

The figures of Manuel Cervera-Marzal, who has studied in depth the functioning of LFI, illustrate these

uncertainties. He estimates that “between 2018 and 2020 LFI had about 6,000 activists. By activists I mean ‘active in a support group’... a somewhat reductive definition... The figure could be revised upwards.” In November 2021 he made another approximation: “I estimate that out of 500,000 members, ten times fewer are activists in the field”. Another estimate is possible from the number of action groups, which could have more than 30,000 members.

The action groups have no finances, premises or printing equipment. There is no intermediate structure, no geographical grouping, no permanent frameworks for action and reflection where collective thinking can be developed, where decisions can be taken democratically.

Legally LFI has only three persons with full powers. It is a plebiscitary democracy with major decisions taken by a limited number of leaders, a tight formation around the leader, which allows political agility, but constitutes a very hierarchical structure, verticality of decisions cohabiting with a horizontality of members, depriving them of any possibility of influencing orientation and decisions. By rehabilitating individualism as a mark of insubordination, “the centralized character of La France Insoumise is in the image of the Jacobin structure of the French state.”

A free news site, Média, was created in 2018 by people close to LFI, while claiming to be independent. An extremely broad appeal from left-wing and far-left figures supported the initiative.

But the initial team quickly shrank, and some key figures have left. We are far from a cooperative, independent, collaborative, pluralistic media. It appeared very quickly as an organ at the service of LFI. The opportunity to create a pluralistic place is being missed. Its audience gives an idea of that of LFI: the number of daily views on YouTube is around 150,000, and weekly views around one million.

During the 2022 campaign, the “Popular Union Campaign Parliament” was created, bringing together 125 members of LFI and 125 personalities, trade unionists, intellectuals,

association leaders, leaders of struggles, chaired by Aurélie Trouvé, former spokesperson of Attac. It could have been the beginning of a process of reorganization on the left but had no existence. Enlarged during the constitution of the Nupes, it has now totally disappeared.

Pressures to structure the movement

Following the campaign, voices were raised for a new organisation of LFI. They came from intellectuals and political currents present in LFI, who pose the problems of internal democracy and the construction of a counter-hegemony, but also from grassroots activists who seek to have an organization that allows daily activism.

Clémentine Autain distinguished herself by publishing a text in which she reaffirmed the merits of LFI “breaking with the functioning of traditional parties” and made concrete proposals for “an identified leadership that could combine three levels of legitimacy: elected officials, action groups, the forces of the social and cultural movement that are committed to us”.

The economist Cédric Durand and the sociologist Razmig Keucheyan see LFI as follows: “From an agile movement, calibrated for lightning electoral battles, it must transform itself into an irresistible force, capable not only of gaining power with its allies in the Nupes, but also of succeeding in engaging in a systemic ecological and social bifurcation beyond capitalism. For this, it must structure in the long term a popular force of the social and ecological left capable of being a decisive political actor for the decades to come.”

Headed by 15 leaders from the central core, they submitted “reforms” submitted to the “representative” assembly of December 10, 2022, made up of 160 leading cadres and members chosen by lot, without any substantive debate organized throughout the movement. It obviously endorsed the

proposals and appointed Manuel Bompard, a faithful supporter of Mélenchon, to replace him in the presidency.

Regarding grassroots organization, the only novelty is to allow the coordination of action groups at the local level which can now create “departmental loops” capable, thanks to “voluntary contributions” from activists (which are not contributions materializing membership and giving rights), to have local expenses and buy premises in rural and peri-urban areas.

Chaired by Mélenchon, the Institut La Boétie has become a much more prominent place of intellectual elaboration and a tool for popular education. It brings together a large number of intellectual figures, publishes notes, fact sheets, organizes symposia and round tables and a national training school twice a year for around 70 activists. What will be the degree of openness of the leadership of the LFI, a condition for the intellectuals involved to participate in the long term?

A new leadership is put in place

The response to the demands for inclusive leadership has been a new tightening of the leadership group. At the end of the assembly a weekly leadership of 21 people, appointed by co-optation in opacity, was appointed by “consensus”. This was the hitherto informal hard core of LFI with a few people not from the inner circle, carefully discarding critical personalities. A council of about forty members was set up, to meet every four or six weeks, representing the “plurality of the movement” which closely resembles the former “Political Space” of LFI, which disappeared for lack of *raison d'être*.

Public reactions criticizing this clan functioning have been numerous, sharply denounced by Mélenchon who calls on activists to remain united. Now nicknamed the “rebels” of LFI, Clémentine Autain, François Ruffin, Alexis Corbière, Éric Coquerel and Raquel Garrido even held a joint

meeting on February 16 in Bobigny against the pension reform, with limited success.

The LFI parliamentary group brings together the historic core, without Mélenchon who decided not to stand again, elected officials with different trajectories, with very rich experiences of struggles, such as Rachel Keke, former spokesperson for the maids strike at the Ibis Batignolles hotel, Alma Dufour, environmental activist, spokesperson for Friends of the Earth from 2017 to 2021, Aurélie Trouvé, co-president of ATTAC from 2006 to 2012, then spokesperson from 2016 to 2021. It also includes elected members of the political organizations which are members of LFI, the POI and the Gauche écosocialiste.

This parliamentary group is not totally controlled by the central core of LFI. It makes decisions by majority vote on parliamentary tactics or on other matters, which are not always strictly what the leadership would have wanted. This was illustrated during the crisis that occurred when Adrien Quatennens, who Mélenchon saw as his successor, was accused of domestic violence. He acknowledged the violence and withdrew from office. Mélenchon then published a message of support "for the dignity and courage"... of Adrien Quatennens. After his four-month suspended prison sentence, the parliamentarians voted and decided on a "temporary removal from the group" for four months, and a return conditional on the commitment to follow a course concerning violence against women. His return to the parliamentary group following a secret ballot appears to many to be a serious moral and political error. Regarding the parliamentary tactics relating to the pensions counter-reform, Mélenchon again intervened publicly, to criticise the other groups in the Nupes "who have, alas aligned themselves on the

lessons on good manners given by Macronism."

On the evening of the first round of the presidential election, Mélenchon suggested that he was retiring, saying: "Do better." This openness has whetted the appetites of all those who see themselves taking his place. What will happen in the end? It's hard to know. For the moment, far from focusing on the Institut La Boétie, Mélenchon has shown he is still to be reckoned with.

The place of LFI in the pensions mobilization

LFI has a functioning focused on electoral success that does not favour the training of activists capable of playing a leading role in a trade union, an association or a unitary mobilization, which requires knowing how to work with others in the long term, to gather, debate, adapt according to the debate, decide democratically, be in the majority. It is striking to note that in these contexts there are very few LFI activists who are also very dynamic at the political level.

Indeed, those who mobilize, politicize, radicalize, organize themselves in multiple forms are neither driven nor structured by LFI. To think that these different forms could naturally be placed under its political leadership is an illusion. The friction is therefore permanent. As former CGT General Secretary Philippe Martinez said in response to Mélenchon, on forms of action, "it is not one who decides in place of all, but we talk to each other, and we decide..."

In the mobilization in defence of pensions, LFI would like its deputies to be the natural correspondents of

the struggles. But this is not the case. The totally unified inter-union coordination appears to millions of opponents of the government as the framework adapted to the needs, as Mélenchon was in the electoral field. Therefore, after the "sound and fury" of the parliamentary joust, in the demonstrations LFI is a political current like the others on the left and does not play a specific political role to organize the confrontation, which is the central question for all those who want to win.

To conclude, in the political field, in the media space, LFI is an unavoidable force. In the field of ruins that is today the political left in France, it appears as the central, decisive force. But, built on a fragile foundation, it is unable to assume the responsibility of working on the organization of the camp of the dominated.

Those at the bottom need much more than just an organized movement to win elections. What is sorely lacking today is a hegemonic political force on the left, which offers an alternative to capitalism, which effectively structures the exploited and oppressed, in their workplaces, in their neighbourhoods, which links the struggles against capitalist exploitation, the ecological crisis, and oppressions into an emancipatory whole, which puts the broadest democracy at the centre of its practices.

LFI is far from that! And for the moment, the reorganization measures that aim only to maintain an electoral machine are far from being commensurate with the stakes of the period.

*Rouen, 5 May 2023, this article was originally written for **Viento Sur**.*

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

"What did each of us do to stop this

nightmare?"

8 June 2023, by Igor Paskar

Almost a year has gone by since I carried out this action. During that year, I pictured this moment time and again, the moment when I would be given the opportunity to make my final statement. I agonised over the words I would say, and the motives that drove me to act as I did.

During the last sitting, your honour, you asked whether I regret my actions. I understood that the extent of my professed regret would influence the severity of the sentence. But if I renounced my beliefs, I would be acting against my conscience.

On the contrary, **during the time I have been in prison, I have seen first-hand the injustices perpetrated against the people who we call our brothers: both prisoners of war who have served in the Ukrainian armed forces and ordinary Ukrainian citizens.**

The war – or whatever term we use to label it – came to their homes, destroying their lives as they knew them. No matter what slogans and geopolitical interests we use to varnish this, in my eyes it can not be justified.

Do I regret what has happened? Yes, perhaps I'd wanted my life to turn out differently – but I acted according to my conscience, and my conscience remains clear.

Rather than reflecting on who is right and who is guilty, I would like to pose this question: what did each of us do to stop this nightmare? What, ten or fifteen years from now, will we tell our children and grandchildren about these troubled times?

Unfortunately, God has not granted me the joy of fatherhood; the people

who were closest to me have gone, and I am left alone with myself. It was easy for me to do what I did, even though I was well aware of the consequences. There was no-one to agonise about my fate, no-one to worry about me, or to cheer me on. But what I really did not expect was the huge number of letters and messages of support that I have received.

People have written from every corner of Russia, and not only Russia. Many were grateful for my position, so completely at odds with the notion of unanimous national support for what is being perpetrated. There were so many messages of encouragement: "stay strong", "don't despair". So many warm words, so much sympathy.

But I'll be so bold as to read just one part of a letter that I received in May, which really touched me, and pushed me to write this final statement to the court. Here it is:

"There is very little left of everyday life. It turns out that we can't live everyday lives any more. I am listening to the memoirs of prisoners from the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Right now I'm on the breathtaking biography of [the actress] Tamara Petkevich [who spent seven years in a prison camp]. She was arrested in 1943, and lived until 2017. When they came for her she was only 22 – just a girl, half the age I am now. I have not read Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, and I never got round to Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* either. But now I'm listening to Petkevich, and it's making me realise that this is exactly what we must listen to, what we must read at school. As a country we are obsessed with the

past, but we hardly ever think about the present or the future. The Americans have their American dream: something to strive for. We have nothing but a fixation on that which happened long ago, that which can not return. But time and again we try to bring back what has passed, and these attempts are absolutely pointless. It's as though the whole country is stuck in the mud. As individuals we are caught in our feelings. It's terrible that even now, for as long as we stubbornly turn our heads back, we will never live happily, never the way we want to. Let's hope people can find happiness in the little things."

You can support Igor Paskar by sending letters:

□ Address: Russia 344022, Rostov-on-Don, 219 Maksim Gorky street, SIZO-1, Igor Konstantinovich Paskar (d.o.b. 1976).

□ You can send letters on line via the volunteer service RosUznik.

Solidarity Zone gives full support to Igor Paskar. His legal representative is Felix Vertegel.

Note. Letters sent to Russian detention facilities that are not in Russian are unlikely to be delivered to prisoners, and Rosuznik is also a Russian-language service. If you send short messages to Igor via Solidarity Zone supporters in the UK at 2022ukrainesolidarity@gmail.com, we will arrange for them to be translated and passed on.

Russian original of Igor Paskar's statement [here](#).

Source [Solidarity Zone](#)

Normalizing Bashar al-Assad's Regime

7 June 2023, by **Joseph Daher**

MBS declared that he was “happy to welcome President Bashar al-Assad,” hoping that “Syria’s return to the Arab League would lead to an end to the Syrian crisis” and turn the page on “painful years of struggle.” During his speech at the summit, Assad called for “joint Arab action for solidarity, peace in the region, development and prosperity instead of war and destruction,” before meeting with MBS.

Earlier that same day, he shook hands with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, met with his Tunisian counterpart Kaïs Saïed, as well as with the Emirati Vice President, Sheikh Mansour ben Zayed. While the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has championed the normalization of Damascus since 2018 and reportedly invited Bashar al-Assad to COP28, Saudi Arabia has played the key role in opening the door for Syria’s return to the League. Saudi Arabia accelerated the process after the earthquake by opening talks with Iran, which culminated in the official restoration of diplomatic ties brokered by China between Tehran and Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia and the other Arab states are dropping their isolation of Assad merely to stabilize the region under their collective authoritarian rule over brutally unequal societies.

No Concessions from Damascus

Damascus had granted no real concessions in exchange for its return to the Arab League. League members expected but did not require Assad to allow the return of Syrian refugees without retributions, create a credible political process that will lead to elections, and enact measures to stop the smuggling of narcotics from Syria into neighboring countries.

We should be skeptical about these expectations, as they are largely for show. Assad’s regime has no intentions on delivering on any of them. Just recently, the Access Center for Human Rights documented that his regime paid human smugglers between \$150 and \$3000 per person to take Syrian refugees deported by Beirut back to Lebanon.

The other Arab states will certainly not put any pressure on Damascus to meet any expectation of democratization, as they are not themselves “beacons of democracy,” to say the least. They are little interested in the wellbeing of the popular classes in their own countries, let alone in Syria. These expectations are mainly for the US and European states’ consumption.

The US has officially denounced the normalization of Assad, but has been unable to stop the region’s states from rekindling ties with Damascus. However, a new bill introduced in May 2023 called the “Assad Regime Anti-Normalization Act of 2023” seeks to expand the list of targets for its Caesar sanctions to include all members of the Syrian parliament, senior members of the ruling Baath Party, and those responsible for diverting international humanitarian aid.

The bill also takes aim at a US-backed effort to send Jordanian electricity and Egyptian gas to Lebanon via a transnational pipeline that runs through Syria. The Syrian government would receive in-kind compensation in the form of gas supplies, rather than cash, for its participation in the stalled four-country energy project. The bill would amend the Caesar Act to make such in-kind transactions with Damascus sanctionable.

In the EU, there are also signs of opposition by some European states that oppose normalization, the lifting

of sanctions, and any disbursement of funds for reconstruction before a political transition. On the other hand, several other countries, including Italy, Greece, Romania, Cyprus and Austria, are in favor of normalization with Damascus in hopes of sending refugees back to Syria.

Cracking Down on Drug Smugglers

In contrast to the regime’s intransigence on refugees and democratization, it has shown some flexibility on cracking down on the smuggling of the drug captagon, an addictive stimulant. But even on this it will face some resistance from within the regime.

Much of the captagon production and distribution is controlled by the Syrian Army’s Fourth Division and its affiliated Syrian businessmen. Over the last decade, its captagon operation, especially smuggling of the drug abroad, has exploded, turning it into a lucrative part of Syria’s war economy—estimated to be worth billions of dollars a year.

The Saudis, however, are intent on cracking down on all this. Between 2016 and 2022, they foiled attempts to smuggle more than 600 million amphetamine pills from Lebanon. And Assad has signaled willingness to cooperate. Thus, at a meeting hosted by Jordan in May 2023 with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Egypt, Damascus agreed to “take the necessary steps to stop smuggling across the borders with Jordan and Iraq” and to work to identify producers and transporters of narcotics.

In May, two airstrikes, most likely ordered by Jordan, targeted drug trafficking operations in Syria, one of them assassinating the notorious Syrian drug lord Merhi al-Ramthan

and his family. In addition, Damascus has carried out a spate of arrests targeting drug traders in southern Syria. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has promised financial aid of up to \$4 billion according to some sources to Syria in exchange for reducing and controlling captagon production and smuggling.

Saudi Arabia's Shifting Foreign Policy Strategy

The rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Syria has been developing for several years. In May 2021, Syria's Minister of Tourism, Rami Martini, took the regime's first official visit to the Saudi kingdom since the uprising over ten years ago. Saudi Arabia's reasons for rehabilitating Damascus are connected to its national interests and regional dynamics.

The normalization process is a product of Saudi Arabia's evolving political strategy in the region. MBS's confrontational foreign policy, exemplified by the kingdom's deadly war in Yemen and its policy of maximum pressure against Iran and its regional allies, has been a failure.

This policy became a political obstacle to Riyadh's plans to reform the economy, attract foreign investors, and open the country to tourists. It has sought, therefore, to establish more cordial relations with its neighbors. It began to shift in this direction, ending its confrontation with Qatar and currying favor with Turkey's Erdogan. In March of 2023, it deposited \$5 billion in Turkey's central bank to boost the country's economy. Saudi Arabia's strategic reorientation culminated this April in it establishing diplomatic relations with Iran through China's mediation.

Since then, both states have affirmed their willingness to work together for "security, stability and prosperity" in the Middle East. This pact is particularly important for Saudi Arabia to stabilize Yemen and prevent security threats at its southern border. The rapprochement will allow the two countries to reopen their embassies

and to implement economic and security cooperation agreements signed more than 20 years ago.

Economic Reform as the Underlying Objective

These foreign policy shifts are driven by the Kingdom's need to focus on economic reforms and objectives laid out in its Vision 2030, which sets as a goal ending dependence on fossil fuels and securing \$100 billion in annual FDI by the end of the decade.

Saudi Arabia had faced real challenges before its recent foreign policy shift. FDI flows had dropped from a 200 percent increase between 2018 and 2019 to a 20 percent increase between 2019 and 2020. The ruling regime hopes to reverse this decline by luring more investors based on normalizing its relations with the region and stabilizing its crises.

Its key aim in economic diversification is the development of its tourism sector. Riyadh intends to reach 100 million visitors per year in 2030 and open 315,000 new hotel rooms to accommodate them. In March 2023, it launched a new airline, Riyadh Air, which aims to serve 100 international destinations.

The kingdom hopes to direct investment into mega-cities such as NEOM, the Red Sea Project, and Qiddiya, which is projected to be an international entertainment hub, including a Six Flags theme park. The Saudi monarchy promises to plow a staggering \$1 trillion into the tourism sector over the next decade.

It has already poured money into the archaeological site of al-Ula, which had been abandoned for decades, to attract visitors. It is creating other tourist destinations from scratch, such as the luxurious Red Sea Project, which covers 17,400 miles along the west coast, and the Trojena ski resort in the heart of the futuristic metropolis NEOM, which will host the 2029 Asian Winter Games.

By developing its economy in this fashion, the monarchy hopes to

compete with other Gulf countries, which are also building enormous tourist industries. Qatar hosted the 2022 World Cup for the first time in the Arab world, while Expo 2020 was held in Dubai, which received more than 12 million international tourists last year.

Riyadh is carrying out all of this development in classic neoliberal fashion. It has announced Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) for many government services, including more traditionally state-run sectors such as education, housing, and health. The Financial Times described the plans as "Saudi Thatcherism."

In April 2023, MBS launched four new "special economic zones" (SEZs) in order to establish non-traditional industries, particularly related to tourism, IT, renewable energy, and logistics, while offering competitive tax rates for businesses, as well as exemption from customs duties on imports, production equipment, and raw materials. The new economic strategy places private capital at the center of the future Saudi economy.

Multipolarity and Regional Authoritarian Stability

Saudi Arabia's final reason for its shift toward normalization of relationships is the perception that Washington can no longer be trusted to provide regional security. The kingdom does not view the US as a reliable hegemon after its defeat in Iraq, failure to protect its allies against popular uprisings, and its increasingly critical posture toward Riyadh.

With the relative decline of US power in the region, other imperialist forces such as China and Russia have asserted their own interests. Regional powers like Iran, Turkey, Qatar, as well as Saudi Arabia have done the same, pursuing their aims, balancing between the rival imperialist powers, and sometimes openly defying the US. The Saudi leadership's decision to cut oil production and maintain high oil

prices even at the cost of triggering inflation encapsulates its new independence from Washington.

In this new scenario, the regional powers are all determined to consolidate a form of authoritarian stability. Despite their persistent rivalries, the states want to lessen their open conflicts, improve their economies, and thereby bolster their rule all to avoid a repeat of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

Thus, Qatar put aside its objections and allowed Damascus to return to the Arab League to avoid angering the leadership in Riyadh and other Arab capitals. Qatar has also been steadily mending ties with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain.

Syria, Turkey, and Kurdish Self-Determination

Similarly, Turkey has started a process of normalization with the Syrian regime. Thus, in May, the foreign ministers of Russia, Syria, Turkey, and Iran met in Moscow for high-level talks on rebuilding connections between Ankara and Damascus.

Ankara's shift is motivated by two main objectives. Firstly, Erdogan sought to gain votes ahead of the 2023 Presidential elections by accelerating the forced return of Syrian refugees to Syria. Over the past two years, there has been a rise in racist and xenophobic attacks against Syrians in Turkey, and Erdogan has deported thousands of them.

During the election campaign, the opposition candidate Kilicdaroglu adopted an even more severe stance, promising to expel greater numbers. By contrast, Erdogan and his Foreign Minister Çavusoglu stated that there he had worked out a roadmap with the Syrian regime for the return of the refugees developed following their meeting in Moscow.

The other motive for Erdogan's rapprochement with Syria is their shared determination to deny Kurdish

aspirations for autonomy. In 2022, Erdogan stated that "it is necessary to finish what has been started" and escalate the deployment of the Turkish army and Syrian proxies against Kurdish forces in Syria.

Already their joint operations in the Afrin region in 2018 led to massive violations of human rights and the forced displacement of approximately 137,000 people, predominantly Kurdish residents. Erdogan successfully used these threats of new military operations against Kurds in Syria to whip up Turkish nationalism and defeat his opponent in the runoff election.

But it remains unclear whether Syria will deliver for Turkey. For its part, Assad's regime has declared that no progress in the relations between the two countries will occur without the end of the Turkish military presence in Syria.

Turkey remains frustrated with Damascus's inability to meet its demands for the return of Syrian refugees and putting an end to Kurdish rule in northeast Syria, also known as "Rojava." The Syrian regime is politically, economically, and militarily too weak to intervene in the north and it sees the return of millions of refugees as a political and security threat, and an additional economic weight it cannot bear.

No Hope for Syrian Reconstruction through Normalization

Assad's re-integration into the Arab League will not facilitate reconstruction and economic recovery in Syria. While sanctions remain a significant obstacle to attract foreign investments, they are not the only one. There are several others.

First, Syria lacks a secure and stable economic condition, making it far too risky for local and foreign corporations to invest in the country. Second, Damascus has proved itself incapable of preventing the constant depreciation of the Syrian pound,

further undermining investors' willingness to set up operations. Third, the country does not have functioning infrastructure and Damascus has not invested funds to rebuild it, instead diverting most of its expenditures to the war effort, public sector wages, and subsidies, but even these are declining.

Fourth, the country simply lacks the funds to invest. Deposits in private banks dropped from \$13.87 billion in 2010 to \$1.9 billion in 2022. Finally, the country suffers from a shortage of skilled labor, which is exacerbated by high rates of emigration by young graduates.

In this situation, Damascus will try to use the normalization process to secure aid and investment. But any reconstruction under Assad's regime will not serve the country's popular classes.

Its policies are not designed to remedy the country's economic problems and social inequalities. Instead, it prioritizes consolidating its own despotic power, ensuring its security, and using disbursed funds to curry favor with its clientelist supporters.

Inequality and injustice are at the heart of the Syrian regime's policies, and no amount of funds it secures will make this leopard change its spots. It will merely use them to bolster its manipulation of state assets, carry out crony privatization, and complete the neoliberal deregulation of the economy.

All of this will be done to the detriment of the country's popular classes. Seeing a country where 90 percent of the population live below the poverty line, few refugees and IDPs will return willingly to the country, and those who are forced to do so will find themselves in desperate conditions and abject destitution.

The normalization of Syria thus serves the interests of Bashar al-Assad and his despotic regime rather than the country's people. It also serves the interests of authoritarian leaders throughout the region who are determined to secure their power and crush the last remnants of the waves of struggle for social transformation

There Can Be No Peace in Sudan Without the Democratic Empowerment of Its People

6 June 2023, by **Muzan Alneel**

Over the last month, Sudan has been convulsed with violence as a power struggle between two rival military leaders erupted into full-scale warfare. Hundreds of people have been killed and thousands more injured, with more than three hundred thousand Sudanese displaced from their homes.

The rival claimants to power are Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemeti. The two men previously joined forces in October 2021 to stage a military coup and clamp down brutally on Sudan's revolutionary movement that was struggling for democracy. Now they have turned their guns on each other.

The descent into violence discredits the approach of the US and other Western governments that legitimized the coup instigators and sought to build a negotiating process around them. This did not begin after the coup: since 2019, international diplomats had strongly supported a partnership setup that kept the two generals in power, claiming that it would result in a transition to civilian rule.

But the resistance committees that brought down the dictatorship of Omar al-Bashir are organizing on the ground to protect communities from the ravages of the latest conflict. It is their efforts that are sowing the seeds of a better future for the people of Sudan.

Descent Into War

For weeks, the militarization of the Sudanese capital Khartoum had been escalating significantly. Soldiers and

military vehicles belonging to the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were already a familiar sight in the capital and many other Sudanese cities, even before the coup of 2021 took place. The RSF is a paramilitary force that has its origins in the Janjaweed militias deployed in Darfur.

Yet the recent escalation was different. It stood in stark contrast to the official news of progress in negotiations between the military and civilian ex-partners of the failed transitional government. The key matters for discussion included the issue of merging the SAF and the RSF.

On the morning of April 15, fighting broke out between the SAF, under al-Burhan's command, and Hemeti's RSF. In less than four hours, the army's fighter jets were bombing the capital. It is important to understand that both parties to the fighting have their buildings located in the middle of residential areas. That includes the army headquarters and several RSF buildings that had been turned into barracks, which made the capital a ticking time bomb.

The slogan of the protesters, "army to the barricades, RSF to be dissolved," was no longer simply a call for the military factions to be removed from political decision-making. It was a demand for the physical removal of the military and all militias from residential areas as well.

Popular Power

For more than a year, since the coup on October 25, 2021, the Sudanese resistance front has organized weekly

protests led by neighborhood resistance committees. The demonstrators chant slogans calling for free education and health care, public safety, the army's return to barracks, and the dissolution of the RSF (in Arabic: **السلامة العامة، العودة للجيش إلى barracks، dissolution of the RSF**).
السلامة العامة، العودة للجيش إلى barracks، dissolution of the RSF

The international diplomats who invested their efforts in advocating and facilitating talks and agreements with the coup perpetrators judged these demands to be unrealistic and immature. However, the resistance committees continued their work on the ground, protesting in the streets to reduce the ability of the coup regime to legitimize itself, as well as engaging in a countrywide deliberation process charting the future they seek for Sudan.

More than eight thousand neighborhood resistance committees engaged in the process that produced the Revolutionary Charter for the Establishment of People's Power. This was a document that included a road map for rebuilding the government from the bottom up, starting from local councils, all the way to a national legislative body that would select and oversee the executive.

The committees presented this agenda as a path to sustainable peace that would address the core issues of the Sudanese people and allow them equal access to political decision-making. Career politicians from the national and international elites ignored or even ridiculed their vision.

Self-Aid

When the fighting broke out, it was the experiences and tools of popular organizing that came to the rescue of the Sudanese people. Khartoum's neighborhood resistance committees issued a joint statement on the second day clarifying their position: "We are not impartial as we are engaged in peaceful struggle against the militarization of our country."

The statement branded al-Burhan and Hemeti as enemies of the Sudanese revolution and urged the people to organize to provide for themselves. This remains the popular view, even though the SAF and the RSF have both engaged in propaganda campaigns to equate their own cause with that of the Sudanese people and their revolution.

The fact that the SAF and the RSF have borrowed the language and slogans of the revolution to advocate for their war is a clear sign of how the revolutionary organizations, while ignored by most international bodies, have transformed politics in Sudan. Yet these propaganda campaigns have encountered little success, as the reality of people's needs on the ground remained the priority for the resistance front.

No Quick Victory

Fighting continued despite SAF statements promising a quick win over the "rebels," while the RSF boasted about its progress against the "coup forces." In reality, there was no speedy end to the fighting in sight.

The RSF took over more areas in the capital, including hospitals, areas where medical supplies were being stored, and power-supply stations. The SAF showed minimum regard for human life as it focused on the use of air strikes, with homes and schools bearing the brunt of the war.

The army's priority was to regain control over the presidential palace and the national radio station. It did not make the same effort to evict RSF forces from hospitals, power stations, or other institutions that actually have

a direct impact on people's lives and well-being.

The Sudanese army has controlled the lion's share of the country's budget and resources for decades. It has revealed itself to be yet another governmental institution weakened by corruption, inefficiency, and the rise of a private sector substitute — in this case, the RSF militia.

"No to War, Yes to the People"

On the ground, neighborhood groups were created on messaging apps such as WhatsApp, focusing on the provision of services for the residents of their neighborhoods. This work included providing updates on what shops and bakeries were open and the availability of water and electricity sources, as well as information on safe routes and assistance with evacuations from high-risk areas.

As the fighting continued and the fragile infrastructure of Khartoum collapsed, these groups started operating previously closed health centers as a substitute for hospitals that were now impossible to reach. As the capital's residents fled to other regions, similar groups and neighborhood resistance committees around the country set about organizing to provide the displaced people with housing, food, and medication when needed.

Along the roads linking Khartoum to other states, groups of youngsters stationed themselves offering water and snacks for travelers and inviting them to stay in their villages. When thousands of displaced Sudanese found themselves stuck at the Egyptian border in the north with no international organizations present to assist them, several popular initiatives came to their support. The resistance committee of the nearest city, Dongola, organized a convoy to reach the border and provide for them.

Back in Khartoum, the newly formed emergency rooms communicated with technicians to restore power supply in areas damaged by the war. These examples and many others show that

on the ground, resistance committees have combined the slogan "no to war" with practical assistance for the Sudanese people, relying on their own power.

Diplomatic Disasters

International diplomats also fled the city, moving to the new temporary capital of Port Sudan. Without having critically examined their previous efforts, they continued talks with both combatants, announcing one failed ceasefire after another. The Sudanese people ridiculed their efforts, joking about how each "ceasefire" simply resulted in more violence than the previous one.

It was the very same diplomats who foisted a failed "partnership agreement" with the military upon the Sudanese people, as well as the Juba peace agreement, from which we can draw direct links to the coup. Having legitimized the generals with their coups and wars, they still somehow consider themselves experts with the capacity to end the violence, although they have never been held accountable for their previous failures. This makes any hope for a positive intervention from the international community tenuous to say the least.

This statement holds true not only for Sudan but also for many other conflict zones where the corrupt logic of international diplomacy has prioritized deals with war criminals over addressing the root causes of injustice and conflict. In the name of "realism," diplomats supported a setup that left the leaders of the SAF and the RSF in control of Sudan's weapons and wealth while somehow expecting that they would not utilize that control to expand their power.

A truly realistic and sustainable approach is being created by the people of Sudan in the face of the war. As the Sudanese people take control of their own lives and resources, the power and wealth available for the generals to fight over will diminish. In this revolutionary scenario, there can be an end to the war as popular power organizes itself into a countrywide

resistance front.

Support for the Sudanese people in this struggle will never come from the existing international organizations, which have no interest in real democracy that serves the popular

will. The people of Sudan can only ask for help from fellow revolutionaries and fighters for peace and justice, demanding accountability and ethical guidelines for the work of international diplomacy. The backing of our comrades around the world is

vital to ensure that no international intervention imposes further destruction on Sudan. The central slogan remains “no to war, yes to the people.”

Source [Jacobin](#).

Pro-independence victories in French Polynesia

5 June 2023, by **Léon Crémieux**

Since it was founded in 1977 around Oscar Temaru, the FLP (Front de libération de la Polynésie), then Tavini huira’atira, has fought for decolonisation and independence for the 300,000 inhabitants of the archipelago known as French Polynesia. This struggle led to the country being reinstated on the UN list of territories to be decolonised, and above all to the fight against nuclear testing.

The nuclear issue

With French Polynesia, French imperialism has an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 4.5 million km², i.e. almost 40% of the total surface area of 11.6 million km², making France the largest EEZ ahead of the United States. France has always blocked any process of independence and retains regal control over the territory (currency, justice, army and police, diplomacy).

As far as nuclear testing is concerned, France, forced by the revolution to stop testing in southern Algeria in 1966, decided to impose 193 aerial and then underground explosions on Polynesia from 1966 to 1996, after considering the French Alps, Corsica, Réunion and New Caledonia. While Polynesia’s Gaullist and autonomist right-wingers have always supported the tests and the heavy presence of a garrison economy (through the Pacific Test Centre bringing together 10,000 metropolitan French and thousands of

Polynesians), Tavini has always fought nuclear testing, even bringing a complaint against France for crimes against humanity before the ICC in 2018.

Spectacular results

Although Oscar Temaru, the main founder of Tavini huira’atira-FLP in 1977, has been President of Polynesia on several occasions since 2004, there has never been a stable pro-independence majority in the Territorial Assembly. The 2023 election saw the autonomist camp (Edouard Fritch’s Tapura and Gaston Flosse’s Taho’era’a) collapse from 77% of the vote in 2018 to 38.5% in 2023, while the Tavini increased from 23.1% to 44.3%. The Polynesian electoral system, with a bonus for the list that comes first, gives 38 seats out of 57 to the Tavini, and the post of President of Polynesia, which holds executive power (elected by the Assembly), has just gone to Moetai Brotherson.

These spectacular results can be explained less by a sudden surge in the demand for independence than by the rejection of the Fritch-Flosse system, local supporters of Macron and the Republicans, with its calamitous management of the pandemic and, above all, a serious worsening of living conditions for the population. In fact, the Tavini’s

activity and campaign have focused on purchasing power, demonstrating its solid base among the working classes of the archipelago.

Major social crisis

Even before inflation soared in 2022, Polynesians were living in a deplorable economic situation, with salaries on average 40% lower than in France and a cost of living 40% higher, due in particular to the heavy burden of imports, including the fuel used to power the thermal power stations. The situation has only worsened over the past year, with official inflation forecast at 8.5% for 2022, but the cost of food and energy is much higher. Average values do not reflect the incomes of a large proportion of the population, with one in two people of working age out of work. The poverty rate was officially 21.9% in 2019. In 2015, families living below the poverty line had an average of €1,200 for a household of six people.

Polynesia’s social and tax system is managed by local laws: there is no income tax, inheritance tax or wealth tax, and corporation tax can be easily circumvented, all of which greatly limits resources for social redistribution and maintains serious social inequalities. The latest “family budget” survey carried out by the ISPF (French Polynesia Institute of Statistics) in 2015 showed a society twice as unequal as in France: the

richest 10% enjoy incomes on average nine times higher than the poorest 10%.

Nuclear - an ongoing problem

Despite Macron's grand declarations on the "nuclear debt", the consequences of 30 years of nuclear testing have still not been dealt with by France, which is blocking the vast majority of compensation claims,

playing down the proportion of the population affected by radiation, as well as their descendants, and failing to take into account the heavy burdens borne by the Polynesian Social Security Fund. In 2021, the Fund estimates that it will have spent 670 million euros on radiation-induced illnesses, while Polynesian women between the ages of 40 and 50 have the highest rate of thyroid cancer in the world. This issue will undoubtedly be one of the first to be raised by the new majority in the Assembly.

It is clear that while the pro-independence movement intends to keep the country on course for independence in the medium term (10 to 15 years), its political line is to impose a partnership that will force France to take its debt into account and move forward with a process that will create the economic and social conditions for independence.

1 June 2023

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

Hope is shipwrecked: Erdogan's regime wins again

4 June 2023, by **Uraz Aydin**

The reactionary bloc wins the majority in parliament

The bloc formed around Recep Tayyip Erdogan is probably one of the most reactionary coalitions in the country's political history. Already, since 2015, the AKP had been in alliance with the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). For this election Erdogan included in his bloc the Islamist party Yeniden Refah, led by Fatih Erbakan, son of the historic leader of political Islam in Turkey, Necmettin Erbakan.

Another more Islamist wing of the far right, the Great Union Party (BBP) also forms part of Erdogan's camp. This bloc was also joined by HÜDA-PAR, the legal party of Hezbollah in Turkey, mainly established in the Kurdish region and which in the 1990s had been used as an armed force by the Turkish Gladio against the PKK and had committed numerous massacres. The regime will try to use this organization to break the hegemony of the Kurdish political movement, which has maintained

itself despite a level of fierce repression since 2015.

During the legislative elections of 14 May, which were held at the same time as the first round of the presidential elections, the pro-Erdogan bloc obtained, with 49.4 per cent of the votes, 323 deputies (out of 600). Although his votes were down compared to the election of 2018 when he obtained 344 deputies, Erdogan still has the majority in parliament which allows him to adopt or prevent bills. The results obtained by the AKP were also down, but the MHP, which was estimated to have fallen to 6-7 per cent, almost regained its 2018 level, reaching 10 per cent. However it should be noted that the bloc came first in almost all the cities of the earthquake zone.

A defeat for the opposition

Opposite this bloc was the Alliance of the Nation, whose main party is the Republican People's Party (CHP), a centre-left party whose origins lie in the foundation of the Republic. The other "big party" in this bloc is Meral

Akşener's Good Party (İYİP), which is a far-right split, representing a more secular nationalism than the MHP, but trying to reposition itself towards the centre-right.

Also part of this alliance are two parties whose leaders were previously leaders of the AKP, one led by Ahmet Davutoğlu, former Prime Minister, and the other by Ali Babacan, former Minister of Economy. Finally, the Saadet Partisi (SP), which comes from the historical current of Islamism from which the AKP emerged, also participates in this bloc, as well as another small right-wing party.

Politically, this opposition alliance defends a return to a parliamentary regime (abolished by Erdogan in 2017 following a referendum) and the recovery of the economy through a restored neoliberalism with certain "social" traits. With 35.4 per cent of the vote, the opposition bloc obtained 212 deputies, 23 more seats than in the previous election.

The parties of Babacan and Davutoğlu, as well as the SP, whose candidates were presented under the CHP lists, seem to have contributed 3 per cent to the results of the CHP. These right-

wing parties thus obtain 40 seats, while they only brought in 22 more. The eligible places reserved for right-wing candidates in these lists had sparked debate among the rank and file of the CHP.

Nationalist turn of the opposition after the first round

During the 14 May presidential election, despite all the opposition's predictions, Erdogan won 49.5 per cent of the vote, thus beating the leader of the Alliance of the Nation by 5 points, the latter only receiving 44.8 per cent. Given the importance of the President of the Republic in the autocratic system, Kılıçdaroğlu's victory was decisive for regime change. He led a campaign that was able to embrace large sectors of the population. The fact that he is an Alevi Kurd (a minority stream of Islam seen as a heresy by traditional Sunnism) had generated debate, with many believing that he could not unify the opposition. However, the leader of the CHP led a campaign proudly claiming his adhesion to Alevism and calling for a reconciliation of the population of Turkey in the face of the polarizing policies of Erdogan.

A third candidate, Sinan Ogan, an ultra-nationalist from the ranks of the MHP, won 5.2 per cent. He was the candidate of a small nationalist, anti-migrant and anti-Kurdish bloc, who refused to support Kilicdaroglu, in particular because the latter was also supported by the pro-Kurdish party HDP. He thus held a crucial position for the second round.

In order to be able to rally the electorate of Ogan, Kilicdaroglu, himself a candidate from a bloc made up of various centre-left, conservative, Islamist and far-right currents, thus operated a nationalist turn.

He argued that, in the context of a victory for Erdogan, 10 million new migrants would arrive in the country, that the cities would be under the control of refugees and the mafia, that

young girls would no longer be able to walk around on their own, that violence against women was going to increase (because of the refugees) and that finally Erdogan was going to make concessions in the face of "terrorism" (therefore of the Kurdish movement). He was thus trying to ride the (massive, among Turks and Kurds) anti-migrant wave by declaring that he was going to send them all back to their own country, but also to reverse Erdogan's main argument during his campaign, that the opposition supposedly supported the "terrorism" of the PKK.

Indeed, the fact that the HDP (pro-Kurdish left) supported Kilicdaroglu, himself Kurd and Alevi, and that it promised to release Selahattin Demirtaş (former HDP leader, imprisoned for seven years) had been Erdogan's main angle of attack against the opposition. After having maintained a more democratic discourse before the first round, Kilicdaroglu ended up criticizing Erdogan himself for having conducted negotiations with the Kurdish movement (in 2009-2014).

Eventually Ogan preferred to express his support for Erdogan, but the most prominent party in the bloc for which Ogan had been a candidate, the Victory Party, whose main political stance was anti-migrant nationalism, declared its support for Kilicdaroglu. On this, the latter signed a protocol with this party, where the anti-migrant position was reaffirmed but which also promised (within the framework of the laws) the continuation of the appointments of administrators in place of HDP mayors in the Kurdish region, who were accused of having links with the PKK (about fifty municipalities are concerned by this). While in the initial programme of the opposition it was a question of new elections for the town halls concerned... Although the HDP protested this decision, it continued to call to vote for Kilicdaroglu, but the percentage of participation in Kurdistan, which was already below Turkey's average in the first round, fell further in the second round. Despite everything, the opposition candidate emerged a winner in all the towns of the Kurdish region.

HDP, TIP and the "Work and Freedom" Alliance

Another opposition alliance was the one called "Work and Freedom," made up of the HDP (Democratic People's Party, left-wing party from the Kurdish movement), the TIP (Workers' Party of Turkey, in which our comrades of the Fourth International are active) as well as four other formations of the radical left. For the presidential elections this coalition supported Kılıçdaroğlu. For the presidential elections the HDP participated in the elections under the name of its "replacement party", against the probability that it would be banned, the Green-Left Party (YSP).

The TIP did not present itself in the cities where the HDP had a large majority (Turkish Kurdistan) and in some where it risked losing deputies to the HDP and the CHP; it submitted slates in 52 out of 81 cities. The fact that the TIP wanted to run within the alliance but with independent slates in some cities is a question that has generated a lot of debate. For the HDP, the TIP should have included its candidates in the lists of the YSP; its opinion was that having two competing lists within the same alliance would divide the votes and lose potential elected representatives.

The TIP had another proposal. The party had been observing an influx of members for several months. It had quadrupled its membership since mid-January, going from 10,000 to 40,000 members in four months, in particular because of its mobilization in solidarity with the city of Hatay (Antioch), seriously affected by the earthquake. This participation, but above all the sympathy that was expressed towards the party and its elected representatives, who for five years had led a very combative policy, came from political and social sectors that were largely different from those who had previously voted for the HDP. An important part came from the left of the CHP, but also from an electorate which previously voted for the right but which (especially through the elected representatives of

the TIP) discovered a combative left, which does not mince its words vis-a-vis the ruling circles and gives a prominent place to workers' rights. It was clear that the TIP could not channel all of these votes to the HDP-YSP lists. So its proposal was that the alliance candidates present themselves in certain cities under the TIP lists (even if it meant putting HDP candidates at the top of the list) and thus having a plurality of candidacy tactics according to the demographic, ethnic and social specificities of the localities. This would have increased the results of the alliance at the national level, but also the number of elected representatives. In the end, the two parties failed to agree on this tactic, mismanaged the controversy (which had negative repercussions on the networks) and the TIP ended up presenting itself with its own lists in fifty cities. Among the TIP lists there were also candidates from two Trotskyist currents, the Workers' Democracy Party (IDP) and the International Workers' Solidarity Association (UID-DER).

The HDP-YSP obtained 8.8 per cent in the legislative elections, 3 per cent less than in the previous ones. It is still too early to make substantial analyses, but it seems that support for Kılıçdaroğlu for the presidential elections was understood as support for the CHP (in the legislative elections) and therefore votes went to this party. On the other hand, the 10 per cent barrier (to enter parliament) was an important source of motivation to vote for this party and allow its representation in parliament (and reduce that of the opposing bloc). The fact that this barrier is currently 7 per cent (a threshold that the HDP should easily exceed, according to estimates) must also have weighed, and part of the left-wing electorate who had previously voted for the HDP returned to vote for the CHP and partly for the TIP. Finally, we know that especially within the Kurdish people, certain more conservative and nationalist sectors are opposed to alliances with

the Turkish far left; this must also have had an effect on the results.

The results of the YSP, which are considered a failure by the party, have triggered debates and in particular severe criticism from Selahattin Demirtaş, whose relationship with the leadership had been strained for several years. Having played an important role during the campaign from his cell (through the daily visits of his lawyers and his Twitter account directed from outside according to his instructions), Demirtaş has declared his retirement from "active politics". The HDP is thus embarking on a process of internal debates which will culminate in its next congress.

In this nightmarish panorama a meagre (but significant) consolation is the result that the TIP obtained. For the first time since 1965, a socialist party defending the cause of the working class has managed to enter parliament with its own votes (and not by being elected under the list of another party). The TIP obtained 1.7 per cent with a million votes, only presenting itself in two-thirds of the territory, therefore probably above 2 per cent in total. It thus gained four deputies, three of whom were already in the previous parliament. The fourth, Can Atalay, who was elected as deputy for Hatay, is a renowned lawyer involved in all the struggles of the country and who has at present been in detention for a year and has been sentenced to 18 years in prison for having been one of the main spokespersons for the Gezi revolt in 2013. Can's case is being appealed; legally he should be able to be freed to take his place in parliament, but the regime refuses for the moment to release him.

Rebuilding class consciousness

If the conditions for carrying out the campaigns were completely unequal (control of the media by Erdogan, etc.)

and many cases of fraud were observed, we must recognize that the regime triumphed despite everything. Neither the economic crisis nor the earthquakes of February, and even less the attacks on democracy have led the conservative and popular electorate to break with the regime. On the contrary, the discontent of the working classes was expressed within the reactionary bloc, but towards currents even more radical than the AKP.

The results of these elections show once again that to defeat the Erdogan regime the defence of democratic and secular values is not enough. If Erdogan's camp brings together different social classes, so does the opposing bloc. Once again we see that the right wing of the opposition, far from being a solution, further strengthens the regime and the dominant bourgeois, nationalist and Islamist ideology. It is necessary to build another polarization, in order to break the reactionary hegemony, but also that of the opposition bloc. A polarization that would allow the dissociation between the interests of the working class, the oppressed and those of the bosses, whether secular or Islamist. The fight against authoritarianism must be invested with a social, class content. And this goes through the reconstruction of the "subjective factor", of class consciousness, of the capacity for self-organization of the exploited, of women against patriarchal domination, of the unification of local and migrant workers, Turkish, Kurdish, Syrians and Afghans. This is the main challenge facing the radical left, from the HDP to the TIP and other currents of the revolutionary left. Certainly the situation is not easy. We recognize our defeat, but we refuse to bend and give up the fight. Being aware of the fact that freedom and equality will only be the work of the workers themselves, as we like to repeat here, we pour ourselves a tea and get back to work...

1 June 2023

Many questions after the defeat of the left in Greece

3 June 2023, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

New Democracy is also playing it safe ahead of 25 June, still unsure of how solidly it will be reinforced. If ND wins, the attacks will worsen, given the austerity recommendations from Brussels, in a context where the far right with its various components, apart from those integrated into ND, has obtained between 8 and 9%.

How deeply rooted is the right?

All the signs were pointing, if not to defeat, at least to a sharp fall in ND's share of the vote (39.85% in 2019): although it has fulfilled its mission for its electorate to the tune of 200%, it has also demonstrated its incompetence in the face of hardship (Athens paralysed by snow, inability to deal with the fires in Evia, overwhelming responsibility for the Tèmbi rail disaster, etc.).), it has met with strong resistance in the face of its social and cultural attacks and its repression, and it has been implicated in scandals and illegal practices (eavesdropping, refoulement of refugees). And yet, it has gained one point and 150,000 votes, and is the leading party even among young people aged 17-24 (31.5%, compared with 28.8% for Syriza).

Some see this as a profound decline in class consciousness (post-Covid), and questions are being asked about the "brainwashing" effect of most of the media in the hands of oligarchs linked to ND. The campaign based on fear and the last-minute gifts may also have played a role, but the fact remains that the balance of power on the right may be fragile, given that 20% of voters chose on the last day, 51% voting for ND and 13% for Syriza, or when 43% of voters explain ND's victory by the weaknesses of the left, 25% by the support of the media, and only 28% by the work of the government...

What prospects for the left?

Since Sunday, questions have been asked about the reasons for Syriza's surprising fall (-11.5 points, -600,000 votes), without this benefiting the other left-wing parties (a little to the Greek KKE PC: +1.9 points, +130,000 votes; Varoufakis' Mera: -0.8 points, -40,000 votes; Antarsya +0.13 points, +8,500 votes). Some fear that in June the fall will be even more pronounced, a premonition of collapse; others, like KKE, Pasok and the right, hope so. It's hard to predict even the short term!

What we've been stressing here since Syriza's first successes (when it broke through the 3% barrier) is its weakness: Syriza, even though it has

grown from 30,000 to 170,000 members, has never built itself as a militant party, and has little presence in the struggles (in the recent student elections, won by KKE, its current got 4%...). Its intended "centre-left" positioning has not convinced many people, and its campaign "for a government of progress" towards Pasok has above all enabled the latter's leadership to regain its health while spitting on this proposal.

But despite this strategic impasse within the framework of the reformist impasse, what is certain is that if the Greek stock market was euphoric this week, it was because of Syriza's defeat: unlike most of the leaders of the political left, the capitalists know that a Syriza victory would above all have been a victory for the workers, with the "danger" of mobilisations to challenge the ultra-liberal smash-and-grab. And the fact that all the groups to the left of Syriza are only up by 2.8 points despite Syriza's 11.5% fall shows the urgency of the situation: do everything possible to unite the working-class and popular left against the right, with, as Antarsya rightly hopes, a strong anti-capitalist left.

1 June 2023

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

DeSantis, also a Far-Right Candidate, Challenges Trump for Republican Nomination

2 June 2023, by Dan La Botz

Several Republican candidates are challenging former president Trump, but the leading contender is Florida governor DeSantis who is as far right as Trump himself. While Trump is a charismatic rightwing wildcard, DeSantis is a serious and systematic far right politician. Though their styles are different, their politics are virtually identical.

DeSantis has sterling elite credentials. He graduated from Yale University, studied law at Harvard, served for fifteen years in the U.S. Navy becoming a lieutenant commander, then as a U.S. Justice Department attorney.

Then, elected to Congress, he was a founding member of the rightwing Freedom Caucus and a Trump supporter. He opposed any tax increases to fight global warming, He worked to repeal President Barack Obama's Affordable Health Care Act. He opposed gun controls. He opposed progressive immigration laws. And he opposed the special counsel investigation into Trump and Russian interference in the 2016 election.

In 2018 DeSantis ran for governor of Florida on the Trump program of building a border wall to exclude immigrants and "Make America Great Again." And he won.

During the COVID pandemic, DeSantis

resisted such health measures as facemasks, stay-at-home orders, and vaccination requirements as well as signing a law that forbid businesses from requiring proof of vaccination. Consequently, the state experienced surges in infections and hospitalizations and was 27 out of 50 in deaths per capita in April 2021. His business-as-usual policies, combined with federal stimulus funds, and tax cuts led to a booming economy, and he was reelected governor by a historic 19.4 percent lead over his Democratic Party challenger.

DeSantis characterizes his ideology as "anti-woke." He opposes "critical race theory," that is, teaching about the history of racism, takes anti-LGBTQ positions, and he worked to exclude transgender girls from sports as well as forbidding discussions of sexual orientation and gender from the schools, the notorious "don't say gay" law. When the Walt Disney Company, which owns Disney World in Orlando, Florida opposed the law, DeSantis responded by ending the company's special independent administrative district and is now involved in a series of lawsuits with Disney. In a bizarre publicity stunt attack on immigrants, DeSantis sent his agents to Austin, Texas to recruit Venezuelan asylum-seekers whom he then flew to liberal Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts where they were abandoned. DeSantis

has also signed a law that makes abortion illegal after six weeks of pregnancy. He has called for putting armed guards into schools, expanding stand-your-ground laws to include shooting looters, and signed a law permitting carrying concealed weapons.

According to the latest polls, 55 percent of Republicans support Trump and only 20 percent support DeSantis, but the latter is far ahead of the rest of the field, each of whom has only between 1 and 5 percent support. If for some reason, Republicans should turn away from Trump—which seems unlikely even if Trump were indicted and convicted of a felony—at present, DeSantis seems like he would be the leading candidate.

As a candidate against President Joe Biden, who is 80 years old, DeSantis' age of 44 would be a great advantage. DeSantis would also be the favorite-son candidate of Florida, a crucial swing state. But in other key states, where independent voters will determine the outcome, he would find it hard to win a majority, having alienated many women, LGBTQ people, Blacks and Latinos. His far-right record makes clear that his election would be a disaster for the country and especially for its working people.

28 May 2023

From impasse to the road to reaction: an urgent assessment of the political scenario

1 June 2023, by Brais Fernandez

The Popular Party also accumulated electoral power winning many provincial capitals (Valladolid, Zaragoza, Valencia, all the Andalusian ones, except Jaén...) and consolidating

its stronghold in Madrid. Vox was consolidated as a state political force. The governmental left is sinking, with Podemos disappearing in Madrid, the Canary Islands and the Valencian

Community and becoming a residual party in the territories; Ada Colau lost Barcelona city council. The radical left, like the Candidatura d'Unitat Popular - CUP or Popular Unity

Candidacy – and Adelante Andalucía, have fared no better in these elections: the former lost 40,000 votes and turned into a party of the Catalan peoples, Adelante Andalucía lost Cádiz and is no longer in key cities such as Jerez or Seville. Only the Bloque Nacionalista Galego – BNG or Galician Nationalist Bloc – and EH Bildu improved their results in Galicia and Euskal Herria, while Más Madrid managed to remain the leading opposition force to Ayuso and Almeida. This is, in a descriptive way, the political panorama that has led Pedro Sánchez to call elections for 23 July.

From transformism to restoration

These results can be read as a shift to the right. In the field of institutional power and the political environment, they certainly are. However, Pedro Sánchez's manoeuvre is an attempt to avoid the wear and tear of months on the defensive, with an emboldened Partido Popular – PP or People's Party – and pressure from Ciudadanos – Citizens – and a left of the government that, through the umpteenth attempt to refound itself around Yolanda Díaz, was trying to surf what by all accounts is already a deep crisis. Many analysts have insisted that Pedro Sánchez is betting everything on one last chance to win, with his usual style of playing poker. It is possible that the maths plays out: there is a possibility that it will be a close election. But the truth is that the turn to the right of Spanish society cannot be ignored. As much as Pedro Sánchez tries to save himself (we'll see if he succeeds), the right is experiencing an ascendant phase and the left a process of decline, with clear symptoms of decomposition of some of Sánchez agents, as is the case of Podemos.

There are, without a doubt, international causes that determine Spanish politics and its state of mind. The post-pandemic and war society is an exhausted society, in search of security in a context in which, after the collapse and capitulation of the left-wing options that emerged in

2008, change is felt as something that can bring us closer to a country of the capitalist periphery than like Sweden. This state of mind, present throughout the capitalist centre, provokes a strong hegemony by the old middle classes and the reactionary right, who seek to unload the weight of the crisis on the working class. But the central issue is that the progressive government has done nothing to strengthen the working class throughout these years of government. The policy of social peace and agreement with the employers has meant a decrease in wages without affecting benefits and the relationship of forces between the classes remains exactly the same. The progressive left believes that its problem is fundamentally communicative, but the problem is deeper: it is incapable of transforming anything substantially, because it lacks the will and social strength to do so. Its project is that of capitalist modernisation and keeping Spain in the club of the declining imperial periphery. Even if Pedro Sánchez got lucky and had the numbers to be in government, the restoration led by the right would already be underway. The left of the government, already touched and half sunk after these elections, will seek to endure in the midst of their disputes over positions and fights on social networks – all without making the slightest strategic analysis of the effects of their integration into the regime. Tied hand and foot to the progressive bloc, its social attrition, no matter what happens in the next elections, is already unstoppable. In the medium term, this will translate into new crises and implosion processes.

Two scenarios and one perspective

In the most unlikely, but not ruled out, scenario, the progressive government would repeat its mandate. We say that it cannot be ruled out, because the electoral arithmetic indicates this, even though the political dynamics go in the opposite direction. The government would continue its modernising policy for a while, preparing for the EU directives (little debated in our secondary-obsessed

public sphere) announcing spending cuts in the name of the deficit, redistributing European funds, increasing military spending and boosting the wage freeze via agreements between employers and unions. There is no other horizon: stop the right, in order to continue with the same policies as always.

In the event that the right wins, the first dilemma would be the entry of Vox into the government. But it is important to note that this would not mean a regime change. Some of the weak measures taken by the government would be repealed: others would stay. Political repression of the militant left would undoubtedly increase in degree, with the gag law that the progressive government has not repealed. The most novel thing would be the exclusion of the big unions from the social agreement. But social dynamics are not like a fountain that turns on and off: against a demoralised and exhausted left, the opposition would play the classic role of an aspiring turnista. The PSOE would lead the opposition, and the so-called PSOE left would accelerate its Italian-style crisis.

Neither the social nor trade-union movements nor the eco-socialist and anti-capitalist left, in a broad sense, that oppose this progressive government should consider this second scenario positive. In the first place, because it would not mean any attrition on the left of this government, but rather a turn to the right that would redouble the attacks on the working class. Secondly, because the conditions of political freedom (without having to talk nonsense about fascism) would worsen considerably. Thirdly, because it takes time for fractions of the working class to break away from the progressive bloc, through a clearly disappointing government experience. This does not mean endorsing the logic of the lesser evil or submitting to the blackmail of some progressive parties, which are primarily responsible for this situation. The fundamental thing is to rearm for what is to come and try to understand why this cycle of restoration has been opened without repeating the same mistakes. The construction of an eco-socialist and anti-capitalist political

project will not face the same scenarios if the progressive bloc or the right governs, but the important thing, whatever happens, is that we do not stop working to open another perspective.

I don't think it makes much sense to get involved in debates about the vote where there are no left-wing options that are outside the progressive government bloc. The calls for abstention have more to do with the self-construction of the group (any militant of a revolutionary left group that has a real presence somewhere outside the internet knows that a PP-Vox government will increase the political repression they suffer).

Abstention in this specific context implies, for the most part, disaffection and political apathy. This is something that could become anger in the future: this is central, but to be serious, this social sector, key to future yellow vest-style outbreaks, will not determine its political action by anyone's position right now. In the same way, the blackmailing logic that forces anyone opposed to a right-wing government to become a vote-collecting adherent, despising militant construction and the need for a project of rupture, is intolerable. Let progressivism earn its own votes and exhaust its path as far as it can. Those of us who are committed to another path, based on class conflict, even

though today it is a minority one, must prepare ourselves for the challenges that come, seeking a coming together with all the emancipatory movements and putting at its centre a strategy of accumulating forces to overthrow this political regime. We must also be capable of putting together a social and political defence against the attacks that are coming. A major challenge, but in the twilight of progressivism, it is the only way to sow the seeds of another future.

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