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Sudan's huge tragedy and the way out

30 September 2023, by **Gilbert Achcar**

At the forefront come conflicts between blond whites, such as the Russians, Ukrainians, and other Europeans, followed by the East Asians, and after them with gradually darker skin: the Caucasians, the Levantines (the war in Syria has certainly received much greater attention than today's war in Sudan, even if it is legitimate for the Syrians to complain about the lack of interest in their country's fate - all things are relative indeed), the Yemenis, the peoples of Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the Horn of Africa, all the way to Black Africa.

The Sudanese tragedy continues to worsen, and it has already reached a huge magnitude, with UN agencies reporting that the number of dead has exceeded five thousand, and the number of wounded twelve thousand. This is a very conservative estimate, the same sources believing that actual numbers are much higher. A few days ago, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, issued a report reminding the world that at the end of 2022, that is, before the outbreak of the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Sudan had more than 3.7 million internally displaced people, most of whom living in camps in Darfur. Another 800,000 Sudanese were living as refugees in neighboring countries, such as Chad, South Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia. At the same time, the country was home to more than a

million refugees from other countries. Most of them came from South Sudan, but there were also joined since late 2020 by refugees fleeing the crisis in northern Ethiopia, and others coming from Eritrea, Syria, and the Central African Republic.

In the first five months of the current conflict, more than a million refugees and returnees fled the country, while another 4.3 million people were displaced within Sudan, making it home to the largest number of internally displaced people in the world. Add to this the impact of climate change-related weather conditions, including floods and droughts, and their consequence in crop failure and livestock decimation, as UNHCR has indicated, and you begin to realize the great severity of the humanitarian crisis facing Sudan today - to say nothing of the other tragedies of war, especially the horrific fate of women, always the first victims of wars fought by men.

Against this dreadful background, the UN Secretary-General's representative in Sudan, Volker Perthes, submitted his resignation nearly two weeks ago, warning of the country's slide into civil war. The truth is that this slide began early on, and escalated during the summer when tribal leaders in Darfur announced their support for the RSF, calling on their fellow tribesmen in the military to side with the forces led by

Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. Sudan has become geographically divided between an eastern region controlled by the SAF and a western region controlled by the RSF, while the areas between them, including the capital Khartoum, are disputed by the two parties.

The truth is that Perthes, and behind him the United States and the European countries, bears great responsibility for this outcome in Sudan because of his insistence on appeasing the military. Instead of supporting the battle waged by the Sudanese democratic forces, led by the "resistance committees", to reject the coup carried out by the armed forces under the leadership of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in the fall of 2021, Perthes continued to press for a new bargain with the military and dealt with Al-Burhan as if he were still the legitimate head of state. This is what allowed Al-Burhan to address the UN General Assembly last week, drawing rightful protests from the Sudanese democratic forces.

So, where is Sudan headed? It has entered a war that bears all the ingredients of long-term conflicts: not only the existence of internal divisions along regional, ethnic, and tribal lines that are pushing towards the transformation of the conflict between two military factions into a civil war between components of Sudan's population, but also the existence of

external players supplying the two conflicting parties with the fuel of war in the form of money and weapons. It is no secret that Sudan is turning into a new arena of regional and international conflicts, like neighboring Libya. Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar himself is one of those intervening in the Sudanese conflict, alongside the RSF, which is also supported by the Russian “Wagner” forces and the United Arab Emirates, its old sponsor, while the SAF receive support from Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, and even Ukraine!

The way out of this tragedy is difficult to imagine today considering how much the situation has deteriorated since the fighting broke out. Those calling for a cessation of fighting and reconciliation between the two warring factions are dreaming, as it is no longer possible at all for the two factions to coexist within the same state (if a ceasefire were to occur between them along with some

political settlement, it would be nothing more than a temporary truce).

On the other hand, it is not within the SAF’s reach to defeat the RSF and stabilize the situation under their exclusive control, except after a very long, extremely deadly and destructive conflict, to which the famous saying of the Roman historian Tacitus would ultimately apply: “They make a desert and call it peace.”

What remains, therefore? What about the “federal” solution that Dagalo called for, i.e. a new division of Sudan’s territory, leading to the emergence of a new state in the west and south of the country dominated by the criminal Janjaweed militia, which Omar al-Bashir elevated to the status of part of the official armed forces under the RSF label? Such a “solution”, if it could stop the fighting currently taking place across the country, would imply an escalation of genocide and ethnic cleansing in the

areas controlled by the RSF, in Darfur in particular.

The truth is that there is no longer any way to stop Sudan from sinking deeper into civil war other than the intervention of international forces under UN command to impose a cessation of fighting and supervise the democratic transition that both Al-Burhan and Dagalo claim that they are ready to submit to, each one of them even outbidding the other in confirming his readiness to accept it. A democratically established civilian government in Sudan would imperatively need to reorganize the country’s entire armed forces along the line that the civilian opposition has long called for.

26 September 2023

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A breath of the 2011 resistance in Syrian protest movement,

29 September 2023, by Joseph Daher

A general strike was also called in the governorate, with the forced closure of all state institutions, except those classified as essential services. Other cities and regions under the control of the Syrian regime, including the governorates of Daraa and rural Damascus, have also witnessed forms of protest, albeit on a much smaller scale.

Political and economic demands

Although the trigger for the latest protests is linked to the economic decisions taken by the Syrian government that have caused a further deterioration in the living conditions of the popular classes, it is

the entire Syrian regime that is being called into question. This is symbolized by the now historic slogan chanted by the demonstrators - “The people want the fall of the regime” - and the destruction of large banners and portraits of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.

While the resilience and courage of the Sweida demonstrators are to be welcomed, only an extension of the protest movement to other regions can allow it to continue and represent a real challenge to the regime. Arrest campaigns have taken place in different cities, such as Latakia and Aleppo, since the beginning of the protests in Sweida. The regime’s security services fear that the protest movement will spread.

Minimum wage at \$100, release of political prisoners

If the mobilization remains limited to the governorate of Sweida, the regime will most likely bet on stalemate, the fatigue of the demonstrators and the economic difficulties resulting from the closure of economic activities. The region depends on the regime in terms of providing food, fuel and services.

Attempts to create new political collectives have also taken place in recent weeks, for example the August 10 Movement. Its main objective, as stated in its initial statement, is to address the socio-economic and

political suffering of the Syrian population while emphasizing peaceful and non-sectarian resistance. It also demands, among other things, an increase in the minimum wage to \$100 per month, the release of all political prisoners, the departure of all foreign occupation forces and the implementation of UN Resolution 2254 and so on. These new collectives claim to have thousands of members, mostly young, in areas controlled by

the regime, and organizes in a decentralized and online way. However, the movement has so far refrained from calling for demonstrations, waiting to reach a critical mass of popular support and fearing violent repression.

These new groups, however, remain quite small and do not yet represent a challenge for the regime at the national level. The ability of the

popular classes to self-organize and act collectively is still very limited by the state. Nevertheless, this breath of popular resistance, which reminds everyone of the 2011 uprising, shows that the revolutionary process is still open, against all odds.

28 September 2023

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

After the primaries, the elections

28 September 2023, by **Eduardo Lucita**

The open and mandatory internal elections made it clear that the wave of extreme right-wing politics that is sweeping the world has also reached our country. If 2001 saw the crisis of the traditional parties and led them to form coalitions, this result puts all coalitions in crisis, increases the prevailing economic-political uncertainty and deepens the crisis (the first manifestation of which was the hasty devaluation of the Argentine peso on Monday without even a minimum compensation plan).

The general framework of this electoral course is the beginning of a change of cycle characterised by:

- The crisis of Kirchnerism, until now the dominant current within Peronism, which is transferred to the movement as a whole. This is a crisis that has been brewing for years and that will deepen with this strong defeat. [1] It does not imply that Peronism cannot be reconstituted nor that Kirchnerism cannot be reinstated as an internal current.
- The reconfiguration of the bloc of the dominant classes, with the question of what role industry will play as well as the incorporation of the knowledge industry sector. In addition the leadership of the bloc will pass into the hands of those sectors of capital that benefit from income from the land (agrarian, hydrocarbon and mining) along with the always present

financial capital.

Why?

However, this general context does not explain the increase in abstention, as these PASOs have been the most competitive in the last 20 years. Nor does it explain the surprising percentage obtained by right-winger Javier Milei, whose transversal vote had both a popular and youthful content. A rather impressionistic look would explain this as both a punitive vote and one of anger. However, there seem to be deeper causes. Resignation and fatigue in the face of a social crisis that has lasted through three governments (each one leaving the situation worse than the one before), seems more likely to justify absenteeism. Nevertheless, the hopelessness that exists across vast social sectors, the feeling that their future has been ripped from them and that they see no other perspective than the worsening of present conditions, would have a lot to do with the vote for Milei.

It could be said that it is a vote of the hopeless who are looking for hope. This hope is found in those who promise to change everything from the roots, with these sectors unaware of the consequences.

And now what?

The pre-electoral consensus: extractivist, exporting, stabilising (adjusting) the economy, was definitively imposed. There are no longer disputes about models (the three possibly successful candidates share the broad strokes of this orientation, although they may differ in methods, in the timings and in the specific legalities). But beyond that consensus, both Milei and Patricia Bullrich of the right-wing PRO (Republican Proposal) aim for a qualitative leap that the primaries have enhanced. They go beyond adjustment and extreme exploitation of nature. They aim for profound structural changes that affect both economic and social relations, as well as civil rights and the insertion of the country into the international order...

In other times, proposals like those of Milei and Bullrich required a coup d'état to be put into practice, but within the phenomenon of the current global far-right wave they can come to political power through the popular vote and a regime of liberal democracy. In our view, whoever finally wins the presidential elections it will be a party government, and they will not control the executive. The issue is that within the current regime, parliament also counts.

With the forty deputies that La

Libertad Avanza [LLA or Liberty Advances coalition] would obtain, it could block a parliamentary quorum, but it would also have difficulties passing its own laws, which is the same case for both the Juntos por el Cambio [Together for Change] and Unión por la Patria [Union for the Homeland] coalitions. Not in vain is Milei already talking about resorting to popular consultations, a way to obtain mobilised social support in case of having to govern by Decreto de necesidad y urgencia [Necessity and Urgency Decree or DNU] now called “elective authoritarianism” by social scientists. Faced with this panorama, strengthening the bench of left-wing deputies acquires no less importance.

Turbulence on the horizon

The labour and popular movement face an all-out offensive against historical social achievements and the expansion of rights achieved in recent decades, but the country has social and political reserves to face this offensive. Will the movement for human rights allow the review of the trials against humanity and the imprisonment of those responsible? Faced with the attempt to annul the laws on legal, safe and free abortion and comprehensive sexual education, will the powerful women’s movement simply sit back and watch the parliamentary debate? Will the traditional union leadership simply allow the annulment of the ultra-activity clause, which would collapse all agreements and open the door to

company-based unions, destroying single representation industry-wide branches? Will the huge environmental movement not react to extreme exploitation of nature and its consequences on climate change and the country? The answer is that there will be battles and that the responsibility of the party and social left is to bring these future struggles together without subsuming them.

However, this reaction will not be immediate, it will have to face current and future adjustment, but more generally it will take time to debate and mature. In the meantime there are the general elections in October and then November if there is a runoff...

Wholesale uncertainties

In the days after the primaries the situation has worsened. Both economically and socially due to the devaluation, and in the electoral perspectives, according to the latest data Milei’s candidacy continues growing with already around 37%. Is Milei’s vote consolidated or is it a fragile vote subject to volatility? Are his economic proposals consistent and, if applied, could they end up generating great chaos?

The polls showed a three-way tie, with little difference between first and third of the pre-candidates, a difference that will be reduced even more with the official count, predictably in favour of Sergio Massa

of the UP. Therefore the result of the general election becomes even more uncertain. Milei may end up winning in the first round or he may only end up with the most votes. Massa may come in third or he may manage to reach enough votes to compete with Bullrich in the the runoff. The flipped coin is in the air.

The debate

This coming electoral stretch is also a battlefield. How to stop this electoral dilemma is being discussed throughout the popular camp. There are not many alternatives: blank votes and abstention have been ruled out because they do not provide any solution. It remains to vote for the complete list of the Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores - Unidad [FIT-U or Workers Left Front-Unity] [2] in order to collaborate in strengthening the resistance or vote in favour of Massa to stop a possible Milei-Bullrich runoff and to strengthen the left bench.

All this is and will be present in the coming weeks in the discussions in the working class and popular camp. The only certainty is that future will indeed be turbulent and that the broadest social unity will be necessary. On the near horizon, a crisis of governance cannot be ruled out.

26 August 2023

Translated by David Fagan for **International Viewpoint** from **Viento sur**.

“The world needs to be aware that human rights are being trampled on in Nicaragua”

27 September 2023, by **Jeunes anticapitalistes (JAC)**

DL: In the 1970s, Nicaragua was the scene of the Sandinista revolution, which was a source of inspiration for revolutionaries

around the world. More than forty years later, how would you describe this period?

KR: The Sandinista popular revolution had what it took to be an inspiring moment for all leftists and all popular movements. At the time, it meant first

of all the end of the dictatorship, and therefore the possibility of profound changes in the country. But obviously, no one imagined that the next dictator would come from their own ranks. However, the revolution brought ideas that remain alive even today. It was able to bring the population together around a dream, that of putting an end to the dictatorship and living free. But ideas are one thing, practices another: seen from today, it is quite clear that many activists of the Sandinista Front were in it through opportunism, hoping to take advantage of the fall of the dictatorship to win power and economic advantages. And, parasited by personal interests, this movement which had opened the door to radical change finally closed it, leading to a dictatorship even harsher than that of Somoza. For the Nicaraguan people, it is therefore a key moment in their history that has been stolen from them.

DL: The Sandinista revolution meant first of all the end of the dictatorship, and therefore the possibility of profound changes in the country. But obviously, no one imagined that the next dictator would come from their own ranks. No hesitation on your part, then, to describe this regime as a dictatorship?

KR: None. From his first term in office, in the aftermath of the revolution, Ortega carried out a series of reforms tailor-made for him and those close to him. After elections that he lost, he returned to power in 2006, thanks to the pact he made with the liberals; and from there, he patiently, through gradual reforms, organized the merger of institutions, until arriving at a regime in which a single man controls the entire state apparatus... and large companies, which today form the new Nicaraguan bourgeoisie that the regime has taken

responsibility for establishing in recent years. According to research by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), after the April 2018 uprising, Ortega had more than 300 people murdered. This date is generally understood as the breaking point, the moment when the regime assumed its authoritarian nature: over the five years that have passed since then, it has deployed the full range of repression against its opponents, against dissident political organizations, against human rights defenders. A range that included arbitrary detentions and torture. Under these conditions, there cannot be free and democratic elections. The presidential elections of 2021, then the municipal elections of 2022, had only the vague appearance of being so.

DL: Like many Nicaraguans , you yourself had to leave the country. What is life like for someone who has had to flee this violence?

KR: Political persecution and exile have destroyed many interpersonal ties, to the point of tearing the social fabric. Fleeing repression means abandoning your country, your family, your job, and facing a gigantic amount of challenges and uncertainties, in a country where you don't know if you will find housing, a job, the possibility of studying, or quite simply rebuilding a new life... or resuming the life that we were unable to continue in Nicaragua.

DL: Ortega's policy is also this huge canal project in Nicaragua...

KR: Yes. It has now been ten years since Ortega passed the law allowing the digging of this canal, which should ultimately connect the Pacific and the Atlantic, as the Panama Canal already does. This is another facet of the regime's authoritarianism, one that

specifically attacks various communities, mainly rural. A significant peasant movement sought to oppose this project, and through it, the regime itself; but it suffered extremely violent persecution. Well before the turn of 2018, in fact. Already at that time, this project highlighted the hyper-centralization of power, which was able to impose this law even though the population was very largely opposed to it. But for now, the project remains at a standstill [3].

DL: Who is resisting today in Nicaragua?

KR: Social movement organizations are forced to operate in exile, but they retain a social base in the country. The population is resisting, including people who have stayed away from political spaces; but, as a result of state violence, this resistance has become more silent. Today, it mainly revolves around popular, clandestine journalism, to denounce the arbitrariness of the dictatorship. People struggle by relaying information to independent, foreign-based media; and they can thus accomplish their mission, which has become unrealizable within the borders.

DL: And outside the country? What can international solidarity do?

KR: From anywhere, we can carry out actions on a global scale. Denounce Ortega to international organizations. Call on human rights organizations. Drive support campaigns. The world must realize that human rights are being trampled on in Nicaragua.

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

One year after the murder of Jina Mahsa Amini and the “Woman, Life, Freedom”

uprising

26 September 2023, by **Shirin Shalkooi**

This uprising arose in a specific context. Since 2017, we have seen an acceleration and intensification of social protest. The population faces terrible inflation in the price of basic foods, salary arrears can sometimes extend to a year. Half of the population lives below the poverty line, even though the country has the fourth largest oil reserve in the world and the second largest gas reserve. The regime devotes most of its budget to military spending and the enrichment of an oligarchy. It toughens repression against women and LGBTI+ people. It persecutes national minorities (Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, etc.), immigrants (Afghans) and religious minorities (Bahais, atheists, etc.). Policies of oil extractivism, deforestation and disastrous management of water supply are aggravating the climate crisis, which has an impact on health and makes certain areas uninhabitable.

Point of no return

This is not the first time that women have taken to the streets, nor that the population has risen up. But the September 2022 uprising is more unifying than all the previous ones. Its massive and revolutionary character marks a rupture, a deep crisis of legitimacy, not only of the government led by President Raïssi but of the Islamic State as a whole. During the green movement in 2009 against the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a significant section of the movement defended the possibility of reforming the state. At present, the population has abandoned all hope in this direction and is directly attacking the head of state, the Supreme Guide: down with the dictator, down with Khamenei!

Putting an end to the regime has become a central demand, first raised in the regions of Kurdistan [4] and Sistan-Baluchistan [5], before

spreading to the whole country. In a few days and for about six months, thousands of people took to the streets to oppose the regime's murders and proclaim their thirst for freedom and better living conditions. Women, girls and LGBTI+ people took a central place in the movement. There were also more and more protests in schools and universities. There was an increase in strikes in different sectors such as petrochemicals, education, bazaars and refineries. There were also several general strikes across the country and in some cities. The regime has been economically weakened, but not yet sufficiently. It is above all its legitimacy which has been shattered.

A revolutionary uprising is a time of popular awareness and massive and accelerated learning of techniques of struggle. In Oshnavieh, demonstrators took power in the town for a few hours and scared away the police. Schoolgirls chased out the management of their school. Students broke down the barriers separating men and women in university canteens. Above all, despite the repression, the uprising opened a space for expression and confidence in one's own abilities and those of the community. Without making fear disappear, it broke at least for a moment the generalization of fear, the feeling of helplessness and a wait-and-see attitude. In the midst of pain, a field of hope and creativity opened up, as shown in particular by the new production of numerous revolutionary songs. Finally, it forced the population to self-organize to overthrow the regime and encouraged people to ask themselves essential questions concerning the strategy of revolutionary struggle [6].

Despite the decline in street protests after the first six months of the uprising, nothing will ever be the same again. This is demonstrated in particular by the many women and girls who still refuse today, at the risk

of their lives, to submit to the obligation to wear the hijab. The regime has not been normalized in the eyes of the population and has not regained any legitimacy.

The response of the regime

Initially, the regime counted on the fact that the movement would die down. Furthermore, it was assuming that, apart from symbolic support, very little concrete international support would be provided to the population. It shut down the internet and prevented access to the main social networks. In October 2019, 1,500 people were killed in one month. This time, there were fewer people killed (at least 550) [7] but thousands of imprisonments (at least 22,000) [8], coercion into forced confessions and the use of torture, sentencing to forced labour, mutilations (including blinding), poisoning of girls in their schools (in 28 provinces) and executions (at least 26) [9]. Students were excluded from classes and forced to continue their studies hundreds of kilometres from their university.

The machine used by the regime is directly controlled by the Supreme Guide. It is made up of four main forces: the Ministry of Intelligence (surveillance and espionage), the police (including the famous "morals police" newly baptized "unusual clothing police"), the Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Basijis (paramilitaries). The "good Muslims" in the eyes of the regime are also encouraged to "do good and prevent what is evil", a duty enshrined in Sharia law. Concretely, civilians are used to monitor, repress or denounce opponents or acts deemed criminal. In the regions of Kurdistan and Sistan-Baluchistan, the army is permanently deployed and there are numerous massacres. On the eve of the

anniversary of Jina's murder, we noted the multiplication of repressive measures in Kurdistan. Justice is also directly under the control of the Supreme Guide. In addition to physical repression, a real psychological war is being waged. This nameless brutality is both terrorizing and at the same time, thanks to collective mobilizations, a source of an ever more assertive rejection of the regime.

The regime's reaction was also ideological. Khamenei and the various institutions have used the discourse they have always used to divide the population. A discourse of denigration of the poor, national minorities, women and opponents accused of being agents of the West, enemies of Islam, manipulated beings, devoid of reason or the rejects of society, lazy people and traffickers. The reasons for imposing the death penalty attest to this ideological struggle. Twenty-six of those executed, were hanged or thrown into the void on the grounds of having "gone to war against God" and of having "spread corruption on earth".

To date, the regime has not acceded, even partially, to any of the movement's main demands: the end of the compulsory wearing of the hijab, apartheid and gender domination, the right to life of LGBTI+ people, the end of executions and the release of all political prisoners, the right to self-determination of national minorities, freedom of political and trade union organization and economic improvement in living conditions. The repression and the refusal to give in to demands have generated tensions within the state. On January 3, 2023, the senior leaders of the Revolutionary Guard Corps reported to Khamenei about defections among their troops. Small breaches have been opened in the military and political apparatus by the movement. But nothing yet that makes the regime tremble.

Challenges in the solidarity

movement in Brussels

Outside of Iran, the uprising has had international repercussions. The uprising brought together exiles, students and descendants of the first two generations of migration. Solidarity movements organized by individuals and political organizations in the diaspora have formed in different places around the world, particularly in Europe, Canada and the USA. The uprising also met with the solidarity of feminist movements and collectives of different political tendencies. The "woman, life, freedom!" movement, thanks to its massive character, its capacity to integrate multiple demands and its perspective of radical transformation of society, resonates with what can be described as the "fourth wave" of feminism in the countries of the Global North.

But it also encountered the solidarity of liberal and right-wing feminist forces who decided to see in the uprising only the struggle of women against the veil and even against Islam. These tendencies often go so far as to exploit the struggle of Iranian women to defend the supremacy of so-called "Western values" and to justify racist and discriminatory policies towards Muslim women who wear the headscarf, as well as towards immigrant men. At the media level, Iranian women are made into symbols of the woman who is sometimes submissive, who sometimes refuses to submit. This vast, clichéd media coverage contrasts with the weakness of information-sharing on the aspirations and methods of struggle in Iran.

In Belgium, where there is not a large Iranian diaspora, everyone lived their life in their own corner. Public criticism of the regime was very limited. The four national solidarity demonstrations in Brussels brought together an average of 2,000 people each. Participants and organizers made the conscious decision to build a movement of political and cultural solidarity with an open face and to give up, for those who still could, the possibility of visiting their families and

friends in Iran as long as the regime is still in place. Decisions that were still unimaginable the day before the uprising.

Opposition to the Iranian regime in exile is no more politically homogeneous in Belgium. It also carries different political trends from the right and the left, themselves made up of different groups with different programmes and strategies, such as the royalists, the Persian nationalists, the Kurds, the communists, the Fedayeen and the People's Mujaheddin. In the present movement, we have seen the emergence of a liberal tendency proclaiming itself "apolitical" but supporting severe sanctions from Western governments and European institutions. We also saw the creation of two new collectives: "Women, life, freedom - Gent" and "Women, life, freedom - Belgium" [10]. The latter was at the initiative of numerous awareness-raising and solidarity actions "from below" [11]. It also relayed the main demands that emerged in the uprising in Iran and attempted to build solidarity on this basis with progressive organizations in Belgium. The movement also mobilized many unorganized people who had not previously taken an active part in organizing solidarity actions.

Behind facade proclamations of solidarity, a few strands of cut hair and the portrait of Jina Mahsa Amini Brandi, the parties in power in the federal government (Liberals, Greens, Socialists and Flemish Christian Democrats) have continued to normalize their relations with the Iranian state. This is demonstrated in particular by the invitation and granting of visas to a delegation of 15 representatives of the Iranian regime, including the mayor of Tehran (known for his bloody repression of protests) at the Brussels Urban Summit last June, which led to the resignation of Pascal Smet. At the same time, the Belgian state continued to put conditions on the granting of refugee status, to detain people in closed centres and to forcibly expel Iranian exiles from the country [12]. Despite international appeals, the Iranian embassy was not closed. During a demonstration in Brussels, the

consulate was even barricaded by Belgian police. It is also still possible for Belgian companies and wealthy people to continue their investments in Iran, such as those of the Spoelberch family in technological companies of the Iranian regime [13]. The government also played into the hands of the Iranian state's "hostage diplomacy" by releasing an intelligence agent, Asadollah Assadi, who had been sentenced to 20 years in prison for an attempted bomb attack, in exchange for the liberation of Olivier Vandecasteele. An agreement which was made at the expense of thousands of detainees in Iranian prisons and groups of Iranian opponents of the regime in exile [14]. Let us note in passing that Amnesty International, an important player in the Vandecasteele liberation campaign but invisible in the four major national solidarity demonstrations, has clearly opted for a strategy centred on an individual and indifferent to the political situation.

At the regional level, the Iranian uprising particularly attracted the interest of the N-VA, the Flemish nationalist party in power in the Flemish region and in opposition at the federal level. This party leads a fight against trade-union, feminist and anti-racist forces and notably defends disinvestment in public services, lower wages, limitation of access to abortion, imprisonment and expulsion of migrants. On December 3, 2022, Theo Francken and Darya Safai, both N-VA deputies in the federal parliament, took part in a meeting with the "7 Aban Front", a coalition of Iranian Persian nationalists. Darya Safai, Belgian-Iranian, claims to be an activist for the emancipation of women. In reality, his involvement in the solidarity movement strengthened nationalist political tendencies, supporting the intervention of foreign countries and opposed to Kurdish self-determination and the rights of LGBTI+ people.

As with Iraq and Syria, the Belgian and European governments have absolutely no interest in democratic and social political forces emerging in Iran. On the other hand, they could have an interest in a change of regime if a new political leadership favourable to Western economic and political

interests emerges. For example, a right-wing, liberal and authoritarian bloc that would turn away from Russia and China. This is not yet the case. Despite at least one attempt with the formation of "The Alliance for Freedom and Democracy in Iran" in January 2023, notably composed of Reza Pahlavi (son of the last Shah of Iran), Masih Alinejad (American journalist), Shirin Ebadi (lawyer), Hamed Esmaeilion (former spokesperson for the association of families of the victims of flight PS752) and Abdullah Mohtadi (general secretary of the Komal Party of Iranian Kurdistan). This alliance without principle and ready to ally itself with imperialism without providing either social or democratic guarantees, has encountered numerous criticisms and seems, for the moment, to have ended in failure. But, it was at its strongest moment that Alireza Akhundi (Swedish MP, Centerpartiet) and Darya Safai called for a major international demonstration in front of the Council of Europe in Brussels on February 20, 2023. The call supported a central demand: the addition of the entire Revolutionary Guard Corps to the list of terrorist organizations of the Council of Europe.

Despite all the political differences highlighted, from the first rally in September 2022, the police declared that they would only give one authorization per month to demonstrations of "Iranians" while justifying themselves with paternalism and not without hypocrisy: "if you want to overthrow this regime, you must be able to demonstrate together". In fact, this position contributed to strengthening the dominant position of the right wing, better equipped with resources, by marginalizing progressive political forces in the opposition and restricting their possibilities of expression and their visibility.

What prospects for the future?

In recent weeks, the Iranian regime has stepped up its repression to prevent a new wave of protests. To avoid giving in to despair, it is

important to give meaning to the uprising and the mobilizations in which the population took a major "step forward" towards victory.

In this step forward, political forces capable of supporting self-organization and creating the possibility of convergence have yet to emerge and be formed. The population is gaining experience in strategies of self-protection and survival in the face of repression. Progressive forces in Iran and in exile have a key role to play in creating spaces for self-education, strategic analysis and self-organization. If there is one lesson that we can learn from all the revolutions in history, it is that we cannot separate the overthrow of the regime from the question of social and democratic organization, from the project of society to be built. The nature of the coalitions that will make possible the overthrow of the regime will colour the social and political future of the country. Despite physical and psychological exhaustion, many revolutionaries see an essential strategic issue: strengthening alliances between workers, students, grieving families, national minorities and women's groups.

There is just one certainty: new crises and uprisings can only happen. Getting organized means giving yourself the means to better prepare for that and to contribute here to supporting the relationship of forces there.

What are the tasks of the solidarity movement outside the country?

- Fight any attempt to impose a political alternative to the regime from outside the country.

- Reveal the duplicity and dangerousness of Western governments and those who proclaim themselves as figures of the Iranian diaspora.

- Strengthen international sanctions on senior leaders of the Revolutionary Guards and the Islamic State: boycott, freezing of assets and bank accounts.

- Demand the lifting of banking and commercial secrecy in Belgium and Europe to block the assets of the

regime's leaders and stop any economic partnership.

- Establish strong national and international coalitions with trade-union, feminist, anti-racist and socialist forces to build links of solidarity "from below". For example, for the release of all political and common law prisoners .

- Promote self-education on past and contemporary revolutionary experiences. For example: Syria and Sudan.

It is in this sense that an international coordination of feminist groups and collectives from the Iranian diaspora called for common feminist action in solidarity with the revolutionary movement on Friday, September 15, 2023. To demand the right to

emancipation and the need to continue the fight for "woman, life, freedom"! The anti-capitalist left was present to show its support at the rally organized in Brussels.

15 September 2023

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

Venezuelan immigrants win victory

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

At present as many 9,000 immigrants are crossing the border each day, coming from dozens of countries and Venezuelans making up a large portion of them. Republican Greg Abbott of Texas as governor of a border state has been fiercely opposed to immigration. He has filled buses with immigrants and sent them north to Democratic cities like Chicago and New York. Until now, Venezuelan asylees, unable to work legally in the United States, have been dependent upon local governments to house them, find schools for their children, and take care of their medical care.

In New York they have been housed in hotels and former military facilities. In Chicago, the immigrants are placed in temporary shelters, in police stations, and at O'Hare Airport. Some have been sheltered in colleges in Massachusetts and New York. But some conservative, white rural and suburban counties in New York State closed their shelters to immigrants and refused to allow New York City to rent hotel space for the immigrants. Mayor Eric Adams of New York City—with 60,000 new migrants, 15,000 of them Venezuelan—said before the TPS decision that the migrants were costing the city \$4

billion a year and in order to cover the cost he would have to cut other agencies by 15%.

The TPS status was won by pressure from Mayor Adams and New York State Governor Kathy Hochul as well as immigration rights and human rights organizations. Soon able to work legally, the immigrants will have to find jobs and homes for themselves as well as enrolling their children in public schools. In places like Illinois and New York state governments and local school boards will have to find classroom space and hire bilingual teachers for the thousands of immigrant children.

Why this massive Venezuelan immigration? Some 7.7 million people have emigrated out of Venezuela fleeing the country's collapsing economy and the repressive government of Nicolás Maduro in what is the great migration in the history of Latin America and one of the largest in the world. The country's economic problems have been aggravated by U.S. sanctions, which according to Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have affected the

Venezuelans' food and health. About 6.5 million Venezuelans have been received in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru with varying degrees of acceptance and support. About 500,000 have come to the United States where now, with their new TPS status, they can integrate themselves into the economy and society.

In granting TPS status to the Venezuelans, Biden has taken a risk, since immigration has become a divisive political issue. Trump and the Republicans call for closing the border and turning in the immigrants away while most Democrats are more supportive of the immigrants. At the same time, it seems that Biden, to shore up his base in the Democratic Party, is moving to the left, granting TPS to these immigrants and going to join the picket line of striking United Auto Workers. In this way he hopes to increase his working-class vote in key industrial states like Michigan and Ohio and to win more votes in Florida, which is 26% Latino. Whatever Biden's motives, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans should be somewhat better off.

24 September 2023

Anti-imperialism of fools: The case of Imran Khan

24 September 2023, by **Farooq Sulehria**

Of late, *Intercept* has joined the fray. In less than two months, Intercept issued two 'exclusive' reports. On 9 August it was 'revealed' that the USA maneuvered to topple Khan. [15] On Sept 17, another juicy story was broken with a 'progressive' twist: Washington helped Pakistan get an IMF bailout on the condition of secretly supplying weapons to Ukraine. The latter *Intercept* report again linked Khan's ouster with Empire's meddling in Pakistani politics. [16]

Seizing upon *Intercept's* 9 August expose, *Jacobin's* staffer Branko Marcetic penned an emotional essay anchored in an anti-imperial outrage the American left most likely expressed last time during the Vietnam days. [17] Marcetic placed Khan in this essay next to Salvador Allende to indict the Great Satan for imperial machinations in the periphery countries.

Long before *Intercept* and *Jacobin*, *Democracy Now* a day after Khan's removal, flagged the possibility of White House intrigues to bring change in Islamabad, the scenic capital of Pakistan perched in the Himalayan foothills. The *Democracy Now* segment on Khan's removal featured Tariq Ali who strongly hinted at the US involvement. [18] Such conspiracy theories were in fact set in motion by Khan himself days before his removal. At a public rally, he waved a cypher sent home by Pakistani ambassador in Washington, reporting a meeting with a US diplomat. In this meeting, Donald Lu, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, expressed displeasure over Khan's tacit support for Putin. Ironically, Putin received Khan precisely the day Russian invaded Ukraine.

While there have been counter-

narratives absolving Washington of any unfair play in Khan's affair, the purpose of this article is neither to substantiate nor to deny the US role in Khan's dismissal (though I will return to the topic at the end of this essay). This article aims at deconstructing the above-mentioned efforts in radical Western media outlets to portray Khan as 'anti-imperial', on the one hand, and to demonstrate that the 'regime change' in Pakistan would have occurred regardless of US whims because the Pakistani generals wanted a 'regime change', on the other hand.

Before discussing Khan's imagined 'anti-imperialism', let it be clear that Khan's dismissal was evident to any keen observer of the Pakistani politics. Here is a proof: on 6 November 2021 *Daily Jeddoh*, posted an analysis that explicitly claimed Imran Khan would be removed from power. [19] *Jeddoh* (Struggle) is a Marxist online daily. [20] Below is a brief background to Khan's ouster from the corridors of power.

Khan launched his Pakistan Justice Movement (PTI) in 1997 banking on his cult-like status as a former cricket star. Cricket is the opiate of the masses in South Asia. He was flanked by retired military general Hamid Gul and ultra-right ideologues while the main discourse was anti-corruption. It is rumoured in Pakistan that Khan was launched in Pakistani politics to counter Benazir Bhutto. In 1999, General Musharraf imposed the fourth military dictatorship and Khan was quick to support Musharraf in the hope of becoming next prime minister. Khan was embarrassingly lacking popular base, hence, Gen Musharraf did not find him useful. Gen Musharraf in a tv interview acknowledged that the military had to rig elections to help Khan win his own constituency when general elections were held in

2002. The elections in Pakistan are conducted in the British fashion: constituency-wise and first-past-the-poll system.

Bitter and frustrated, Khan with a huge ego and a deep-seated narcissism, joined the opposition when a mass movement emerged against the Musharraf dictatorship in 2007. Benazir Bhutto (BB) was assassinated in December 2007. Fingers were pointed out at the Musharraf dictatorship for the suicide attack that claimed BB's life. Fresh elections brought BB's centre-left party Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to power while her key rival Nawaz Sharif emerged as the key opposition leader. Until then, Pakistani politics was dominated by two political dynasties: Bhuttos and Sharifs.

The PPP was launched by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, BB's father, as an Islamic socialist project in 1967. When elections were held for the first time in the country, since its independence in 1947, Bhutto managed to win. As country's first elected prime minister he introduced (half-hearted) land reforms and a massive nationalization. Like most of his third world radical contemporaries, he was removed from power and sent to gallows in 1979 after General Zia overthrew him in 1977. To counter the PPP, the Zia dictatorship patronized Nawaz Sharif, an industrialist from the dominant province of Punjab. When Gen Zia's died in a plane crash in 1988, fresh elections were held. BB won the elections and triumphantly arrived at the Prime Minister secretariat.

However, all-powerful military maneuvered to remove her and heavily rigged the 1990 snap elections to bring Mr Sharif to power. From 1988 to 1999, BB and Sharif managed to come to power twice. Once in

power, Sharif developed differences with the military but also managed to build himself a popular base in the Punjab province owing to some of his mega infrastructural projects such as motorways besides a lavish politics of patronage. Bhuttos hail from the Sindh province.

During the Musharraf dictatorship, Bhuttos and Sharifs joined hands finally for the restoration of civilian rule. While the general elections in 2008 brought the PPP to power (BB's widower, Asif Zardari became the president) at the federal level and Sindh, Sharif's party, the Muslim League, built the provincial government in Punjab with his younger brother, Shabaz Sharif, as the chief minister. In 2013, fresh elections were held and roles were reversed. The PPP emerged as the opposition (retaining its government in Sindh) while Sharif took oath as the prime minister for the third time.

Though Bhuttos and Sharifs have never really challenged the military hegemony yet neither of the dynasties is fully trusted by the military command. Hence, a malicious and machinating generals decided to build Khan as an alternative to Bhuttos and Sharifs 2011 onwards. Besides promising an end to corruption (mother of all Pakistan's problems, according to Khan's discourse which remains very popular in Pakistan), Khan also promised to end dynastic politics (more below on his actual political programme).

While the PPP discredited itself owing to poor performance 2008 to 2013, Sharif was able to gain popularity by 'reviving' economy (he lavishly borrowed from imperial donors) and introducing yet more mega infrastructural projects. Most importantly, he was able to eliminate huge electricity outages (by introducing disastrous climate projects including coal energy). The power cuts, sometimes extending to 12 hours a day, had eroded the previous PPP government's credibility and popularity. To replace Sharif with Khan, Sharif was disqualified from politics through Kangaroo courts besides rigging 2018 general elections. However, meantime, Khan was able to build a popular base

among the urban middle classes including military's rank and file.

In particular, the professional classes (doctors, engineers, IT workers, academics, media men and women) finally found in Khan a long-awaited messiah. The critics in Pakistan call Khan's cult like following Youthias (a corruption of English word 'youth' but with anti-gay connotations) or 'fan club' of celebrity Khan. Pakistani diaspora in the West converted to Khanism like the fanatic Donald Trump followers in the USA. It seems some self-styled leftish diasporic Pakistanis have also jumped on this bandwagon.

Pakistan's mini-Trump

When Imran Khan assumed the title of prime minister, noted American comedian, Trevor Noah, in his broadcast 'The Daily Show' humorously drew parallels between Trump and Khan. [21] Khan's 'fan club' was incensed on the analogy oblivious to the fact that *International Viewpoint* had correctly labelled Khan as Pakistan's mini-Trump before 'The Daily Show'. [22]

Once in power, Khan and his PTI proved inefficient even from the viewpoint of its Khaki patrons. Economy nosedived. Inflation and debt spiral snowballed. Ironically, the anti-corruption discourse lost all the relevance since Transparency International (which in turn is very questionable organization, objectively serving imperial interests) ranked Pakistan as more corrupt than it was under Sharif.

It is important to foreground Khan's political and economic programme at this stage. While Bhuttos and Sharifs have driven forth neoliberal policies, Khan and his PTI offer the most militant neo-liberal agenda. Ultra neoliberalism economically and social conservatism (with a strong touch of religion) define his politics. Conservatism in Pakistan is not complete without incorporating highly toxic misogyny. An example: Khan repeatedly ridiculed Bilawal Bhutto (BB's son and PPP's present CEO) for

being 'womanly'. "One can not say whether Bilawal is a He or a She", he would tell the large rallies of his supporters. The rape, he thought, was women's own fault since they dressed provocatively. The more he lost popularity as the prime minister, the rigorous became the exploitation of religion. He tried to cast himself as the crusader against growing Islamophobia in the West. Ridiculed as 'Taliban Khan' by his critics, he declared ben-Laden a 'martyr' and glorified the Taliban despite unspeakable barbarities they were committing in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Most importantly, he returned to the IMF for yet another bailout package but simply refused to address the two fundamental problems afflicting Pakistani economy: foreign debt and the military budget. Owing to foreign debt, Pakistan is fast becoming another Sri Lanka. Bankruptcy is around the corner. Ironically, to postpone bankruptcy caused by foreign debt, the managers of Pakistani state resort to more loans. Khan did exactly the same. It is obvious to any elementary student of Pakistani economy that economic revival is impossible unless Pakistan refuses to shed imperial loans. Intercept's newly-found anti-imperial hero ruthlessly incurred global debt as country's prime minister.

Next big drain on Pakistani economy is the military budget devouring 30 to 40 percent of the federal budget. The Khan government kept on increasing the military budget at a time when economic growth went negative, second time in country's 75-year long history.

As millions more fell below the scary line of poverty, Khan was busy conspiring with a section of military command (notably General Faiz Hameed, heading the Inter Services Intelligence) to consolidate his grip on power through appointments of cronies on key military positions. The stronger faction in the military edged Khan and his crony-military men out with the help of Sharifs and Bhuttos. They all connived because their interests converged.

Meantime, his rule was proving indeed

authoritarian. Even when the media was highly supportive, left-over critical voices were silenced. Disappearances of political activists and their torture reached new heights. Among the victims included Ali Wazir, only Marxist in the National Assembly. The five-year term of the parliament expired last August. Ali Wazir spent three of the five years behind the bar. He justifiably voted in favour of no-confidence motion against Khan in April 2022. Workers demonstrations were ruthlessly attacked. In one instance, expired tear gas was fired on a peasant demonstration in Lahore. Khan's interior minister mockingly defended the inhuman act.

Once in opposition, Khan began to criticize top military generals. The coalition government consisting of Bhuttos and Sharifs (Shairf's younger brother Shahbaz Sharif became the prime minister, Bilawal bagged the slot of foreign minister) proved more incapable than that of Khan's outgoing regime. The price hike doubled in one year. The growing unpopularity of Sharifs helped revive Khan's popularity. Miscalculating his support in the military top-echelons and urban middle classes, his party synchronized attacks on military installations on May 9, earlier this year, to agitate against Khan's arrest. This adventurism provided military with a pretext to crackdown on the PTI. Presently, Khan himself is in prison while over four thousand PTI activists and leaders have also been imprisoned. Fresh elections by law should have been held November. However, the Election Commission has postponed the process till January on phony pretexts. Khan and his PTI are least likely to win the next election. The way the PTI 'won' the 2018 election, it will lose at the next polling day in the similar fashion. The PTI since Khan's arrest is positioning itself as anti-military and projecting Khan as anti-establishment. Is Imran Khan anti-military establishment?

Khan's 'anti-establishment and

anti-imperialism'

The military in Pakistan has built itself a social base (which shrinks and expands periodically) with an ideological super-structure. The ideological planks that help sustain this super-structure consist of anti-India paranoia, Islam (perpetually threatened by the Christian West and Jewish Israel), and a 'fifth column' consisting of ethnic minorities (particularly Baluch and Pashtoons).

Nota bene: the Pakistan military is numerically and politically dominated by the Punjab province, the largest of four major ethnicities. Like national chauvinisms in rest of the world, Pakistani chauvinism, with the central aim of justifying phenomenal military budgets propelling the country to bankruptcy, pivots around fantastic conspiracy theories.

Imran Khan while in power proved himself the most rabidly anti-India politician. He turned the exploitation of religion into an art. Though he was not in control of anything substantial (military was/is) yet his stint in power undermined whatever democratic development had occurred in the country since Gen Musharraf's exit. Certain instable but substantial gains were made to establish civilian supremacy in relation to military. With Khan at the helm, Pakistan embraced what many in the country called 'hybrid regime': a civilian façade whereby military steers in disguise. Even when in opposition ever since April 2022, Khan or his party has not questioned either the military budget and the associated privileges that accrue to top brass or the ideological super-structure.

The PTI remains ultra-neoliberal, anti-women, anti-working class, conservative project that counts on the support of rightwing middle classes. Discursively, like Trumpism, it thrives on the victimhood of the oppressors. It is a politics of anti-politics. Consequently, Khan's anti-imperialism is as hollow as his anti-establishment. He flaunted his trip to White House, when Trump was inhibiting it, as a big success. Once the Biden administration replaced the Trump gang, Khan was given a cold

shoulder. This became a public embarrassment for Khan. Not merely every foreign correspondent interviewing him, local media(wo)men would also question him about President Biden not receiving his phone calls. Beyond such symbolisms, it is his politics that deserve sober analysis by anybody seriously engaged in anti-imperialism.

Long before Intercept et al pouched up Khan in their list of anti-imperialists, the left in Pakistan faced a similar situation post 9/11. On the one hand, there were certain Trotskyist trends in Latin America and Europe urging the Pakistani left to support the Taliban, on the hand, the global corporate media were drawing irritating analogies between Che and ben Laden.

The left in Pakistan proved principled and nuanced post 9/11. Despite many mutual ideological and political differences, none of the organized groups lent support to the Taliban. The left opposed the Taliban as well as the US occupation. Time vindicated this principled position even if the left, owing to its marginality, could not play any decisive role in the outcome. Likewise, the left developed no illusion either in ben Laden or Khan later on. At the time, this author penned an op-ed for a Pakistani broadsheet. It is copied in entirety below for its contemporary relevance even beyond Pakistan:

The dangerously beautiful Che Guevara is trivialized when some myopic columnist compares him to Osama bin Laden. Not because Che's cap is more fascinating than bin Laden's turban. The symbol of respectability in many Asian and African societies, a turban is as fascinating as a cap, hat or whatever one wears in different cultures. Capitalism sells images, and it is the corporate media that identifies a turban, beard or the Osama-brand fundamentalism with Islam. No, it is not the headwear or beard that trivialises Che when he is compared with Osama. It is Osama's quasi anti-imperialism that is far removed from that of Che.

ideological support through his neoliberal policies. Military and the IMF are the key instruments to facilitate imperial interventions in Pakistan.

The politics of Khan have not benefitted anti-imperialism by an iota in Pakistan. On the contrary, his politics have gravely undermined, for the years to come, the gains made by the women's movement, democracy activism and the trade union struggles. Domestically, he sided with military by facilitating the hybrid regime. Globally, he sided with the IMF by providing practical and

It is possible that the Biden administration actively or passively sanctioned Khan's removal from power. Even if the White House or Foggy Bottom effected a 'regime change' in Islamabad April 2022, they removed one of their own. Hosni Mubarrak comes to mind. The Egyptian Pharaoh also blamed Uncle Sam after the Arab Spring humbled him. [24] At least Saudi monarchs bought the story. [25]

We do not need "great symbols of authority" with double standards: expel patriarchal behavior and harassment from our social movements!

23 September 2023, by Mi-hyang Pak

"It is now 2023. We don't need 'great symbols of authority'. Drive sexual violence out of social movements!"

It criticized the sexual violence of the then leader of the Tiananmen Square protests. [26] There were also signs around the area criticizing leaders of China's democracy movement who have been accused of sexual violence and harassment in the past.

"Are you silent about crimes of sexual violence while you claim democracy and human rights?"

Among young people opposed to the authoritarian rule of the Xi Jinping regime, empathy for the students who stood up for political reform 34 years ago is spreading. On the other hand, these voices also expressed the disposition of the post-Tiananmen generation which does not necessarily see the pro-democracy activists as heroes. They expressed surprise at the

old patriarchal view and disregard for human rights shared by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese democracy movement community, including democracy movement organizations that exist primarily outside of China.

Wave of the #MeToo movement

The #MeToo movement that spread in the US in 2017 spread to China in 2018. Since then, sexual harassment has been found to be widespread in various sectors of Chinese society. And the #MeToo movement had arrived in Taiwan. Officials from Taiwan's ruling party and opposition parties accused sexual harassment one after another. However, most of the allegations within the Taiwanese

regime were buried in the dark. Under these circumstances, many people accused the then student leader of the Tiananmen Square protests of sexual violence. One of the accusers revealed the name and face to the media to make the allegation of sexual violence.

The then student leader was the main leader of the Tiananmen Square protests. He was also known worldwide as an icon of the Chinese democracy movement. It was reported that the university, where he taught for several years, launched its own investigation and contacted his students. And the university's special faculty decided to cancel his lectures for the coming semester out of concern for the students. On the other hand, the "political intentions behind it" were also reported.

Incessant accusations and silence of the CCP

This accusation of sexual violence would not be subject to the claim of "political intentions". Prioritizing the "democratization of China" while dismissing sexual harassment would only be a secondary crime against the victims under the pretext of the "political position. Meanwhile, sexual violence and human rights abuses by other "pro-democracy activists" have come to light. It has been reported that a "pro-democracy activist" sympathetic to the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests echoed racist

propaganda similar to that of the Chinese Communist Party, demonizing the Uyghurs and labeling them as "terrorists". [28] The CCP's model of governance is based on patriarchal system and women who seek to dismantle such structures are a major driving force behind the movement. A future movement to push the CCP in a democratic direction may be a movement like the White Paper Protests that takes place outside the traditional Chinese democracy movement community. The Chinese democracy movement community has long lost its influence in China due to the government's crackdown on political leaders. Moreover, some in the Chinese democracy movement community would have themselves turned their backs on the changing

times. There is no future for a movement that turns its back on the changing times. And there will be no young next generation willing to take over such a movement.

We are living in the capitalist society where various forms of discrimination and social exclusion are rife. However, we have taken a political position against all forms of oppression and discrimination. Any forms of oppressive or discriminatory behavior must be sanctioned and, if necessary, the perpetrator must be excluded. It is not "great symbols of authority" with convenient double standards for human rights that will transform our society.

23 September 2023

"It feels like the apocalypse"

22 September 2023, by **Mike Phipps**

Around 200 people are estimated to have been killed and hundreds more wounded, including old women and children. The [mayor of the city of Marturi](#), which was shelled, was one of the fatalities. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed support for Azerbaijan's military aggression.

Last December, [Azerbaijan](#) began a blockade of the disputed region, by closing the Lachin corridor. This created a humanitarian emergency for the ethnic Armenian civilians in the enclave, as food, energy and medical care became increasingly scarce.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch condemned the blockade and the International Court of Justice of the [United Nations](#) ordered Azerbaijan to "ensure unhindered traffic" on the highway connecting Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh. The [European Court of Human Rights](#) also called for free travel. Both rulings were ignored by the Azerbaijan regime.

Azerbaijan's military intervention had long been threatened. In October

2020, [President Aliyev](#) stated that, "If they do not leave our lands of their own free will, we will chase them away like dogs."

Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding territories had been under ethnic Armenian control since the end of a separatist war in 1994, but Azerbaijan regained the territories and parts of Nagorno-Karabakh during fighting in 2020. That ended with an armistice which placed Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh. The enclave is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but its population of 120,000 is [over 99% Armenian](#).

The current Armenian government of Nikol Pashinyan has distanced itself from the breakaway republic. "We hope that military escalation will not continue, because in the current conditions it is very important to ensure stability and stop combat actions," Pashinyan said in a televised address to Armenians. He said the [Russian peacekeeping troops](#) took full responsibility for the safety of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Protesters in the Armenian capital took a different view. Thousands gathered in Yerevan's central Republic Square to express their anger with Pashinyan's government, as well as what they see as the failures of Russia and the West to protect the lives of ethnic Armenians.

In a comprehensive statement of condemnation, the [Russian Socialist Movement](#) suggested that recent developments made it clear to the Azerbaijan government that "aggressors can get away with anything." It said: "The obvious beneficiaries of this war are also the regimes of Putin and Erdogan. Russian foreign policy proves that Putin absolutely does not tolerate the manifestation of political subjectivity in countries that, from his point of view, should forever be in the sphere of Russian influence... A possible constitutional coup in Armenia is Putin's desired outcome of the war unleashed by Aliyev."

[Other analysts](#) agree. One pointed out that some Russian officials and

prominent propagandists were “gloating” over the renewed fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, citing the fact that Dmitry Medvedev, the Chair of Russia’s Security Council and Russia’s former president, had lashed out at Armenia’s President Pashinyan on Telegram for “flirting with Nato” and providing aid to Ukraine. “Guess what fate awaits him,” Medvedev said.

The Russian Socialist Movement statement called on Azerbaijan to immediately cease hostilities and open negotiations without any preconditions, and on the international community to immediately impose sanctions against the leadership of Azerbaijan. It pointed out that Azerbaijani border guards, who control the Lachin corridor, several times during the summer abducted Armenian men trying to leave the enclave. “This means that as long as Azerbaijan controls the humanitarian corridors, there is no confidence in the safe evacuation of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh.”

Armenians have strong grounds to fear genocide in the region, based on their history. The ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh is a distinct possibility.

Russian-Armenian anti-war activist Arshak Makichyan [tweeted](#) a thread from a woman in Stepanakert: “I was

coming from work and a Smerch [meaning Smerch missile] whistled over me. Then the second time, then the third. There were explosions. It was nearby, apartment building was destroyed. That’s how I found out [about the beginning of the fighting]... There is no electricity, no food. Stores are not working. People are burning fires, trying to warm water. It feels like the apocalypse... People continue to gather at the airport. There are a lot of young families with children there. They live in tents, there is no food there, no hot meal points... Residents of village of Krasny Bazar who reached Stepanakert told horror stories. They were on foot and their column was shot. And there literally women and children were dying without help... Now the town of Martuni and Martakert are surrounded by Azerbaijanis. They [female residents] are told over the loudspeaker that they are given a day or two and that they must leave everything without their belongings... But how to leave? We have non-walking patients, we have pets. Where are we supposed to go? We’ve been in a blockade for nine months, we don’t even have gasoline, we don’t have transportation. And we don’t know where to go. Their army is everywhere. They are shooting at our cars.”

[Makichyan tweeted](#): “EU/UN should urgently send peacekeepers to

Artsakh to save 120,000 indigenous Armenians and help evacuate them to a safe place. EU should grant Armenian people the right to seek refuge here, as France did in 1915. It’s time to save people’s lives from Second Armenian Genocide.”

Yet the [EU seems reluctant](#) to risk jeopardizing its relationship with the Azerbaijan regime. Two months ago, EU High Representative Josep Borrell announced that the “European Union is deeply concerned about the serious humanitarian situation” in Nagorno-Karabakh, but fell short of recommending any concrete action. A year earlier European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen flew to Baku to sign an agreement doubling the supply of gas from Azerbaijan to the EU.

The British government too has been a major source of foreign investment for Azerbaijan’s economy. It was unsurprising therefore that the [UK government’s only comment](#) on the bombardment so far was to say that Azerbaijan’s use of force was unacceptable but that it was encouraged by the announcement of a ceasefire. Such banalities in the face of a potential human rights catastrophe are shocking.

21 September 2023

Source: [Labour Hub](#).

Electric Vehicle Factories Are Overwhelmingly Nonunion. The UAW Strike Could Change That.

21 September 2023, by [Dianne Feeley](#)

The IRA also extended additional manufacturing tax credits to the Internal Revenue Code. Companies are reimbursed 10 percent of the cost of producing renewable energy. The section grants a \$35 credit for every kilowatt-hour of battery cell

production and a \$10 credit for those of modules. Various analysts [estimate](#) the ten-year tax credit may provide battery cell manufacturers with an extra \$135-200 billion.

Amid high-stakes contract negotiations with the Big Three

automakers, newly elected United Auto Workers (UAW) president Shawn Fain has criticized Biden’s packages for not tying public spending to worker protections. While the IRA [includes](#) prevailing wage standards and apprenticeship programs for the

construction industry, it is silent on wages and working conditions in manufacturing. “The UAW supports and is ready for the transition to a clean auto industry,” Fain said in a late August [statement](#). “But the EV transition must be a just transition that ensures auto workers have a place in the new economy.”

Shortly after the IRA’s first anniversary, the Biden administration announced an additional \$15.5 billion to aid the auto companies’ transition. Biden’s nod to organized labor provided companies with a unionized workforce extra points on their application, but nothing more. While small compared to the largesse in the IRA, it reinforces the administration’s twin goals of drawing down the country’s reliance on China-based manufacturing and dramatically boosting the number of hybrid or fully electric vehicles available by 2030. As Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm put it, through linking the reduction of the country’s reliance on fossil fuels to the creation of a homegrown battery industry, the Biden administration aims at building a “global manufacturing powerhouse.”

For their part, auto companies and battery manufacturers are investing \$100 billion in building new battery plants in the United States and Canada. Given that the technology was developed primarily by Chinese and South Korean companies, the Detroit Three are eager to partner with them. In most cases, the auto companies have set up new plants as joint ventures, conveniently bypassing their collective bargaining agreement with the UAW.

Elected as a reformer, Fain is making the demand for job security a central priority in negotiations. With the contract set to expire at midnight tonight, the Detroit Three have increased their offers but seem determined to keep a “temporary” or “supplemental” lower-wage/few-benefits layer of the workforce. A strike, beginning tomorrow, is almost certain.

The union would begin striking just a few plants across the three corporations. Everyone else would report for work, continue strike

preparations, and be ready to walkout as needed.

Folding in battery workers into the “master agreement” would be a gigantic win as EV production revs up, but that isn’t on the table. However, the future of the workers in the United States’ blossoming, heavily subsidized EV sector is implicitly present. If the contract rolls back concessions, battery workers will flock to the UAW.

The First Plants to Open

The most common battery cell is the lithium ion. Cost efficient and easily stored, it is made from lithium, nickel, cobalt, and aluminum oxide. In addition to lithium deposits found in Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina, half a dozen states, including Nevada, California, Utah, and North Carolina contain lithium.

While battery cells comprise 25 to 30 percent of the total value of all EV parts and are the key component in the supply chain, the work is poorly paid. Workers earn an average of \$17 to \$21 an hour, have few benefits, and face dangerous working conditions. Government grants, loans, and tax credits [contain](#) no prevailing wage provision for workers making the product

In the relatively new method of building battery cells for EVs, a cell consists of assembling three elements: a positive cathode, a negative anode, and an electrode — a liquid solution — that sits in between. Routine exposure to chemicals used for each component can cause respiratory tract, skin, or eye irritation; nausea; headaches; dizziness; and diarrhea. Acute exposure risks harm to one’s kidneys or reproductive system (including fetal damage) and can lead to germ cell mutations or cancer.

To minimize worker exposure, safety protocols must be established, meticulously followed, and updated. These include monitoring air quality, keeping certain chemicals away from heat, limiting contact with particular chemicals, and providing complete and transparent information about

possible problems and finding alternatives.

After cells are placed into pouches, they are assembled into a dense network of battery cells at another facility — likewise, mostly nonunion.

The Reality of Battery Cell Production

Of the US battery plants in operation, the oldest is Tesla’s nonunion Gigafactory Nevada (2017). Since opening, the company has faced allegations of low pay, racial discrimination, labor law violations, and dangerous working conditions. Despite this history, Tesla’s investors expect to rake in a billion dollars in tax credits this year.

GM’s joint venture with LG Energy Solution, Ultium Cells Lordstown, Ohio, got off the ground in the summer of 2022. Estimating the cost of bringing the facility online at \$2.3 billion, the company projected a work force of seventeen hundred. The starting wage was \$16.50 an hour and was projected to top out at \$20 after seven years. This year GM’s chief financial officer Paul Jacobson expects to collect \$300 billion in tax credits.

On top of providing poor pay, the company has had serious safety issues. The latest incident, on August 23, was a n-Methylpyrrolidone (NMP) spill. The Environmental Protection Agency defines NMP as “an unreasonable risk” to human health at nearly every stage of commercial or consumer use. Other troubling issues include infrequent monitoring of air quality, failure to provide showers, and lack of exit routes.

As a result, newly employed workers took action. Many quit, while others signed cards to have the UAW become their union. When the company refused to recognize the union through “card check,” workers filed for an election with the National Labor Relations Board. Held over two days in December 2022, the election resulted in a 710-16 vote for the UAW.

Last month, workers ratified an

interim contract (895-16) that boosted entry wages to \$20. Based on hours worked, this will result in backpay of \$3,000-\$7,000. Working conditions, including health and safety, are still being negotiated, but the UAW is demanding the safety measures that have been so central to the UAW national agreement. A UAW report, “High Risk and Low Pay,” documented cases of workers sickened by chemicals. The report outlines strong and enforceable protocols in the UAW’s national agreement, including the right of workers to walk off the job under unsafe conditions.

But without a union — the situation of the vast majority of EV workers — safety issues are only covered by the underfunded Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The UAW report concludes:

There will be tens of thousands of workers in battery plants in the near future. Establishing best practices at these plants now will set a high bar throughout the industry. Workers across the supply chain, from mining and mineral processing through final assembly of EVs, will be dealing with many hazards similar to those faced by workers at Ultium in Lordstown. Ramping up EV production to reduce climate impacts must not result in spreading dangerous manufacturing practices to communities across the country. All EV workers deserve robust protections and a voice in making their jobs safer.

The Building Frenzy

For the time being, the construction boom continues in nonunion plants.

Ultium Cells LLC is building two other battery plants, in Spring Hill, Tennessee, and Lansing, Michigan, at a cost of \$2.6 billion each. Both will employ seventeen hundred workers and produce pouch-style cell packets. GM has announced a fourth joint

venture, this time with South Korea’s Samsung SDI, making both prismatic and cylindrical cell packets.

For its part, Ford created a joint venture (JV) with South Korea SK On. BlueOval SK is building two plants in Kentucky at a cost of \$5.8 billion and hiring five thousand workers. A third plant will be put up in BlueOval City, next to where Ford assembles an electric truck. That facility is projected to have twenty-five hundred workers with a total \$5.6 billion investment for the entire complex. Finally, at a cost of \$1.34 billion, Ford is reconfiguring its Oakville, Canada, assembly plant to package battery cells from a Kentucky plant.

The three US plants received a \$9.2 billion loan from the Department of Energy, the largest loan a federal agency has approved to date for battery manufacture. The deal provides superior repayment terms, including debt forgiveness if the project doesn’t pan out. But there were no provisions for workers.

Things are slightly better in Marshall, Michigan, where Ford is planning on constructing a \$3.5 billion, twenty-five-hundred-worker lithium iron phosphate plant, contracting with Chinese battery maker CATL. Ford company hasn’t agreed to union representation, but has said it would recognize the union through a card check process. In addition to federal grants and credits, the state of Michigan provided \$36 million to get the site ready, \$300 million to acquire the land and cut trees, another \$330 million to develop roads and other necessary infrastructure; a \$210 million grant; and a fifteen-year tax abatement that amounts to an estimated value of \$772 million. Other states are ponying up money for the EV plants in their areas.

Nonunion companies are also getting in on the EV facility boomlet. Tesla plans to expand to a lithium refinery in Texas and produce battery cells, packs, and modules in California and Texas. Other companies investing in battery plants include BMW (South Carolina), Honda (Ohio), Hyundai (Georgia), Mercedes-Benz (Alabama), Toyota (North Carolina), Volkswagen (Ontario, Canada), and Volvo (South

Carolina).

A variety of battery manufacturers are building new facilities, too. These include the Japanese company AESC (Tennessee, Kentucky, and South Carolina), the Chinese-owned Gotion (Michigan), South Korea’s LG Energy Solution (Arizona and Michigan) the start-up Our Next Energy (Michigan), Japanese-owned Panasonic (Kansas), South Korean SK Battery America (Georgia), and Redwood Materials, a recycling company (Nevada and South Carolina).

Past UAW officials did not address the coming restructuring of the auto industry, so the union is years late in developing a militant response. President Fain notes that over the last twenty years, sixty-five auto plants have closed and several parts plants have been sold off. Meanwhile, in the last decade alone, the Detroit Three enjoyed a quarter of a trillion dollars in profit. CEO compensation packages have exploded as the wages of autoworkers and the pensions of retirees stagnated.

The union insists that it makes no difference whether one works in a parts plant, an assembly facility, or a new battery plant — the right to a good-paying job, safe working conditions, and a life outside of work is essential. For its part, Stellantis insists on maintaining divisions — such as Mopar — where workers receive substandard pay. GM has that same demand for those who work for its subsidiaries, such as GM Components Holdings (GMCH) and GM Customer Care and After Sales (CCA).

The new leadership’s eagerness to galvanize membership for a “No Concessions” contract has meant organizing for a potential strike. They have adapted several methods developed by Teamsters for a Democratic Union: trainings on how to gather coworkers together to discuss contract demands, wearing red union T-shirts on Wednesdays, practice picketing, and where possible, strike preparation committees in the locals.

Most recently, the UAW held a Zoom training on how to talk to the media. This is a sharp contrast to the

previous leadership's "no comment" to reporters during negotiations. This, plus Fain's weekly updates over Zoom and appearances at rallies, has kept members abreast of the negotiations. In those locals where the Administration Caucus (which ruled the union for decades) is telling members such strike preparation and militancy is harmful, members have tools to organize around this roadblock. But many local leaders,

seeing members' enthusiasm, have joined the campaign. The energy is contagious.

The old leadership failed to reverse the givebacks and proved incapable of organizing even one foreign auto "transplant." Now the growth of joint venture EV plants has complicated the task. The new UAW strategy is to obtain a "No Concessions" contract with an eye toward moving on to organize nonunion plants. It has called

on members to model themselves after the sit-down strikers of the '30s and launch a Stand Up Strike midnight September 14.

Only such a militant union with innovative tactics and a commitment to move mountains will be capable of inspiring EV battery workers.

14 September 2023

Source: [Jacobin](#).

A chain of disasters in Libya

20 September 2023, by [Maria Puccini](#)

This is by no means a natural disaster, but a hurricane whose violence has been increased tenfold by the warming of the Mediterranean. Torrential rain fell on Benghazi, Shahhat, Al Marj, El Beïda and Sousse, among others.

Dams not maintained

The heavy rains caused the collapse of the Bou Mansour and Al-Bilad dams, located on the Ouadi Derna, upstream of the city. These dams date from the Gaddafi era and were designed in the 1970s by a Yugoslav company [29], but had not been maintained for some twenty years and had cracked in 1998. However, a serious warning was issued in 2022 by Abdel-Wanis Achour, a university lecturer from El Beïda, at the end of a documented study of the dams on the Ouadi Derna: "Those in charge must take immediate steps to carry out regular maintenance of the existing dams, because in the event of a major flood, the consequences will be catastrophic for the inhabitants, whether riverside or city dwellers," he said, before recommending that it would be necessary to "find a way of increasing

the vegetation cover to combat desertification" and "alert the inhabitants living on the banks of the river to the dangers involved and the safety measures to be taken."

Torrents of mud and health risks

The consequences of this predicted hurricane were not properly anticipated by the weather or civil protection services, which should have evacuated people as a precautionary measure.

And what should have been a "flood" (like in the Thessaloniki plain in Greece) turned into a surge of mud several metres high, sweeping a quarter of the city of Derna (population 100,000) into the sea, with the poorest neighbourhoods being the first to give way.

In addition to the traditional consequences of this type of disaster - a lack of drinking water and the risk of epidemics - there are now difficulties in accessing the victims, due to bridges and roads being cut off, and the existence of two authorities in Libya. The risk of contamination has

increased tenfold, as it is difficult and time-consuming to find corpses in the mud, and there are no covers to isolate them. Finally, after a decade of fighting, there is a risk of contamination by buried toxic products from munitions that have been lying on the ground for years and have been released by the mudflow. The number of displaced people is likely to rise, as the people living near the dams are now living in fear. In turn, the mayor of Toukra and the Libyan Red Crescent warned of the danger posed to the population by the Jaza dam if it were to give way. Another warning has been issued concerning the Ouadi Al Qattara dam upstream of Benghazi.

The people of Libya, be they Libyan, Sudanese, Egyptian or others, are paying a high price for the counter-revolution led by Marshal Haftar, who is more concerned with gaining power than with the common good, and is supported by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Russia, France and the Wagner militias. The only response from European governments to those fleeing the disasters caused by climate change is war.

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

Three deaths at work per day on average

19 September 2023, by **Hélène Marra**

The expression “white deaths” used in Italy to indicate that the deaths occurred in the workplace is misleading. It aims to depoliticize and individualize these tragic accidents inherent in capitalism. In the majority of cases, there are indeed guilty parties and clearly identifiable causes: the race for profit, the pace of work and appalling working conditions.

The coldness of the figures and statistics often conceals the experience of hardship. This was the case of Gianfranco Corso, who died in Brescia after a week of agony. On 30 August, the 50-year-old drainage worker found himself trapped 9 metres down a well. Corso had climbed down the shaft through a trapdoor to help a colleague who had felt ill because of the presence of gas, but he in turn fell ill when he breathed in toxic fumes, in particular hydrogen sulphide emissions.

The very young and foreigners among the worst affected

Another worrying fact to emerge from the Vega Observatory is the occupational death rate among the very young (aged 15 to 24). This rate has increased by 100% compared to the 25-34 age group.

Overall, the age group most affected by fatal accidents at work remains the 55-64 age group (101 out of a total of 271).

The number of women who lost their lives at work between January and May 2023 was 16, while 11 lost their lives on the way to and from work. The situation is also very bad for foreign workers, for whom the risk of fatal accident is almost double that of Italians.

Italy at the bottom of the European average

According to Eurostat data, the country with the highest number of accidents in relation to the employed population is Cyprus, followed by Bulgaria and then Italy, with 3.39 per 100,000 employees, while in France the rate is 2.541.

There are increasing questions about the possible correlations between the reorganization processes following the Covid crisis and this upsurge in work-related fatalities. The resumption of production activity against a backdrop of economic crisis could well be the underlying cause of this new spiral of accidents.

Voices raised

against injustice and contempt

Giorgia Meloni’s neo-fascist government thinks it can solve the crisis with “bonuses”. The state has paid out €270 billion in economic bonuses and various contributions. This is how it is trying to anaesthetise social tensions, not by solving the problems but by thwarting the self-organization of the masses at the hottest moments. Individual one-off payments, bonuses are not collective rights and are distributed with the aim of destroying and hindering any process of building a class for itself.

Although fragmented and heterogeneous, a few dissenting voices are standing up to this wave of injustice and contempt. In Naples, those who had received the citizenship income organized themselves into various committees. The state is offering them a subsidy of 350 euros a month (less than the citizenship income) for 12 months only, provided they register on an electronic platform and take a training course. We should follow developments in this movement of unemployed workers in southern Italy, whose politicization could give impetus to the struggles of wage earners.

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

Auto Workers Strike All of the Big Three Companies for the First Time

18 September 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

The union particularly wants to end tiers and “temporary work” that may last for years and provide no benefits. The UAW also seeks to ensure union job security as the industry makes the transition to electric vehicles (EVs). The union’s strategy is to walk out only at selected plants. It has begun by striking three of 54 plants, one from each company, that produce trucks which are very profitable.

Union president Shawn Fain, told the members shortly before the strike:

The companies know what our priorities are. They’ve made a quarter of a trillion dollars in North American profits over the last decade while they nickel-and-dime our members every day. They price gouge the American consumer, and they squeeze the U.S. taxpayer for every dime they can get. The big three can afford to immediately give us our fair share; if they choose not to then they are responsible for the strike.

backed by Unite All Workers for Democracy, a reform slate, and won the presidency earlier this year by just 500 votes. He blames the UAW’s former corrupt, company-union leadership for making concessions in wages, pensions, and cost of living. Fain, who begins each day reading the Bible and praying, launched the strike quoting the Gospels several times and called upon his members to have faith in themselves.

I have always believed that UAW members serve a higher power, we have a mission and a calling. We fight not only for the good of our union or for the good of our members and our families, we fight for the good of the entire working class and the poor....I tell you this, I’m at peace with the decision to strike if we have to because I know that we’re on the right side in this battle, because it’s a battle of the working class against the rich, the halves versus the have nots, the billionaire class against everybody else.

Fain, 54 years old and a union electrician for 29 years, has been a union official for twenty years, serving as skilled trades committeeperson and shop chair at a Stellantis plant and then for ten years as a UAW international representative. He was

Polls show that 75 percent of Americans back the UAW strikers and President Joseph Biden and [Senator Bernie Sanders](#) have both indicated their support.

The UAW members are striking to

defend their union and its future. From the 1940s to the 1970s, the UAW represented the majority of workers in the auto industry. During those years, under the leadership of Walter Reuther, a social democrat, the UAW was the flagship of the U.S. labor movement. The union peaked at 1.5 million members in 1979.

From the 1970s to the 2000s the UAW lost its domination of the industry as foreign companies—Volkswagen, Toyota, Hyundai, and others—established plants in the United States and successfully resisted unionization. Today those companies manufacture half of all cars made in the U.S.—and not one has been unionized. At the same time, union leadership entered into partnership agreements with the companies and the leaders became corrupt, robbing from the union.

The challenge today is the transition from internal combustion engines to electric vehicles. EV plants require less labor and nearly all the batteries used in EVs are produced in nonunion plants. Elon Musk’s Tesla company that produces EVs is nonunion.

This strike is important then not only to win for the members and retirees, but also demonstrate the union’s willingness and ability to fight for its future.

17 September 2023

Did India really win its independence through non-violence?

17 September 2023, by **Pierre Rousset, Sushovan Dhar**

Myanmar lived, from February 2021, what was perhaps the most far-reaching and widespread movement of

non-violent civil disobedience in modern and contemporary history, in response to the army’s desire to

secure a monopoly on state and political power, which it shared with the National League for Democracy.

The very day after the putsch, the vast majority of the public refused to collaborate with the junta. Had it received the international support it deserved at that time, the military coup would probably have been aborted. This was not the case.

Thanks to this respite, the junta was gradually able to regain the offensive, engaging in a ferocious crackdown which, to date, has cost the lives of more than 4,000 civilians. In the central plain, the popular movement was forced to engage in armed resistance (which was already the case in the ethnic states of the mountain periphery), in the face of ruthless power. The civic disobedience movement was not in vain. The illegitimate nature of the military government became abundantly clear, making it impossible to quickly normalise the regime in the diplomatic arena. Links were forged between all the regions of the central plain and many ethnic states. Resistance was able to develop over time. However, non-violent mass action was not enough to force the army to abandon its policy of terror against the population.

Was it any different in India? We put this question to Sushovan Dhar, a political activist and trade unionist.

Pierre Rousset - Was independence, the liberation from the British colonial yoke in 1947, effectively won thanks to the civil disobedience movement embodied by Gandhi?

Sushovan Dhar - As far as India's liberation movement and Gandhi's non-violence are concerned, it's an exaggerated and sanitised version of Indian history that was presented by the Congress party and liberal historians, particularly after independence.

In fact, the armed resistance groups were very powerful and made a major contribution to the struggle for India's independence. The movement was particularly strong in Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh (then called the United Province) and Punjab. In addition, there was a series of armed mass movements led by the Left: Telangana, Tebhaga and many other revolts in

different parts of India. **Bhagat Singh** and his comrades in the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association** also played a major role.

Even on the eve of independence, the famous naval mutiny shook the country in 1946. Nor should we forget the role played by the **Indian National Army** led by **Subhash Chandra Bose**.

A number of workers and peasant movements were also part of the Congress. It would therefore be wrong to think that the Congress represented only the tradition of non-violence. In fact, Gandhi only entered the scene in 1920 with his **non-cooperation movement**. This was an unsuccessful attempt to induce the British government of India to grant autonomy, or *swaraj*, to India. However, the failure of this movement led to Gandhi's loss of control over the Congress. Indeed, the socialist factions of the party, which included sections that did not fully adhere to Gandhi's non-violence, took control of the party. The same thing happened in 1934, when Gandhi renounced his civil disobedience. If we analyse the history of the freedom struggle in India, we find that, until 1942, Gandhi's non-violence movement was not at the forefront of the freedom struggle. Gandhi's politics were largely confined to individual acts (*satyagraha*).

Nor can the **Quit India movement** of 1942 be described as totally non-violent. If this had been the case, the pressure on the imperial government would have been very limited. Many pressure groups joined the movement. Let us not forget that the senior Congress leaders were all in jail when the Quit India movement was launched. The mid-level party leaders who played a leading role in this movement later joined the Socialist Party and were not committed to the idea of non-violence in the Gandhian sense.

The Indian communist movement was important. Yet it does not seem to have played a major role in 1946-1947?

The importance of the Indian communist movement became apparent as a result of the lawsuits brought by the colonial power. As

early as the 1920s, communists were tried in a series of conspiracy cases:

The **Peshawar Conspiracy Cases** (1922-1927): The British administration started these in five stages against 50 muhajirs who had founded the CPI in Tashkent in 1920. These leaders received political and military training at Tashkent, which was a part of the erstwhile Soviet Union, as well as at the **Communist University of the Toilers of the East** (KUTV) in Moscow. The majority of the muhajirs were Khilafatis, and they had planned to travel to Turkey to fight the British. However, they met **MN Roy** in Tashkent, and together they established the first Communist Party of India. They were accused of inciting "a proletarian revolution against the British imperialist oppressors to restore freedom to the masses" and charged under Section 121-A.

The **Kanpur Communist (Bolshevik) Conspiracy Case** (1924-25) : This was started against communist leaders including MN Roy, **Shaukat Usmani**, **SA Dange**, **Muzaffar Ahmad**, Ghulam Hussain, **Singaravelu Chettiar** and others, many of whom were from the Tashkent group and others were peasant and worker activists from different parts of India. The aforementioned individuals were charged under section 121-A because, according to the British Government, they were attempting "to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty of British India, by complete separation of India from imperialistic Britain by a violent revolution."

The **Meerut Conspiracy Case** (1929-1933): This trial was the most important in establishing the Communist Party of India as a party of the working class and peasantry. For organising a walkout among employees of the Indian Railways and textile industry, several trade union officials from around India were arrested, along with three Englishmen affiliated with the Communist International, and put on trial. The leaders were **Sohan Singh Josh**, **Muzaffar Ahmed**, **Philip Spratt**, **Shaukat Usmani** and **SA Dange** among others. They received a section 121-A citation. The Great Depression led to a wave of trade union activity,

organisation, and strikes in India's major industrial areas in the late 1920s, which was followed by the Meerut trials.

Unfortunately, the Communist Party of India did not take part in the Quit India movement of 1942!

The consequences of the CPI's disappearance?

It left the masses in the hands of the Congress party. The result was a transfer of power and not a social revolution... It led to the independence of the national bourgeoisie and not of the working masses, who played a major role in the struggle for independence. It was achieved at the cost of popular struggles in different parts of the country over almost a century.

There were chances of creating local self-governments in different parts of the country (for example, the **independent government of Tamralipta** in Bengal), but the absence of a strong supporting force - the leadership - left these popular uprisings to accept Gandhi's dictum and surrender.

Nevertheless, let's not forget that left-wing popular organisations, namely the trade unions, played a major role in the Quit India movement. Left forces from non-PC traditions (**RSP**, **RCPI**, **BLPI** and others) participated in the movement with full vigour.

Therefore, 1942 was neither a non-violent movement nor a Gandhi-led movement. However, the national bourgeoisie, which supported Gandhi throughout, unfortunately emerged as the sole victor and played a major role in post-independent India and shaped the course of Indian history, where the fundamental structures of exploitation and oppression (caste, gender, etc.) remained intact even after the end of colonial rule. The Indian experience became a model for the Third World bourgeoisie, which emerged as the main force in most parts of the decolonised world.

It should be added that posing the questions of violence and non-violence as binary oppositions contributes to elevating methodological or tactical questions above the political content of the struggle. This is true not only of Gandhian politics, but also of its counterfoils, the armed Marxist,

Maoist and other guerrilla movements in many parts of the world. We have witnessed the failure of these policies time and again.

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Source: [ESSF](#).

Mindanao: Desperate situation of non-Moro indigenous peoples

16 September 2023, by Leticio L. Datuwata

BIARONG and the villages in its periphery were historically inhabited exclusively by the Tëduray and Lambangian Indigenous Peoples (Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples in the context of BARMM - Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao). It was not yet created as a barangay.

The areas were once a peaceful place of the Tëduray and Lambangian where life is abundant and easy because of the fertile land area.

These people were free to practice their culture, tribal self-governance, language, system of worship and livelihood system.

Today, the place was inhabited by a mix population of the Tëduray, Lambangian and Maguindanaon Moro clan from Talayan. Though majority of its population are Tëduray and Lambangian.

The place was created as one of the Barangays of South Upi when it was created in 1976.(5)

The early leaderships of Barangay Biarong were held by the Tëduray, but lately, it was held by the Maguindanaon, despite of being minority in the place, but because they are empowered by the power of guns and goons they have had.

The recent clashes between the groups of two political leaders of the Moro clan who are both aspiring for the position of a Chairman of Barangay Biarong this coming October 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections greatly affected

the lives of the NMIPs in the area.

For fear of being caught in crossfire, the civilian Tëduray and Lambangian voluntarily fled and took refuge in the adjacent Barangay Lamud and some are in the center of Barangay Biarong.

The Local Chief Executive of South Upi, Maguindanao del Sur ordered the internally displaced Tëduray and Lambangian to return to their respective homes, but much of their desire to go back because they are in

the stage of harvesting their upland palay, but they are hesitant to obey the order because there is no clear establish peace and security mechanism. They fear that any time the warring groups will stage a gun battle because they are both strengthening their respective armed groups.

In the light of the foregoing, we urge the Minicipal Local Government Unit of South Upi, Provincial Govetnment of Maguindanao Del Sur, the BARMM

Government, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs (MIPA), the Police Provincial Office of Maguindanao Del Sur, the Police Regional Office-BAR, the 6ID, Philippine Army, AFP the OPAPPRU, the NCIP and other concerned institutions to intervene in the sad plight of the Tëduray and Lambangian NMIPs in the area.

They need more than the relief assistance but a sustainable intervention from the Government.

Imperialism(s) and the New Cold War

15 September 2023, by **Gilbert Achcar**

The Cold War and its legacy

The Cold War opposed a bloc of imperialist states - in the classical economic definition of "imperialism" that is common to authors such as the liberal J.A. Hobson and the Marxist V.I. Lenin: domination of foreign territories for the sake of securing markets and investment outlets for monopoly capital (military-industrial complex included) - to a bloc of Stalinist states, based on state-owned economies and ruled by bureaucratic elites concerned above all with the preservation of the totalitarian order that underlies their ruling privileges. Bureaucratic rule is conservative by nature, fearing destabilization that could lead to its collapse. This qualitative difference between the two blocs explains why the former was overall much more aggressive and expansionist, whereas the latter mostly acted defensively.

The term Cold War was created to describe the permanent readiness for war of both camps, engaging in a hugely costly arms race while avoiding direct confrontation. In the age of nuclear weapons, a war between them would have led to "mutual assured destruction" (MAD). To be sure, they fought several indirect wars in the

Global South (the largest were Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan), but no new world war occurred during the Cold War. It ended with the terminal crisis of Soviet bureaucratic rule in the 1980s, the collapse of Moscow's domination over its Central and Eastern European "satellite states" in the late 1980s, and the dissolution of the USSR itself in 1991.

US imperialism was confronted with a choice between the pacification of international relations on the basis of the UN Charter - ambiguously promised by George Bush senior under the label of "new world order", when he was preparing for the first major war waged by Washington with Moscow's approval: the first US-led war on Iraq in 1991 - and the consolidation and further expansion of its hegemonic sphere premised on hostility to post-Communist Russia and "Communist" China. Washington chose the latter option in practice, maintaining a Cold-War level of military expenditure, deciding to keep NATO and enlarge it eastward to states that were formerly under Moscow's thumb, and engaging in provocation against China on the issue of Taiwan.

The New Cold War: A new phase of imperialism?

It thus laid the basis during the 1990s for a New Cold War, finally unleashed by NATO's 1999 Kosovo war, the first US-led war of the post-Soviet era waged in violation of international law, i.e., by circumventing the UN Security Council. This political course was confirmed by the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and further rounds of NATO enlargement, including the Baltic states, three former republics of the USSR. The relations between NATO and Russia reached high tension in 2008, after NATO, bowing to the pressure of George W. Bush, declared that Georgia and Ukraine would join the alliance (although that commitment remained indefinite).

Russia had meanwhile completed its post-Soviet mutation into a capitalist as well as imperialist state. The social collapse resulting from wild neoliberal policies fostered by Western powers in the 1990s, combined with the national frustration created by persistent Western treatment of Russia as a potential enemy, produced fertile ground for the rise of Vladimir Putin's nationalist authoritarian rule. The new highly concentrated Russian

capitalism, characterized by porous boundaries between public and private interests, provided the basis of a new Russian imperialism relying on fossil energies and military industries. Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2004) would become the first targets of this reborn Russian imperialism, before its later expansion in the Middle East and Africa.

The Putin regime grew increasingly authoritarian and revanchist over the years. Its botched attempt at invading Ukraine in 2022 accelerated its shift to neofascism, while bogging Russia down into a protracted and murderous war of attrition. China too grew increasingly authoritarian in the past decade, under Xi Jinping. It had

undergone since the 1990s a spectacular economic and social development that lifted it from the condition of poor state into that of major economic power, the main challenger of US economic supremacy. China's development occurred within a combination of Stalinist state features with capitalism, resulting in a peculiar "bureaucratic capitalism". It has tended naturally to ally with Russia in the face of US bullying, although it has kept aloof from military expeditions abroad until now - unlike the two other powers of the global strategic triad.

The New Cold War has reached a dangerous peak since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Global military

expenditure reached a new high of 2.24 trillion US dollars in 2022 and is well on its way to largely exceed this colossal amount in 2023. The Ukraine war has been seized as a golden opportunity by the military-industrial complexes of major imperialist countries such as Britain to lobby for massive increases in "defence" budgets, at a time when the global expenditure needed for the fight against climate change - the most important threat faced by humanity - remains short of several trillions of US dollars compared to what is needed to achieve the modest and rather insufficient goals fixed by international conferences.

[AntiCapitalist Resistance](#)

The Inherited "Results" of the Imperial Japanese Army's Experiments on Human Beings

14 September 2023, by **Yong-hui Hong**

After the Second World War, the doctors in Unit 731 were granted war criminal immunity in exchange for providing research data to the US. [30] And those involved have been tight-lipped about Unit 731. However, after the 1980s, the subordinates of General Shiro Ishii (commander of Unit 731) and former military doctors who had served in the army finally began to testify publicly about Unit 731. In recent years, related documents have gradually been discovered in other countries such as China, Russia and the US. This has led to significant progress in the investigation of Unit 731. However, the Japanese government, while acknowledging the existence of Unit 731, has yet to admit that human experiments were conducted. Nor has the Japanese government issued an apology. In the northeastern part of China, a large number of the abandoned chemical weapons left

behind by the former Japanese army are still buried. On the other hand, the medical community in Japan, where many members of Unit 731 found employment after the war, has remained silent on the issue.

Historical background and formation of Unit 731

The Mukden Incident occurred in September 1931. The Kwantung Army [31] detonated dynamite near a railroad line owned by Japanese South Manchuria Railway near Mukden. The Imperial Japanese Army accused Chinese dissidents of this act and launched a full-scale invasion that led to the occupation of Manchuria. In 1932, the year after the Mukden

Incident, the State of Manchuria was proclaimed. It was generally regarded as a puppet state of the Japanese Empire in northeastern China. In 1932, General Shiro Ishii, who wanted to establish an institution to prepare for germ warfare, was put in charge of the Army Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory. The following year, in 1933, a research facility was established in Tokyo. In addition, a full-scale biological weapons testing and production facility was to be built in Manchuria. In 1933, a secret unit, the Togo Unit, was established on the outskirts of Harbin in northeastern China. The secret unit became an official unit of the Kwantung Army in 1936. And in 1937, the Imperial Japanese Army caused the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and launched an all-out war of aggression against China. Meanwhile, the Kwantung Army built a facility in the Pingfang district on the outskirts of Harbin City to test and

produce biological weapons. And the Kwantung Army subsequently established related facilities throughout northeastern China. In 1941, the Pingfang district unit was renamed UNIT 731. Unit 731 was part of an organization created by General Shiro Ishii, known as "Ishii's Organization". The organization was supported by huge national budget.

The reality of human experimentation

Within the Unit 731 facility, a prison was set up to confine people (called "logs") for human experimentation. In the Pingfang district alone, more than 3,000 people were killed in human experiments to develop biological weapons. Most of the victims were Chinese and Korean. Other victims of human experimentation included Russians and Mongolians. Not only in China, but also in Southeast Asia, human experiments were conducted as a part of medical training until 1945 [3]. [32] Tsuneishi Keiichi, a Japanese scholar of the history and theory of science, described in his book the reality of the human experiments that were allegedly conducted in Unit 731 [33]:

- - Using the human body as a training platform for surgery
- - Experiments on infectious diseases: living people were deliberately infected with germs such as pest, typhus, and cholera to see the effects of infectiousness. After infection, these people were dissected alive.
- - Other human experiments: Human experiments for the development of vaccines and therapies.

Unit 731 and its affiliated units (Unit 1644 and Unit 100, among others) were involved in research on

biological weapons, development and experimental deployment of epidemic-creating biowarfare weapons in assaults against the Chinese people. Unit 100 also experimented with toxic gas. Plague-infected fleas were spread by low-flying airplanes over Chinese cities. [34] Since the facilities of the Ishii's Organization that made up Unit 731 were designed for thorough human experimentation and killing, there were no survivors from the human experiments. The biological weapons developed by Unit 731 were used in the military operations such as the Nomonhan Incident (1939) and the attack on Ningbo (1940) as the "results" of the human experiments.

Members of Unit 731 after the war

After the former Soviet Union entered the war in 1945, General Shiro Ishii worked hard to cover up the development of biological weapons and human experimentation. They killed all living "logs" and burned all records of biological weapons development. And they destroyed their headquarters in Harbin City and blew up their experimental facility. The Imperial Japanese Army had abandoned their chemical weapons, which were dumped into rivers or buried. Most of the abandoned chemical weapons in China, estimated at about 700,000, are buried in the Jilin Province. [35] At the same time, the members of Unit 731 quickly returned to Japan on a special train [7]. [36]

After the surrender of the Japanese Empire in World War II, the US began to investigate Unit 731. However, it was not an investigation of war crimes, but of the "results" of the development of biological weapons. The US interrogated the head of Unit 731, General Shiro Ishii, and other members. However, during this interrogation, it was confirmed several times that they would not be charged with war crimes. The former Soviet Union proposed to the US to share the biological weapons technologies between the two countries. But the US rejected the proposal. In exchange for access to the technologies, the US authorities secretly granted immunity

from prosecution to General Shiro Ishii and others involved in Unit 731. The US condemned the Nazis doctors at the Nuremberg Trials. On the other hand, the US had chosen a different path of collaboration with war criminals regarding mass murder for the development of biological weapons in Unit 731. This was due to the US policy of prioritizing its own national interests over justice. The US monopolized the "results" of Unit 731's human experiments for later use in the Korean War. The war criminals were eventually able to escape prosecution because China was in a state of civil war and the joint investigation by the US, the former Soviet Union, and China was made difficult by the Cold War between East and West.

War Crimes: What was covered up

Many doctors and researchers involved in human experimentation at Unit 731 were never charged with a crime. After the war, they went on to hold important positions in research institutes and corporations in Japan. Many of them became prominent doctors in the Japanese medical community after the war. For example, leaders of the National Institute of Health of Japan (now the National Institute of Infectious Diseases) which was founded in 1947 and of the Institute of Medical Science at the University of Tokyo. The Japanese medical community, which contributed to the wartime genocide in China through human experimentation during the war, also covered up the past. At the same time, its structural constitution was inherited unchanged. Unit 731 included some of the leading experts in dried plasma research.

One of them founded the Japan Blood Bank in 1951 to produce dried plasma. The Japan Blood Bank made huge profits during the Korean War by selling dried plasma and other technologies developed by Unit 731 to the US military. The company was renamed Green Cross Corporation in 1964. [37] Green Cross Corporation's technology was recognized as world-class, inheriting the "results of human

experimentation by Unit 731". After that, Green Cross Corporation imported a large amount of plasma from the US. However, the plasma was contaminated with HIV. In 1982, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) pointed out the risk of AIDS transmission through unheated blood products. [38] And in December of the same year, Green Cross Corporation was informed of the fact of AIDS infection through blood in the US. However, the company did not stop importing plasma. As a result, thousands of people in Japan, mostly hemophiliacs, became infected with HIV and more than 400 died. [39]

Even after 1982, when the safety of unheated blood products was questioned internationally, unheated blood products were offered to hemophiliacs as if they were human experiments. It was as if the ghosts of Unit 731's experimental disposition were reappearing.

After the Second World War, the 3,000 victims of the living "logs" massacre were resurrected as thousands of victims of the tainted blood scandal in Japan. In Germany, the medical science of the Nazi era was consistently evaluated and criticized. The lessons were incorporated into

the education of medical students. On the other hand, the Japanese medical community, which was fully involved in Unit 731 and germ warfare during the war, did not reflect on itself after the war. And its structural constitution was inherited unchanged. The excessive reliance on human experimentation that remains in Japan's medical societies today should be subjected to historical and fundamental criticism. No human being should be sacrificed for research under the fine-sounding name of "scientific progress."

8 September 2023

The end of a dynasty

13 September 2023, by **Paul Martial**

A few hours after the announcement of Ali Bongo's election victory, General Brice Oligui Nguema, head of the presidential guard, announced the army's seizure of power and denounced a rigged election. A week later, he became president of the transition.

Turning the page

This coup d'état seems to have made only happy people. People took to the streets to express their joy and relief. Even Luc Oyoubi, Deputy Secretary General of Bongo's Gabonese Democratic Party, declared: "We knew that change had to come". He pledged his willingness to participate in the transition. He was pleased that Bongo's advisers were in prison. When they were arrested at home, videos showed them in front of suitcases filled with bundles of cash.

This state of grace was also fuelled by the first measures taken by the generals: the dismissal of Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo, president of

the Constitutional Court, mother-in-law of Ali Bongo and nicknamed "The Tower of Pisa" for her decisions always in favour of the government; the release of Jean-Rémy Yama, a trade unionist from the main trade union coalition Dynamique unitaire; the meeting with the opposition platform Alternance 2023; the appointment as head of government of Raymond Ndong Sima, known as an opponent.

New figures for old politics

This coup d'état is not happening because Ali Bongo committed fraud in the elections. He did the same in 2009 and 2016. At the time, there were protests and the army fiercely repressed them. Nguema's power grab is part of the division of the ruling elite. Ali Bongo's stroke in 2018 left him severely weakened. For months, power was held by his wife and her entourage. The rise to power of his son Nouredin Bongo Valentin,

who was being groomed to replace his father, was by no means to the liking of the historic Bongo wing represented by his sister Pascaline.

Will the military stay in power forever? Perhaps not. The transition charter states that the members and the head of the government, as well as the presidents of the Assembly and the Senate, may not stand in the next presidential elections, but nowhere does it mention the president of the transition. Rapid elections with no real candidate against Nguema could be an option for restoring the constitution, leaving the system intact for the benefit of French economic and military interests.

However, nothing is set in stone, and the end of the Bongo dynasty could herald another, much more profound change as a result of popular mobilization.

13 September 2023

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

State of Georgia Indicts 61 Activists as Part of an Anarchist Criminal Conspiracy

12 September 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

The Georgia Racketeer Influence Corrupt Organization Act (or RICO) is a particularly powerful legal instrument modeled on the federal RICO Act originally designed to go after organizations such as the Mafia. While Georgia frequently uses RICO to go after criminal organizations, including the state's recent RICO indictment of former president Donald Trump for attempting to steal the election in 2000, its use against a social movement is unprecedented and constitutes a threat to all activists in Georgia and elsewhere.

Defend the Atlanta Forest also known as the Stop Cop City, is a uniquely diverse movement that brings together opponents of the construction of an Atlanta Public Safety Training Center to train police and fire fighters. Involved are environmentalists and animal rights activists who want to save the 82-acre South River Forest, indigenous activists, opponents of prisons and police, and anti-racist activists. While the organization does not define itself as anarchist, many in the group are anarchists and socialists who support engaging in non-violent direct action to stop construction. Still property has been destroyed and there have been violent confrontations with the police. But some of those indicted as part of

the conspiracy are not accused of any specific crime, and under RICO need not be.

The roots of the Stop Cop City movement are in the national Black Lives Matter protests against the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 26, 2020. Then on June 12, 2020 the Atlanta Police fatally shot a black man named Rayshard Brooks. He had been asleep in his car in a Wendy's restaurant parking lot when police arrived, attempted to administer a breathalyzer test, he struggle with police and then when he attempted to flee was shot and killed him. Local activists demanded divestment from the police and funding for social services, but the city instead decided to build the 90 million dollar training center in the forest that served as a recreation area for the adjacent black community. As the Defend the Atlanta Forest movement developed and began to engage in civil disobedience, the Atlanta police cracked down, in the course of which they fatally shot forest defender Manuel Esteban Paez Terán, a Venezuelan immigrant known as "Tortuguita," who was sitting down with his hands in the air. He is the first environmental activist to have been shot and killed by police in the United States.

The 109-page indictment contains long discussions of anarchism and mutual aid and condemns direct action. It also confuses acts by Blood street gang, who engaged in shootings that lead to the death of an 8-year-old child, with the activities of Stop Cop City.

Civil rights organizations have argued that the Atlanta Police Department's severe repression has violated the free speech rights of movement activist and has been intended to chill the social protests. "We are extremely concerned by this breathtakingly broad and unprecedented use of state terrorism, anti-racketeering and money laundering laws against protesters," said Aamra Ahmad, senior staff attorney with American Civil Liberties Union's National Security Project.

The Stop Cop City movement has been undeterred. Since the indictment some of its activists have chained themselves to bulldozers to stop the construction. Some Atlanta residents have also circulated a petition calling for a referendum on the construction of the training center. The struggle goes on in the streets, in the forest, and now in the courts.

10 September 2023

A Revolutionary Experience. Chile 1970-1973

11 September 2023, by **Franck Gaudichaud**

Chile, that vast strip of land sandwiched between the Pacific and the Andes, a world where the world ends, as described by the writer Luís

Sepúlveda, illustrates with its recent history the turbulence of the short 20th century. After having experienced an attempted democratic

transition to socialism (1970-1973), the country experienced the violent establishment of a civil-military dictatorship (1973-1989) that

anticipated the advent of a new logic for the world: that of neoliberalism. Then, starting in 1990, a slow and partial democratisation took hold that continued to prolong numerous authoritarian legacies and a violently unequal socioeconomic system. Fifty years have passed since the coup d'état of September 11, 1973. The images of the presidential palace of La Moneda burning, the terrified looks of the prisoners in the National Stadium of Santiago and the sinister dark glasses of General Pinochet remain recorded in our retinas and in our collective memory. The Chilean people, their struggles and their resistance, have been at the heart and in the mobilisations of many solidarity organisations around the world. Today, these memories of repression, exile and struggle for the defense of human rights continue to mark our images of this country in the Southern Cone. But Chile was not only a country of tragedies: the first years of the 1970s were above all those of an extraordinary popular and (pre)revolutionary process that shook the established order.

Fighting From Memory

The Chilean road to socialism lasted barely a thousand days (from November 1970 to September 1973), but it profoundly transformed the country, its social relations, its political imaginaries, and its vision of the future. The legalist and revolutionary commitment of the Chilean left radiated throughout Latin America and once again put ideas such as the distribution of wealth and the necessary nationalisation of natural common goods at the center of the debates, proclaiming the reconquest of national sovereignty for a nation of the Third World against Yankee imperialism, claimed the right to development and democracy from a perspective of rupture with the dominant order and (re)posed the question of the place of the bourgeois State in the transition to socialism.

Starting in 1969, the parties that formed the coalition that came to be called Popular Unity proposed a strategic path that, although

considered reformist by the extra-parliamentary left, claimed to be original: electoral, institutional, non-armed, but also anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and socialist. Beyond the intense debates of the time and the omnipresent figure of President Salvador Allende, the strength of the Chilean process lies in those from below, those without voice who became essential protagonists of this budding revolution, whose creative energy, certainly full of contradictions, was decapitated on September 11, 1973. To retrace the steps of the Popular Unity is to caress with your hand the history of a continuum of multiple social, worker, peasant, student and struggles of ordinary people that suddenly burst into a scenario until then monopolised by an oligarchy accustomed to reigning over Chile. The popular river that overflowed everywhere during those thousand days was the smile of the workers of the Yarur textile factory occupying their factory, it was the soundtrack of the songs of a jubilant people cheering the comrade-president in the Plaza de la Constitución, it was the contours of a popular power that confronted big capital and the sabotage of the extreme right and it was the radicalism of the Mapuche people who broke the barbed wire fences to reclaim the land usurped from their people by colonisation. These experiments in self-organisation, although sometimes limited, are the essence of Chilean history. They mark those historical moments when everything seems possible, when humiliation, state violence and exploitation can be overthrown. They explain the joy of a people standing tall that can be admired on the glossy paper of Armindo Cardoso's photographs or in the Patricio Guzmán's documentary films. And, more than five decades later, they more than deserve to be told in the form of fragments of that broken time of a revolutionary experience that did not come to fruition. In fact, that driving force continues to wander today through the underground galleries of Chilean memory, frightening its ruling classes and tormenting the bad conscience of the leftists who adapted to the times. The stubborn past of those few months on

fire will not go away.

This memory, or rather these conflicting memories, have suffered profound changes, but also various eruptions and shocks throughout the decades, with commemorations and the cultural, social and political mobilisations of the new generations. Since 2019, with the great revolt of October-November of that year that once again shook the Cordillera and directly questioned the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism, the ghost of the uprisings has returned to Chile. It was also with Salvador Allende in mind that the young centre-left leader Gabriel Boric assumed the presidency in 2021 (although his social-liberal management is far from the ex-president's radicalism). And Pinochet and the ultra-right are once again gaining ground in all areas of the Andean country. Thus, fifty years after the coup d'état, looking back at Chilean revolutionary struggles is not an act of militant nostalgia or a simple historiographical exercise.

Dependency, inequality and underdevelopment

In 1970 the Chilean population barely reached nine million people, the vast majority of whom lived in conditions of great material insecurity and poverty. A country of mining capitalism par excellence, Chile possessed immense natural resources, including the largest copper reserves in the world, most of which were in the hands of US capital. This enclave economy also meant structural dependence on the world market and violent class, race and gender relations, a situation that benefited a highly concentrated commercial, port and industrial bourgeoisie and a handful of landowners who were heirs of the neocolonial order. Institutionally, the homeland of poets Vicente Huidobro, Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda had the reputation of having built a stable Republic, supposedly less prone to coups d'état by military leaders than its neighbours. This is confirmed by the fact that the Constitution remained unchanged for long periods. [40] The elites considered it an example in the South American

environment, defended with patriotism by armed forces that are supposed to respect the constitutional order. It was a strong and centralist State around which a white and mestizo ruling class could cohere, while, starting in the 1930s, it allowed the partial integration of political representatives from subordinate sectors and some social advances. However it was not exempt from numerous civil and military repressions of the popular revolts that marked the 20th century.

Since the creation of the Resistance Societies at the end of the 19th century, the labour movement has been a key player on the Chilean scene. Politically, it was organised around two large parties: the Communist Party (PC), founded in 1922 and one of the most important in Latin America, and the Socialist Party (PS), founded in 1933 as a party-movement with diverse influences, including reformists, Trotskyists and Guevarists. The experience of the Popular Front (1938-1947), under the leadership of the Radical Party (linked to the bourgeoisie), integrated communists and socialists into governmental practice. During the 20th century these partisan forces showed their willingness to combine workers' struggles with the parliamentary sphere. One of these figures, Luis Emilio Recabarren (founder of the Partido Obrero Socialista (POS or Socialist Workers Party), defended this policy throughout his life, also considering the elections as a forum that could serve to educate the class. Starting in the 1950s, the plan to conquer power through the ballot box took shape around a communist/socialist axis. This tactic was also reflected in the union movement: in 1953 the powerful Central Única de Trabajadores (CUT or Workers United Centre) was founded, where the PS and the PC were the majority forces, together with a rapidly expanding Christian Democracy (DC). However, these broad alliances were subject to constant turbulence, intensified by various episodes of repression and even political illegality (as was the case of the PC between 1948 and 1958, which had to go underground). In spite of everything, and despite its highly oligarchic character, it is

evident that the Chilean Republic and its compromise State [41], derived from the 1925 Constitution, left a margin of institutional manoeuvre that could be taken advantage of. The gravitation of the socialist and communist left, the presence of a conservative right around the Partido Nacional or National Party (starting in 1966) and the development of a Christian Democratic center (created in 1957), structured the party system around three blocks of quite similar electoral weight.

To the left of the left, the revolutionaries did not share the perspective offered by the institutional and parliamentary game. While the anarchist and libertarian movements lost ground starting in the 1920s, several small currents, including Christian revolutionaries, Trotskyists and, in the 1960s, Maoists and Guevarists, challenged the reformist and electoral orientation of the large parties. The creation of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR or Movement of the Revolutionary Left) in 1965, marked from the beginning by a hybrid strategic option of permanent revolution [42] (influenced by Trotskyism) and prolonged and irregular people's war [43] (close to Guevarism), reflected the radicalisation of trade unionists, workers, intellectuals and students who believed that a break had to be made not only with imperialism, but also with the bourgeoisie and its state apparatus, following in the wake of the Latin American revolutionary processes.

At the end of the 1960s, in the midst of the Cold War, the reforms of the Revolution in Freedom project [44] of the Christian Democratic government (1964-1970), actively supported by the Kennedy administration, failed. The promised industrial growth did not materialise and repression resurfaced. The organised working class, small peasantry, youth and the urban poor (settlers) demanded more substantial changes. The break up of the populist government of the Christian Democrats (DC) opened the way for the left: in 1969 the Popular Unity (UP) was officially founded. This coalition was supported by the PC and the PS, but also by important sectors

of the Christian left. Its leader, who had already been a three-time presidential candidate (1952, 1958, 1964), was the socialist doctor and Freemason Salvador Allende. Born in 1908, a co-founder of the Socialist Party (PS), expert in parliamentary politics (he was President of the Senate between 1964 and 1969) and former Minister of Health of the Popular Front, he declared himself a Marxist. Despite being an admirer of Fidel Castro, he firmly defended the possibility of building a revolution legally and non-violently, taking into account the Chilean political tradition. Using the conceptualisation of Juan Garcés, his close adviser, Allende defended a political and institutional transition to socialism, without interruptions and respectful of the 1925 Constitution. The bet was that the State was sufficiently flexible and, as a sine qua non condition, that the Armed Forces would respect the results of universal suffrage.

The hopes and the struggles of a people

The birth of the new unity of the left was not without problems. It followed in the footsteps of the Popular Action Front (Frente de Acción Popular or FRAP), which in the 1950s sought to bring together those "willing to fight for an anti-imperialist, anti-oligarchic, and anti-feudal programme." Motivated by the continental impact of the Cuban revolution, some leftists, especially socialists, thought that such a programme was insufficient and that it gave too much prominence to the concept of a revolution in stages, highly appreciated by the communists: first anti-oligarchic, in alliance with certain sectors of the national bourgeoisie, and in a later phase, socialist. On the other hand, the strategic debate on the paths to follow to forge socialism and break with Washington's tutelage is far from being settled. Armed or legal? Political-military confrontation with the state apparatus or electoral victory based on the popular movement? Santiago was not Havana and the Chile of 1970 did not experience the Batista dictatorship:

the unarmed route seemed a possible prospect. This was the position defended by the communists, and with them the USSR, which saw it as a consequence of its policy of global peaceful coexistence (consisting of a division of the world between capitalism and the socialist camp). On the other hand, the fact that Allende was about to win the 1958 elections against the conservative Jorge Alessandri ended up convincing a good part of the party's cadres.

In September 1970, after a very dynamic campaign, Salvador Allende won the presidential elections with 36.6% of the votes against the Christian Democrat candidate Rodomiro Tomic with 28%, and the conservative right-wing candidate Jorge Alessandri with 35.2%. Since the Constitution only provided for one electoral round, it was up to Congress to decide between the two main candidates in the absence of an absolute majority. The result of the left raised great hopes, but also showed the difficulties that lay ahead with a UP in a minority in Parliament [45]. Allende had to immediately negotiate a set of democratic guarantees with the DC and promise institutional stability in exchange for his candidacy. This search for agreements with the political center was a constant issue during the thousand days and weighed down the reformist capacity of the executive. The UP programme and its promises of forty immediate measures sought to promote sustained economic development, a bold policy of wealth redistribution and wage increases, the deepening of agrarian reform and control of the main national resources. The expropriation of copper from foreign capital, the nationalisation of several dozen large monopolistic companies and the main banks should have allowed the creation of a Social Property Zone (ZPS), although the private sector would continue to be the majority. In an original system, employees were invited to co-manage public sector companies. The country was experiencing a true revolutionary climate in various social spheres: strikes and occupations of land and factories increased. The explosion of collective participation favoured the left. Popular Unity obtained almost 50% of the votes in the municipal

elections of April 1971. Allende and the UP Political Committee wondered if it was not the right time to dissolve Congress, call new legislative elections and launch a referendum for a new Constitution that would incorporate the socialisation of part of the means of production and the establishment of a single chamber of parliament. But the PC was reluctant and the President hesitant. The opportunity was lost.

The executive's policy directly affected the interests of the big bourgeoisie, the advance of agrarian reform destroyed the power of the large landowners and the nationalisation of copper (1971) was fiercely opposed by the United States. Allende also affirmed himself as the international leader of the non-aligned countries, defending the right of the colonised countries to emancipation by all means and bitterly denouncing imperialism and the world financial system. After the Cuban revolution, the United States feared the effect of Cuba's revolution in its own backyard. Beginning in 1969, the CIA and the US embassy actively conspired to stop Allende's political rise, even by force. Subsequently, the right, with loud and furious support from Washington, set the goal of dismantling the political and social bloc that supported the government and sought contacts in the reactionary sectors of the Armed Forces. Attacks from the extreme right of the Nationalist Front Fatherland and Freedom (Patria y Libertad or PyL) multiplied, and constant pressure was exerted on the Christian Democratic Party until (in 1972) it went into total opposition, while big business launched a tactic of economic boycott that caused havoc. The conservative media, essential cogs in this system, constantly warned against what they called a Marxist dictatorship. This relentless spiral gradually closed in on the left, while the explosion of inflation, the international boycott and the development of a black market alienated the urban middle classes from the labour movement. Locked in a state straitjacket that no longer allowed it to breathe, the Popular Unity was increasingly on the defensive and was losing the initiative.

Popular power and the tragic outcome of the battle for Chile

In this context, the left-wing coalition quickly divided between a moderate pole (classified as gradualist by historians) led by the communists and Allende, and a rupturist pole led by a sector of the Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Christians, who called for progress without compromising, and with the critical support of the MIR (led by Miguel Enríquez). The latter denounced the looming coup d'état and the dead-ends of legalism, urgently demanding a bold Constituent Assembly and the acceleration of the expropriation of the means of production and distribution to put them at the service of the people. This was the demand expressed by the Popular Assembly of Concepción, which brought together various left-wing social and political organisations in July 1972 to denounce the counterrevolutionary character of Parliament. Allende and the PC immediately denounced the delusions and adventurism of this resolution, and political polarisation did not take long to take to the streets. The government seemed overwhelmed by the magnitude of the class conflict. The march of empty pots organised by conservative women, followed by the great strike for miners' wages in El Teniente, skillfully led by the DC against the executive, showed that Marxists did not have a monopoly on the mass movement. Part of the labour movement had also gone beyond the UP programme. In response to each seditious attempt by the right or a bosses' strike, forms of self-organisation, direct supply and workers' control multiplied, especially in October 1972 and June 1973. Popular power became a reality and new organisations appeared, such as the industrial cordones or belts in the proletarian areas of the main cities. These cordones refused to give back the occupied factories, criticised the indecision and lukewarmness of the government and created new territorial coordinations without waiting for orders from the CUT,

although the majority remained faithful to the UP: the comrade-president remained their president. In the countryside, heroic land occupations encouraged by the MIR flourished. In the cultural sphere, the revolution was everywhere: in music and song, in painting and cinema, on the walls and in companies.

Lacking a unified leadership and convinced of the broadly constitutional character of the military, the government believed to the end that it could avoid civil war and, at the same time, channel popular power around legalist proposals. Beginning in November 1972, high-ranking officers were integrated into various ministries. The figure of General Prats, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, to the Ministry of the Interior and later to Defense, pacified the population. His performance was decisive in crushing the sedition of a tank regiment in June 1973. The revolutionary process seemed trapped in a double strategic blind alley: that of the institutional path to socialism, which had become completely impracticable, and that

proposed by the MIR, which was a minority and struggled to distance itself from an essentially political-military and vanguardist conception. Between both, the embryos of popular power and the industrial cordones shine to this day as an unfinished revolution from below, held back by the historical context and strong headwinds.

On the morning of September 11, 1973, with the explicit support of the Nixon administration, a quarter of the officers revolted. Among them was Augusto Pinochet, who had been appointed head of the Armed Forces a few weeks earlier by Allende because he had a reputation as a legalist. The left found itself disarmed unable to organise resistance, as were the industrial cordons. Instead of surrendering to the traitor generals, Allende committed suicide in a presidential palace bombed by fighter jets and surrounded by soldiers. The battle for Chile came to a dramatic end. Relying on national-conservative Catholicism, on the doctrine of National Security and then on Operation Condor on a regional

scale [46], the military regime closed parliament, banned political parties, repressed unions, declared a state of siege and practiced censorship. State terrorism was unleashed against the Marxist cancer that had to be extirpated from society, particularly against the working classes and activists. During the 16 years of dictatorship, the armed forces and political police tortured tens of thousands of people and murdered more than 3,200, more than a thousand of whom remain detained-disappeared today (their bodies have never been found). Hundreds of thousands of people were forced into exile. Starting in 1975, these times of social brutalisation were also times of shock therapy: a true capitalist counterrevolution transformed Chile into the world's first experiment in neoliberalism.

*Translated by David Fagan for **International Viewpoint** from the Spanish version in **viento Sur**. This text is the prologue to the book "Découvrir la révolution chilienne 1970-1973", Paris, Éditions sociales, 2023.*

In Niger, neither generals nor ECOWAS

10 September 2023, by Paul Martial

General Abdourahamane Tiani, head of the presidential guard, is no exception to the rule, justifying his coup d'état in the name of safeguarding the homeland. The other senior officers of the various army corps followed suit to avoid a bloodbath, they said. As for the deposed president Mohamed Bazoum, he is still imprisoned in the basement of the palace.

Greed and demagoguery

However, most of the coup plotters contributed to the policies pursued for years by Bazoum, such as Salifou

Modi, the former chief of staff who is now vice-president of the junta.

Beyond the grandiloquent declarations, the reasons for the coup are more prosaic. Bazoum's desire to thoroughly reorganise the presidential guard risked costing Tiani a position he had held for more than a decade and which had made him considerably richer.

Unlike their peers in Mali and Burkina Faso, the putschists in Niger are part of the country's ruling elite.

What's more, in a few months' time Niger is set to become a major oil exporter, a fact that is stirring up a great deal of envy in the various spheres of power.

General Tiani is skilfully exploiting the desire for change and the exasperation of the people of Niger in the face of a social and economic situation that continues to deteriorate. And ECOWAS is making his task much easier.

A clique called ECOWAS

ECOWAS has instituted a total economic blockade. The President of Nigeria, who also heads the regional organisation, immediately stopped supplying electricity to Niger. In this landlocked country, as always, the first to suffer from these sanctions are

the people.

Humanitarian organisations such as the International Rescue Committee are calling for humanitarian corridors to be set up to deliver medicines and nutritional support, which are beginning to be in short supply.

ECOWAS, which is headed by heads of state, is largely exceeding its prerogatives. In fact, the Court of Justice of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) had already ruled that the sanctions against Mali were illegal.

Not content with setting up an economic blockade, ECOWAS is planning a military intervention in the name of democracy. It's hard to take seriously leaders who keep themselves in power in their own countries by tampering with the constitution and

manipulating elections.

Aggressive policy

Many are worried about ECOWAS's bellicose course. Civil society organisations, while not supporting the coup plotters, are opposed to armed intervention, which would solve nothing of substance. The African Union Peace and Security Council is also opposed. Algeria, aware of the risk of destabilising the region, is trying to promote a political transition. The USA is also reluctant to take armed action. Only one warmonger stands out: Emmanuel Macron. He claims to be the herald of democracy, even though he has endorsed all the electoral misdeeds of his friends, the African autocrats.

The latest revelations in *Le Monde* sweep aside the cliché that

Françafrique is behind us. We learn that French troops stationed in Niger to fight the jihadists were ready to launch a coup de force to free Mohamed Bazoum. It was only Bazoum's refusal to do so that stopped the intervention. Macron had already used French troops from Operation Barkhane in Chad to bomb columns of Chadian rebels who had nothing to do with the jihadists in order to save the dictator Déby.

Given the instability in several French-speaking African countries and Macron's bellicose policy, the demand for French troops to leave Africa is one of the most pressing issues of the moment.

7 September 2023

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

Palestine: thirty years after Oslo, accords benefit Israel

9 September 2023, by **Édouard Soulier**

The agreements of 13 September 1993 signed by the Israeli state and the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) were intended to bring about a lasting solution to the "conflict" and enable the creation of a Palestinian state, a historic demand of the national liberation movement. The agreements provided for the gradual transfer of the West Bank territories under the control of a newly-created Palestinian authority.

This transfer was to take place via a division of the West Bank territories into three zones: zones A, B and C for a transition period of five years. This division endorsed an Israeli demand for differentiated management of these zones. The territories in Area A (18% of the total surface area of the territories) were essentially the major Palestinian towns (except Hebron), where most of the population was

concentrated, to be under Palestinian civil and military control. Area B, approximately a quarter of the territory, comprised the Palestinian villages, under Palestinian civilian and Israeli military control. The remaining 60% of the territory (Area C) was the only unfragmented strip of land, entirely under Israeli control. It includes the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Gaza (dismantled since 2005) and East Jerusalem, which is under Israeli military control.

No real autonomy for the Palestinians

Nearly thirty years on, the situation in these temporary zones has changed little, while the number of settlements

(in Area C) has exploded: on average, almost 14,000 settlers move into the occupied territories every year. There will be 460,000 settlers in 2021, compared with 110,000 at the time of the Oslo Accords. [47] The agreements were never a contract between two equal partners. It was an agreement imposed by an occupier on an occupied party with little negotiating power. In addition, the texts were vague, ambiguous and favourable to Israel. For example, they made no provision for halting the colonisation of land that was supposed to be returned to the Palestinians. Israel therefore continued to develop the settlements after the agreements were signed. [48]

Even if they had been carried out as planned, the Oslo Accords effectively created a Palestine with 10% of its historic territory divided between

Gaza and the West Bank and a “state” under permanent trusteeship with no real autonomy for the Palestinians. The Palestinian people would have continued to be divided between the people of the West Bank, the people of 1948 and, of course, the refugees.

Reorganization of the occupation apparatus

The Oslo process would not have led to the satisfaction of the Palestinians’ national rights. The Palestinian leadership found itself de facto put forward by the occupier and structurally integrated into the architecture of the occupation. From the outset, these agreements and this “peace process” have served as a support for a reorganization of the system of occupation of the Palestinian territories, anticipated for a long time by part of the Israeli ruling class.

The Oslo architecture actually enabled the Israeli authorities to resolve the paradox that had confronted them since the June 1967 war, at the end of which the State of Israel occupied the whole of Palestine, theoretically partitioned in 1947-1948. [...] The military success thus created a political difficulty: Israel was now home to the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to the Palestinians of 1948. The State of Israel’s claim to be simultaneously a “Jewish State” and a “democratic State” is therefore seriously threatened.

[49]

It is in this light that the Israeli strategy and the dynamic behind the “areas” must be understood: giving up sovereignty over the most densely populated Palestinian areas while retaining control over the Jordan Valley, the shores of the Dead Sea and Jerusalem, whose municipal boundaries would be extended. The layout of the settlements, the roads

reserved for settlers and the fragmentation of the West Bank were a concrete application of this angle. So this was not a historic compromise on the Israeli side. The Oslo Accords were an adaptation of the Zionist project to the realities on the ground: the 1987 Intifada exposed the situation of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, helping to delegitimize the State of Israel and threatening to destabilize the Middle East.

Israel’s non-acceptance of the Palestinian state

In April 1994, the agreements that followed the Oslo declaration resulted in the Paris agreements defining the economic relations between the Palestinian “controlled” areas and the State of Israel. The Palestinian economy came under Israeli control, with restrictions on imports and the setting of tax levels. In 1995, the Taba agreements, also known as Oslo II, set out the conditions for the transfer of occupied areas to the Palestinians (Areas A and B) on the ultimate condition that the new Palestinian institution ensure the occupier’s security, i.e. suppress Palestinian resistance to the occupation. From the Oslo declaration to the present day, the many “negotiations” or “peace” plans that have followed - Camp David in 2000, the Quartet in 2002, Anapolis in 2007 - have all come up against the Israeli determination not to accept the existence of an independent Palestinian state on part of the land of historic Palestine under this security pretext.

As well as corresponding to the views of the Israeli state, Oslo placed Israel’s colonization of the Palestinians in the context of a symmetrical conflict between antagonistic states. The slightest act of violence has its “symmetrical” counterpart on one side, without measuring the glaring disparity in the victims, destruction, etc., of the other. Oslo made it possible to develop a rhetoric of permanent temporary existence, because the other party - the Palestinians - did not play the

game of agreements that were unfavourable to them. The slightest pretext was used to crack down harder and to colonize even more in the name of the “peace process”. The constraints imposed on Israel by Oslo were always dependent on a situation that had to be assessed by Israel itself, particularly in terms of security.

This symmetry of the conflict - non-existent from the point of view of political and military influence - was used by Israel to ensure a benevolent neutrality both politically and in the media.

Israel, an apartheid state

For the last ten years or so, no serious actor has been talking about the peace process again, or putting forward the roadmap that emerged from the Oslo Accords. In fact, from this point of view, it is a complete reversal: the international community continues to feed the charade of symmetry between the two sides, while the Israeli state is becoming increasingly radicalized.

In 2018, the Israeli Parliament passed a new Basic Law, entitled “Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People”, Article 1 of which states: “The exercise of the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is reserved for the Jewish people”, a right therefore denied to the Palestinians; another article stipulates that “the State considers the development of Jewish settlement as a national objective and will act to encourage and promote its initiatives and its strengthening” - which means the right to confiscate land, belonging to Palestinians. Above all, this text normalises a practice that for decades has turned Israel into an apartheid state. In 2021, the Israeli organisation B’Tselem concluded that “a regime of Jewish supremacy exists between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean”. It was followed by two major international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

[50]

However, despite the de facto support of the USA and Europe, Israel's image is increasingly tarnished: the fierce resistance of the Palestinians has ensured that their situation is still discussed at international level and that regular actions take place at the level of the United Nations and other working groups linked to the UN organisation, despite the systematic American veto.

Through the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) solidarity campaign propelled by Palestinian civil society, Israel's image of normality has been shattered and, although few in number, the symbolic victories of boycott and divestment have borne fruit and led to debate on the struggle of Palestinians and the injustice they experience on a daily basis in occupied Palestine. The fascization of Israeli society and the resistance it arouses in Israeli civil

society must not mask the extent of colonisation and the fate of Palestinians under occupation.

Thirty years on, the hopes raised by the Oslo Accords have been dashed. They point the way to what must not be done. There can be no "peace process" under occupation and colonization.

Translated by International Viewpoint from l'Anticapitaliste.

Resisting Russian Imperialism: 2 Socialists—a Ukrainian and a Russian—on Ukraine's Struggle for Self-Determination

8 September 2023, by **Ashley Smith, Hanna Perekhoda, Ilya Budraitskis**

Ashley Smith: What are conditions in Ukraine and Russia amidst this horrific war?

Hanna Perekhoda: Everything in Ukraine today is shaped by Russia's attempt to annex our country. Russia is waging terror against the civilian population, bombing residential areas throughout the country. People are dying every day, especially in the occupied areas.

The Russian Army subjects them to murder, rape, and forced displacement. But all of Ukrainian society is engaged in resistance. Despite all the horror of this war, Ukrainians overwhelmingly support and organize for the liberation of the entire country.

Ilya Budraitskis: Since the start of the war, Putin has crushed all opposition in Russia and driven it underground and abroad. He's been successful in creating an atmosphere of fear and obedience.

But only 20 percent of the population support the war enthusiastically, while about 20 percent oppose the war. The

latter is, of course, repressed. Most of the rest of the society is passive and depoliticized, tolerating the status quo.

Nevertheless, as Prigozhin's attempted coup proved, Putin's regime is fragile. Any serious defeat in the war could destabilize his rule and open space for social change within Russia.

AS: What are the reasons for this war?

HP: Russia's war was not a response to an objective military threat from NATO. It is a response to subjective threats against Putin's regime from within Russia and regionally.

His dictatorship oversees extreme inequality. To enforce that, it suppresses any democratic tendencies at home and abroad. That puts Ukraine, which has deep connections with ordinary Russians, in Putin's crosshairs.

He fears that if Ukraine becomes a free, democratic, and prosperous state, it will spread dangerous ideas

among Russians. That's why Ukraine's popular revolution in 2014 was a nightmare for Putin.

In response, he sent troops to seize Crimea and Donbass to incapacitate the country. He expanded the war in 2022 to eliminate Ukraine as a democratic alternative to the Russian autocracy.

IB: I agree. For Putin's regime to survive, he must impose full control over Russian society, including crushing all democratic forces in the post-Soviet space, especially in Ukraine.

He has repeatedly justified this in speeches about Russian empire and the multipolar order. He stresses the need for a sovereign power to rule great nations and their civilizational sphere of influence. It is a deeply reactionary worldview like that of Samuel Huntington.

This project is not unique but an example of authoritarian trends in countries around the world. That's why the war in Ukraine is of great concern to all democratic,

progressive, and leftist movements everywhere.

A victory for Putin would strengthen other reactionaries like Trump and the far right as a whole. That's why we must support Ukraine; its liberation would be a victory for the international progressive movement.

AS: What are you and your fellow activists in Ukraine demanding?

HP: As Ukrainian socialists, we are demanding all the military, financial, and diplomatic aid we need to win. At the same time, we are organizing against our own government's attempt to dismantle labor laws and push through neoliberal reforms.

We are also working to make sure that postwar reconstruction serves the interests of workers and oppressed peoples, not the corporations,

oligarchs, and international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank. As part of that, we are calling for the cancellation of Ukraine's odious debt.

The needs of ordinary Ukrainians, who keep everything from hospitals to schools functioning and are fighting on the frontlines, must be at the center of reconstruction. The liberated country must meet the demands of the vast majority for justice, democracy, and equality.

AS: What can the international progressive movement do to help?

HP: We are asking for solidarity. We want you to call on your governments to impose sanctions on Russia, confiscate his oligarchs' assets, and provide all the aid Ukraine needs to win and rebuild itself.

We want to build links between Ukraine's unions, feminists, and leftists and progressives throughout the world including the Russian left and anti-war movement. We want this because we believe we are part of an international struggle for a better world.

As part of that solidarity, we ask progressives to feature the voices of the Ukrainian people, not Western so-called experts, many of whom know little about Ukraine and Russia.

IB: Solidarity with Ukraine is a fundamental issue for the international left. We must do everything in our power to support the Ukrainian people's struggle for liberation.

7 September 2023

Source: [The Nation](#).

In Greece, megaracists fan the flames of megafires

7 September 2023, by [Andreas Sartzekis](#)

In July, the fires ravaged Rhodes (1/15th of the island, with the chaotic evacuation of 20,000 tourists), and also affected parts of Attica, Corfu and Evia. In August, the suburbs of Volos and the Athenian suburbs burned, and Parnes, one of Athens' three mountains, lost part of its forest, suffocating the city. In total, almost 1,600 km² went up in smoke, with one major catastrophe: in Evros, the north-eastern region bordering Turkey, more than 800 km² are still burning, destroying villages, crops (olive trees) and the protected Dadia forest, with its rich fauna. We have entered the era of megafires. In 2022, 66 fires were recorded, compared with 28 this year, but the 2022 fires burnt "only" a quarter of the area ravaged this year.

Incompetence of Mitsotakis and Co.

In the spring, the Prime Minister claimed that the country was perfectly prepared for fires... However, when fires broke out, we once again saw the lack of resources given to the fire brigade (4,000 unfilled posts, hence the major role played by volunteers this summer), the wear and tear or absence of equipment, and a policy based above all on evacuating the population, who on numerous occasions refused to do so and organized the fight to save their villages from the fire. Above all, the Greek Right's inability to prevent forest fires is strongly called into question: not only in terms of human and material resources on the part of the fire brigade (the resources are going to the forces of repression!), but

also through the refusal to reorganize the Public Forestry Office, as the experts are calling for, which has had the task of organised forest fire prevention taken away from it since... 1998! Faced with the experts' very specific proposals on forest maintenance, Mitsotakis is playing the fatalist: it's the climate's fault, he has been singing all summer, with the same refrain from the press...

Racist outburst

Back in July, Minister Vouridis (a former leader of the fascist junta's youth wing) added his two cents: the fires can be started by careless residents, but also by migrants (not forgetting Turkish agents!). As for the river Evros, the border with Turkey, we can count on him, now number 2 in the government: the border wall will

continue to be built... And it is this nauseating music, taken up by other ministers, that we have heard very loudly in recent weeks, and put into practice by fascist groups, encouraged by their success in the June legislative elections but in severe extremist competition with each other. Nerds who took armed action against refugees on the Turkish border in 2020, and who have since illegally set up huts and even villas in protected natural areas, played the role of sheriff (with videos of their exploits) by beating and arresting refugees, accusing them of setting fire to the forests, just as at least 20 of them were found burnt to death in the Dadia forest. Fascist MPs encouraged the formation of these militias, using racist rhetoric to conceal the fact that the refugees were exonerated after judicial investigations.

This conspiracy theory does not hold water for a second if you look at the map of fire outbreaks in Greece, Turkey and the southern Balkans between the beginning of July and the end of August [51] : they are of the same intensity everywhere, and of course have nothing to do with the presence or absence of refugees!

Be that as it may, the experts have pointed out that the fire in the Dadia forest was probably caused by lightning, but that did not stop Mitsotakis in Parliament this week from once again rambling on about the responsibility of refugees for the fires. Confirmation, if confirmation were needed, that racism is a central element of Mitsotakis' policy, and perhaps also a way of making people forget that, if he can, tomorrow he will offer his bosses the burnt areas to set up various businesses and wind

turbines, the rampant installation of which in Greece, with the destruction of mountain slopes to build roads to the summits, is usually carried out without consulting the local population, much more for the bosses' profits than out of any concern for the environment. In the same vein, Mitsotakis is already planning to entrust his bosses with the "management" of the forests...

In this tragic situation, an initial mobilization took place at the end of August: two (separate...) demonstrations brought together hundreds of demonstrators to denounce the real crime against the environment, demand resources for prevention and condemn the fascist militias and anti-refugee racism of this government.

Athens, 3 September 2023

Russia Policing and Repression Prisons The Persecution of Azat Miftakhov Is Designed to Silence Russia's Left

6 September 2023, by Kirill Medvedev

On July 12, news arrived that Russian political prisoner Azat Miftakhov, mathematician and anarchist, had been transferred to a punitive isolation cell. The reason was his refusal to write an explanatory note about the discrepancy between the contents of his personal belongings and the inventory provided. The previous month, his supposed "violation" had been keeping deodorant on his bedside table. In the isolation cell, he was obliged to sit on a bench without a backrest all day, until it was time to sleep. This caused the prisoner considerable pain — but he was then sent for a month's solitary confinement for breaking the rule against lying down during the day. Kirill Medvedev tells us why Azat is being kept in prison for a fifth year — and how it is connected with Vladimir

Putin's ongoing war and dictatorship.

It seems that a new case is being fabricated against leftist youth in Russia — the case of the so-called Moscow cell of the "Network" organization. For five years, the case against the supposed Network cells in Penza and St Petersburg has been the most high-profile case used to intimidate anti-fascists in Russia. Today, it is part of a campaign to intimidate the antiwar part of Russian society.

Despite the billing, there are no young leftists in the said cell — and nor does any such cell exist at all. Official reports mention only the name of Azat Miftakhov.

Miftakhov is a thirty-year-old Russian mathematician and anarchist of Tatar

origin. He graduated magna cum laude from the faculty of mechanics and mathematics at Moscow State University (MSU). He was engaged in science, took part in political actions, and participated in anarchist campaigns against unscrupulous employers and corporate raiders throwing tenants out of apartments and dormitories. Winner of the All-Russian Mathematical Olympiad, at the time of his arrest, he was about to defend his PhD thesis.

On the night of January 30, 2018, unknown people smashed a window of the Moscow district headquarters of the pro-Putin United Russia party, throwing a smoke bomb inside. No one was in the headquarters, and accordingly, no one was hurt. It was a protest action against the simulated presidential election. Anarchists took

responsibility for the action.

Miftakhov would be hauled before the courts one year later. Outside of this case, twelve people were arrested on February 1, with the state's Federal Security Service (FSB) connecting them with the anarchist movement People's Self-Defense. Miftakhov was among them. The same day, all except him were released. He refused to testify against himself and the others, so the security forces reopened the old case and pinned the broken glass in the United Russia headquarters on him. Using fabricated testimony from anonymous witnesses, Miftakhov was sentenced to six years in prison. (The term was reduced because of the two years spent in the detention center: one year inside counts for a year and a half from the sentence).

What Is the Network Case?

There are strong suspicions that the security forces do not want to release Miftakhov after the end of his sentence. Now, the FSB is apparently trying to prove that he belongs to the "Moscow cell of the terrorist community Network." In 2020, based on confessions obtained by officers through beatings and the use of tasers, a court convicted ten anti-fascists from Penza and St Petersburg to sentences ranging from three-and-a-half to eighteen years in prison. The siloviki, or special services, believe that the Network was planning terrorist attacks ahead of the Russian presidential election and the 2018 FIFA World Cup to destabilize the country and carry out an armed takeover.

The law enforcement agencies recently decided to add a new chapter to the case of the so-called terrorist organization: the fabricated case of the Moscow cell. There is a great danger that its figurehead will be made out to be Miftakhov. This may be due to the old scores to settle with him, which did not enter into deals with the investigators. But perhaps it is just easier to accuse an already known "criminal" than to look for a new one.

The testimony on Miftakhov that may form a basis of a new case was given by Igor Shishkin, one of the defendants in the Network case. After

his release and political asylum in France, Shishkin recounted how the FSB had beaten him to testify against his comrades using terrible torture. In addition, according to the official TASS news agency, some of those convicted in the Network case pointed to Miftakhov as one of the members of the Moscow cell.

If Miftakhov is convicted, he faces many more years in prison. Who Supports Azat?

The campaign in Miftakhov's defense has been supported from the outset by the Initiative Group of Moscow State University (including socialist activist and politician Mikhail Lobanov), DOXA student magazine, and Russian mathematicians.

In December 2020, mathematicians from the United States, Canada, and Europe supported Miftakhov, urging their colleagues not to participate in the International Congress of Mathematicians in St Petersburg.

Miftakhov's persecution and sentence were condemned by Human Rights Watch, the London Mathematical Society, and the International Mathematical Union. The intellectuals and politicians who have spoken out against the persecution of Miftakhov in recent years include Slavoj Žižek, Noam Chomsky, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the late David Graeber, and many others.

There is a support group FreeAzat in Russia; its international branch Solidarité FreeAzat is now collecting signatures in support of Miftakhov. Cases Against the Left

The Miftakhov case is one of many current legal frame-ups against oppositional, left-wing, and anti-fascist youth in the Russian Federation.

Young anti-fascists from the city of Tyumen were tortured to get their testimony: they were beaten, strangled with a bag, electrocuted, and threatened with mop rape. They were accused of creating a terrorist association, preparation for a terrorist act, and intending to blow up military and police stations and sabotage the railroads that carry trains of Russian military equipment to Ukraine. They

face fifteen to thirty years in prison or life imprisonment.

Teenagers from the city of Kansk were detained in 2020 for posting flyers in support of Miftakhov. They were accused of preparing terrorist attacks. Sixteen-year-old Nikita Uvarov was sentenced to five years in an "educational colony."

Two Chelyabinsk anarchists were sentenced to one year and nine months in a penal colony for hanging a banner on the fence of the FSB building with the inscription "FSB is the main terrorist."

Repression on grounds of supposed terrorism hits not only young anarchists and anti-fascists, but also communists. Dmitry Chuvilin, a member of the State Assembly of Bashkortostan and a former member of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), was accused alongside his comrades of "terrorist" organizing just for participating in a Marxist reading group. In fact, local law enforcement was reacting to their active participation in ecological, anti-developer, and other local protests.

Kirill Ukraintsev, a leader of the Courier union of delivery workers, spent a year in jail. One of the charges was a post on social networks with an appeal to come to the trial of Miftakhov. This was qualified as "organizing a rally outside the court."

The editors of the student magazine DOXA, which became the main mouthpiece of radical students' protest, spent a year under house arrest and were convicted and sentenced to compulsory labor for "calling minors to participate in rallies." In April, twenty-six-year-old feminist-linked Darya Trepova was detained for her alleged involvement in the murder of far-right propagandist Vladlen Tatarsky. In connection with this, a new campaign against feminists has been launched. A law equating feminism with extremist ideology has been seriously discussed in the State Duma.

On July 25, Boris Kagarlitsky, a world-renowned sociologist and Marxist theorist, was arrested in Moscow. He is accused of "justifying terrorism" for

his statements against Putin's aggression in Ukraine and faces up to seven years in prison.

Antiwar Dissent

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the role of nonstate combatants in Russia has been growing, both in military operations and in strengthening terror inside the country. The response to the fictional extremism of which civil society is accused became real extremism on the part of men in masks, among whom it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between state security officers and paramilitaries.

The recent prevention of the mock coup headed by Yevgeny Prigozhin, and the partial disbandment of his private military company notorious for brutal executions of "deserters," do not mean that the dominant power structures are returning to the framework of law and transparency. On the contrary, they are even more likely to take actions demonstrating extremism of their own, which becomes more and more legitimate.

The competition among far-right groups, in one way or another connected to the government and the FSB, is also on the rise. Some of them are still counting on the apathy of the population, while others are hoping for a politicized mobilization of the top-down, fascist type, which, in their opinion, is the only way to ensure Russia's victory in the war.

The fiercer this competition, the stronger will be the demand for a grassroots, antiwar, democratic agenda, including a leftist one. People

of left-wing views, anti-fascists, feminists, members of socialist groups, and Communist Party sympathizers largely constitute the framework of civil society and protest society today, forming a great many visible and invisible connections within it. At the same time, they largely lack the visibility characteristic of many liberal politicians. "The mass demand for a left-democratic alternative in society is combined with the dominance of right-leaning people among the opposition's public speakers," Mikhail Lobanov commented in an interview.

Lobanov, a democratic socialist politician and MSU professor, once again had his home raided by law enforcement officers on May 18 in another fabricated case. After new threats and the de facto deprivation of his right to teach in Russia, Lobanov left in July this year on what he called a "long-term business trip abroad." He sees its purpose as participating in "the formation of a mass political force focused on direct participation in the transformation of the Russian regime and on supporting social movements within the country." For him, this also means "working with progressive political forces in other countries to form a set of proposals and guarantees for ordinary people in Russia and Ukraine."

Unfortunately, public opinion around the world still heavily leans into the stereotype that only the liberal opposition in Russia is fighting Putin. This perception is often shared by Putin's own opponents and sympathizers internationally, including leftists who believe that

Putin is building a "multipolar world" and is thus some sort of tactical ally of the Left. Putin's multipolarity means, among other things, the right to state homophobia in the name of so-called traditional Russian values. Imposing these "values" from above is one of the tools of a brutal repressive control.

Elena Gorban, Miftakhov's wife, recently revealed that he had been attributed a lower status among the informal hierarchy of prisoners because of his bisexuality, after the FSB distributed some old pre-prison pictures of him among other inmates. Gorban believes that through this action the agency officials wanted to put pressure on Miftakhov.

Azat Miftakhov is already known as a political prisoner and mathematician supported by many people worldwide, so we have a real chance to secure his release. And that's why we have to concentrate on his case — because in standing for Miftakhov, we also stand for other less-known comrades. But the support of the aforementioned activists does not only have a human rights or humanitarian meaning. As Lenin put it a century ago, today Russia is becoming the weakest link of world capitalism. Left-wingers in Russia fight and risk their lives for a project that challenges not only the current authorities in Russia but the entire neoliberal order. The more support and publicity they receive today, the more likely it is that their project of reorganizing Russia will be at the top of the agenda after the collapse of the current administration.

Source [Jacobin](#).

AMLO's Mexico: Fourth Transformation?

5 September 2023, by [Dan La Botz](#)

The party that AMLO had created, Morena, Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (National Regeneration Movement) — Morena also means brown, the color of the common

people of Mexico — won a majority of 55 seats in the Senate and a plurality of 156 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. With allied parties, Morena had a majority.

AMLO and Morena had put forward a democratic, inclusive, and progressive vision for the country. The media described AMLO as a leftist, and so it seemed to many. Some still think

so. [52]

AMLO promised change. And things certainly needed changing. For 70 years, from 1928 to 2000, the country had been a one-party state, ruled by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) under which corruption and inequality prevailed (brilliantly depicted in the 1999 black comedy "Herod's Law").

Then from 2000 to 2018 it was governed by a series of corrupt and incompetent presidents from the conservative National Action Party (PAN) or the equally pro-business PRI. The results were disastrous, in some ways catastrophic.

When AMLO took office, he faced enormous challenges in leading his nation, then of 124 million souls. A few snapshots — and a trigger warning: The drug business earned hundreds of billions. The year he was elected, in 2018, 33,000 people were murdered in the drug wars; some 200,000 had been killed since 2006.

There were thousands of femicides, women murdered around the country. Some 48 journalists were killed in 2016; 12 in 2017. Over 100 politicians were assassinated during the 2018 election campaign. The minimum wage in 2018 was US\$135 a month, among the lowest in Latin America. Millions lived in poverty. Those in rural areas, the Indigenous, and women were poorer than others, often much poorer.

Corruption was rampant. Former Veracruz governor Javier Duarte, for example, stole US\$3 billion, leaving his state in bankruptcy. The police were notoriously corrupt and violent: murdering, raping and torturing with impunity. When the army was mobilized for the drug war in the early 2000s, soldiers soon did much the same.

Given all that, it is not surprising that millions of younger Mexicans had migrated to the United States, many better educated than those who stayed behind. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Central Americans and others passed through Mexico, exploited by coyotes, robbed by the police, some murdered by gangs, some

suffocating in truck trailers as they tried to make their way to the United States.

Since January of 1994 when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect, the Mexican economy existed in a complex, quasi-common market with the United States and Canada. U.S. and Canadian foreign direct investment, and that from other countries, amounted to tens of billions of dollars a year.

Foreign investors created new industrial zones with hundreds of factories and millions of workers in the maquiladora plants (mostly on the U.S.-Mexico border), in auto plants (U.S., Japanese, and German) a little further south, and in many other industries.

When AMLO's term began, almost all of those workers were controlled by a corporatist system of labor relations where the state protected its "official" labor unions, which in turn protected employers from real unions, keeping productivity high and wages low. Most workers could not vote for the union they wanted, could not vote on the contract, and risked their jobs if they spoke up.

That was Mexico when AMLO was inaugurated — a permanent social tragedy. AMLO promised that his new government would carry out the "Fourth Transformation," a fundamental change in the country that would usher in a new era and a better future for all Mexicans.

He compared this 4T, as it came to be called, to Mexico's other great transformative periods: the Independence struggle that lasted from 1810-1821 and established Mexico as a sovereign nation; the Reform period of 1855-1876 that expelled the French who had invaded and conquered Mexico and also broke the power of the conservative parties and the Church, establishing a liberal state; and the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1940 that gave land to peasants, labor rights to workers, and nationalized the British and American oil industry.

Clearly AMLO imagined that he, Morena and Mexico would do great

things. AMLO not only put his administration in a historical framework, he also imbued it with a mystique. He believed the force was with him.

So these are the questions: Are we seeing a Fourth Transformation? Has AMLO carried out the structural changes that would be necessary for a genuine progressive transformation? If not, what is happening in Mexico?

The Caudillo

The first problem of AMLO's government has been the man himself. AMLO is a caudillo, a charismatic leader of authoritarian populist tendencies, a larger-than-life-size figure who dominates his party, political life, and the national media. But as one academic observes, "unlike other charismatic leftist leaders who came to power with the backing of major social movements or a mass party, as Evo Morales in Bolivia or Lula in Brazil, AMLO commands a largely personalistic movement supported by unorganized popular constituencies." [53]

AMLO has gradually mesmerized a large segment of society. A master of symbolic gestures, AMLO declined to live in Los Pinos, the presidential palace, and turned it into a museum open to the public. He stopped using and eventually sold off Mexico's luxurious presidential airplane, instead taking commercial flights. He also unloaded the fleet of presidential automobiles.

To fight corruption, he said he wanted a "poor" government, a state of "Franciscan poverty." He himself took a 40% pay cut and stripped former presidents of their pensions. His personal austerity, he suggested, would be a model of "republican austerity" for other government officials, and he laid off many of them and reduced everyone's salary.

All this, he said, was central to the fight against corruption. And of course it enhanced his popularity amongst the masses, many of whom had come to loathe the worse than worthless PRI and PAN governments and resent the wealthy elite. Initially he had the

support of 80% of the population.

AMLO is a populist who blames the country's "fifi" (we might say "posh") elite, whom he also calls an economic mafia, for creating the neoliberal economic system and perpetuating the country's political corruption. He uses his position to slam not only the elite but also political opponents and the media. They are bad, the people are good.

And so he speaks directly to the people. His mañaneras, daily 7:00 a.m. press conferences — there have been about a thousand of them — average 90 minutes but some last for hours. They are watched by 13.2 million viewers.

Caudillismo, the domination of such leaders, almost always men, is an historic feature of Mexico since its founding. The caudillo as president reinforces that model of leadership throughout the society, in political parties, in labor unions, community groups and social movements.

It is a style and a system that tends to engender clique politics, favoritism, nepotism and corruption. The presidential caudillo may have a vast popular following and organize enormous rallies, may be beloved by the people — but participation in a rally does not equal a voice in government, and certainly not popular control of the state. AMLO concentrates power in his own hands.

Historically, caudillos emerged from the military. The caudillo was a man on a horse. AMLO did not emerge from the military, but he has increasingly relied on it. The army, the navy, the marines, and the national guard deal with crime, handle immigration, own banks that distribute social welfare payments, and run the airports and the new Maya Train. As president he is, of course, the commander in chief.

The Caudillo and Covid

We can see how caudillismo affected AMLO's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, which was very like Donald

Trump's. [54] As Covid began to appear in Mexico, AMLO not only ignored but disdained scientists' and physicians' public health recommendations. In one of his mañaneras in late March 2020 he held up two amulets that he said protected him, suggesting divine providence or magical powers.

He urged people to continue to go about their business, to use public transportation, go to restaurants, to keep the economy humming. He told people to keep hugging each other and for months afterwards he continued to mingle in his crowds of admirers, shaking hands and kissing babies.

Only very gradually and too late did his government begin to make recommendations on social distancing, masking and other safety practices. Even then he publicly flouted the rules himself. Of course, like Trump, AMLO got Covid.

There was also, however, the problem of the healthcare system. For years Mexico had been cutting the health budget, and AMLO himself, imposing his republican austerity, did the same, cutting the health budget and laying off 10,000 medical professionals in 2019. Health workers protested, blocking highways to call attention to the need for supplies.

There were not enough medicines. Mexico had too few ventilators and not enough hospital beds. [55] AMLO later reversed these policies, but the change came too little and too late. With poor presidential leadership and an inadequate public health system, Mexico had 7,633,355 Covid cases and 334,336 deaths between January 23, 2020 and July 12, 2023.

These deaths are proportionally on a par with the United States under Trump, who did an equally poor job. AMLO bears responsibility for that loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. With such a health crisis, the economy also suffered: "The Mexican economy shrank 4.5% in 2020 as the pandemic ravaged factories, businesses and households. It was the greatest contraction since the 1994 Tequila Crisis that followed a peso devaluation." [56]

Since Covid the economy has improved, growing significantly in the last year, but given its long history of erratic growth spurts, the significance of the recent uptick is unclear.

Drug Cartels and Ayotzinapa

AMLO has also been faced with the enormous challenge of Mexico's drug cartels, which run a multi-billion-dollar business, maintain small, well-armed private armies, exercise control over cities and entire states, and buy politicians, police, and military officers.

In 2006 PAN president Felipe Calderón launched a full-scale drug war, mobilizing the army against the cartels, splitting the cartels into smaller, competing, and more violent organizations. The violence took tens of thousands of lives and the army engaged in widespread human rights violations.

Mexican attitudes toward the drug war violence changed in September 26, 2014 when 43 male students at the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College were kidnapped and murdered in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico.

Every year the students of Ayotzinapa had commandeered city buses and drove them to Mexico City to commemorate the Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968. But in 2014 the students were gathered up and disappeared either by a drug gang, by local politicians and the police, or by the army or, as became clear, by some combination of those.

The students' disappearance led to national and international protests, the Guerrero governor and other politicians were forced to resign. [57] Various agencies of the Mexican government conducted investigations which in turn were discredited by a U.N. investigation, but the crime remained unsolved and the perpetrators unpunished.

AMLO stood with the people against the PRD politicians in Guerrero, demanding that the PRI national government provide answers.

When he became president, AMLO created a Commission for Truth and Access to Justice that once again

investigated the kidnappings and declared it a “state crime.” Warrants were issued for the arrest of 88 people, military commanders, soldiers, police officers and drug gang members.

Still, with authorities hiding evidence, lying, and torturing witnesses, the crime remained unsolved and top officials untouched. Only three students’ remains were found and no one was tried and convicted.

Inter-American Human Rights Commission’s experts who had investigated the crime for eight years ended its work in July, 2023 saying, “The evidence demonstrates that several authorities knew what was happening or had important information that has not been provided, perhaps because they thought it could expose their personnel who might have been involved.”

As Tyler Mattiace of Human Rights Watch told the Washington Post, “President López Obrador made a commitment to Ayotzinapa when he was first elected. But when push came to shove and he had to choose between pursuing truth and justice for Ayotzinapa or protecting the military, he chose to protect the military.”

As a candidate AMLO had promised to send the soldiers back to the barracks and handle the drug crisis differently; he would offer abrazos, no balazos (hugs not bullets) to the lower-level cartel soldiers and workers, like growers and distributors.

But he soon decided he needed some bullets. In 2019 the Mexican congress agreed to create a 60,000-member national guard — made up of Federal police, army and navy troops — provided that it remained under civilian control. But with the government still losing the drug war, in September 2022 congress, infuriating human rights groups, voted to militarize the guard, which by then numbered 115,000. AMLO broke his promise of demilitarization.

Nor did remilitarization of the drug war solve the problem; in 2022 Mexico had some 42,888 homicides. When the drug war began, it was often argued

that most victims were cartel soldiers, killed fighting each other or dying fighting the Mexican police, army or guard. After Ayotzinapa, it seemed, the cartels working with the politicians, police, and army were killing the people.

Despite thousands of arrests, the drug war against the Sinaloa cartel, the Gulf cartel and half a dozen others went on under AMLO with Mexico having lost more than 360,000 lives since it was launched in 2006. [58]

In the same period, 100,000 people have been disappeared, most of whom can be presumed to have been murdered. Amidst this slaughter there is the issue of femicide, the murder of women, with total of 3,754 reported in 2020.

Throughout these years before and during the AMLO presidency there have been large demonstrations against the government for its failure to stop the violence and to solve the crimes, and protests against the authorities’ human rights abuses. These movements, often led by survivors — mothers, husbands, wives, friends — have had little impact. Meanwhile fentanyl — cheaper to produce and with a growing U.S. market — has made the cartels even richer.

AMLO and the Migrants

When campaigning for president, AMLO suggested he would be the protector and defender of the migrants, most of them Central Americans, passing through Mexico. [59] The migrants from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, as well as Cuba and Venezuela, are fleeing economic hardship, political repression, or the drug cartels’ violence. Other migrants come from Africa and Asia with similar issues.

AMLO’s government initially offered migrants humanitarian visas to work or study in Mexico, but then abandoned the program. Under pressure from Trump, who threatened to raise tariffs on Mexican products, AMLO agreed to stop the migrants from crossing Mexico. He sent 25,000 National Guard troops to the Guatemalan border who used tear gas against families with children.

Migrants were not permitted to leave Mexico’s southernmost state of Chiapas. Carlos Heredia, an academic, rights advocate, and former PRD representative in the legislature, told the press, “We have sold our souls and become the wall.”

At a migrant camp in Ciudad Juárez this past April, a fire killed 39 Central and South American migrants held in a prison-like facility as the staff ran away. AMLO blamed the victims saying they had set their mattresses on fires.

Activists in Juárez protested. “The police, be they municipal or state level, can put [a migrant] in jail just for being in the street or for getting on a bus, that’s been the policy since López Obrador took office,” said Graciela Delgado Ramírez, a Juárez activist.

“Here there’s a wall, but it’s not like Trump’s wall. Here the wall is made up of people, where the National Guard, the police, and the bus stations won’t let anyone through.” [60]

Under President Biden’s most recent policy, migrants must wait in Mexico for an appointment made by app, to make their appeal for asylum at the U.S. border. So thousands of migrants are still being held in squalid camps along the U.S.-Mexico border in dangerous cities and towns many overrun by the cartels where they wait for their asylum hearings.

The whole holding camp system is in violation of both U.S. and international law, which says people can seek asylum at the border. Yet AMLO permits the holding camps on Mexican soil.

Economic Development

Early on, AMLO’s government published a National Economic Development Plan for 2019-24 full of idealistic language about participatory democracy, promises of wonderful social programs, and development based on increased investment. Though he criticized his neoliberal predecessors for having privatized over 250 state-owned companies, he did not propose to reverse the problem. [61]

As I wrote in 2018, “López Obrador promised once again, as he had so often in his campaign, that the investments of Mexican and foreign stockholders would not only be safe in Mexico, but would make decent profits under his honest administration.” [62]

He met regularly with bankers and told them that the financial sector should be self-regulated, like the press. [63] He appointed eight businessmen, two of them heads of the major TV networks, to his council of economic advisors.

As a candidate he had opposed the construction of Mexico’s US\$13 billion New International Airport at Texcoco which, he argued, was over budget, riddled with corruption, and a danger to the environment. By the time he became president, the airport was 20% completed and contracts had been signed for most of the rest.

Still, AMLO wanted the project stopped. With no legal power to do so, he organized a completely unconstitutional referendum on the airport’s future. Only about one million people participated, just 1.2% of voters, with most polling places in the president’s strongholds. Some 69% voted to reject the Texcoco airport.

When the referendum was challenged because of its illegality, AMLO used his executive authority and the claim of national security to quash the Texcoco airport. The new “Felipe Ángeles” airport in Santa Lucía has been built on an air force base — militarization again.

AMLO looked for inspiration to the past era of President Lázaro Cárdenas, who in 1938 had nationalized the British and American oil companies, putting oil at the center of Mexican economic plans. Oil had been the past; it would be the future. AMLO invested US\$8 billion in a refinery in Tabasco, his home state.

But Mexico is no longer one of the top oil producing nations in the world. Production is declining, and the refinery does not improve that, since foreign oil is still cheaper. [64] And with concerns about fossil fuels contributing to climate change, a

Mexican Green New Deal would have been a better call.

The economic framework remained unchanged. In AMLO’s first year and a half in office, the Mexican economy continued to be situated in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that was negotiated in 1993. Beginning on January 1, 2020, it was replaced by the U.S.-Mexico-Canada-Agreement (USMC), a treaty negotiated by AMLO’s predecessor.

Most economists believe the general impact of the new treaty is negligible, but the USMC Annex 23-A required Mexico to improve collective bargaining and Annex 31-A created The Rapid Response Labor Mechanism. These provisions, which gave workers and independent unions a tool, would have an important impact as we will see below.

AMLO went to Washington, DC in January 2021 to celebrate the new trade agreement and to make nice with President Donald Trump who had called Mexican immigrants “criminals, drug dealers, and rapists.” Trump thanked AMLO for his help in reducing immigration from Central America. When asked about their relationship, AMLO said, “We are friends, and we’re going to keep being friends.”

The treaty in general, however, was a ratification of the role of U.S. and Canadian corporate investment in Mexico —accepting and reaffirming foreign economic imperialism.

The pride of AMLO’s economic development program is the Maya Train, about 950 miles long and connecting the southeastern states of Quintana Roo, Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche and Yucatán. The plan was to connect the major cities and archeological sites, increase production, commerce and tourism, and thus generate employment and raise incomes in the country’s poorest region.

The train would be built in the state of Hidalgo and would create over one million jobs, AMLO promised and be done by Christmas of this year. All along the route, the president promised, there would be schools and

housing built.

Indigenous groups, environmentalists and archeologists have criticized the project, arguing that it will destroy the rainforests and lead to damage to the ancient Mayan cities and temples, and they warn that it threatens the Great Maya Aquifer that supplies drinking water to millions.

The president calls his critics “the pseudo-environmentalists financed by the United States government.” He said that “not one tree will be removed,” but of course, to build a train through the jungle, thousands have been.

One critic, Gerardo Ceballos, an ecology professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico as well as a member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, told the press, “Anyone who knows the area, scientifically speaking, is concerned about where the train will pass: over one of the largest caves and underwater systems on the planet. And the train will collapse.”

The project, originally priced at about US\$6 billion, is now projected by the president to be over UD\$20 billion, while plans to connect Merida, the region’s largest city, and the small state of Campeche have been scrapped.

Meanwhile around the project there is tremendous land speculation, with pressure on local people, exerted by Mexico’s tourist agency and the army, to sell their land. The military is helping to build and will run the train, which is called a national security project. [65]

Clearly the Tren Maya is disorganizing, disrupting and permanently alerting the Mayan communities, which have had no role in decisions about the project. Whether it will bring the benefits to the Mexican economy that AMLO claims remains an open question.

Recently AMLO paid US\$6 billion to nationalize six Spanish-owned power plants. This gives the Federal Electric Company 56% of total Mexican electric energy production.

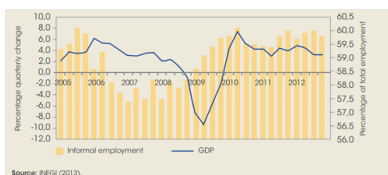
The United States and Canada

opposed nationalization, no doubt seeing it as a dangerous example. AMLO proclaimed, “Mexico is an independent and free country, not a colony or a protectorate of the United States. Cooperation? Yes. Submission? No. Long live the oil expropriation.”

Yet this act does not fundamentally alter Mexico’s relationship to the United States and Canada, and does not represent an important part of an economic development program. “The Poor First”

AMLO, sounding like the theology of liberation in the Catholic Church, stated that as president he would put “the poor first.” His government abolished many previous government poverty programs and gave cash payments to certain vulnerable groups, particularly the elderly and students under 15 years of age. Money for the poor is distributed through 13,000 banks run by the military.

Such targeted social welfare programs are characteristic of the very neoliberal policies that AMLO claims to oppose. Many on the left would argue that universal programs such as free or subsidized housing, education and health care for all are far superior to those that target specific poor groups.



A large part of the poor labor in the informal economy of businesses or are self-employed [the table above indicates the percentage of total Mexican employment in the informal economy], in both cases untaxed, unregulated, and not participating in the government’s social security institutions that provide workers with healthcare and pensions.

These are men and women who work as street vendors, employees of small shops, or delivery workers directed by apps, and many others. Wages are generally low but hard to measure. The informal sector represents 29% of the total economy, while informal employment represents 59% of total

employment.

AMLO’s administration allocated billions to help the poor, but didn’t always spend all of it. Records of what was spent for social programs were not transparent, making it difficult to really understand their impact. Some fear that such targeted programs contributed to corruption, though the evidence for that was not clear either.

Some programs simply failed. Youth Constructing the Future signed up a million young people to get jobs but found work for only 15,000. Máximo Ernesto Jaramillo-Molina in an article titled “More for the Rich, Less for the Poor” argues that government data shows that — while more funds than ever are going to social welfare programs — significantly more of that money is going to the rich and less to the poor. [66]

In 2020 Oxfam reported that 60% of Mexico’s poor were ineligible for three of the main social welfare programs. At the same time, military spending increased and often exceeded what had been budgeted. [67]

Finally, during Covid, unlike the United States and countries in Europe, AMLO declined to create significant special programs during the pandemic. Consequently, despite AMLO’s vaunted social programs, little has actually been done to improve the lives of the poor.

Julio Boltvinik, who writes the “Moral Economy” column for La Jornada, a paper that has supported AMLO, demonstrates that today there are 98 million poor people in Mexico, just as there were when AMLO took office. (August 7, 2023) Mexico como vamos reports that “Mexico’s GDP per capita remains at 2015 levels, indicating eight years of lag and regression.”

Taxes are a related issue. AMLO has refused to carry out a fiscal reform that would provide more money for social programs and government projects. Mexico has among the lowest taxes in Latin America, and the OECD reports that tax evasion in Mexico has been estimated to be around 3% of GDP or 27% of the total revenue of the main taxes. AMLO has not raised taxes on the rich nor done much to end tax

cheating, both of which would be good governance if not structural reform.

The formal working class — people with regular jobs with legally registered employers — has done better. As AMLO was taking office, the Mexican government increased the national minimum wage from around US\$4.40 per day to approximately US\$5. In the border region, closer to the United States where things are more expensive, the minimum wage was set at US\$9 per day.

Seeing that such things were possible, in January 2019 in Matamoros tens of thousands of workers in the maquiladoras, half of them women, struck dozens of plants. Using social media to organize, they demanded a 20% wage increase. The strike affected Ford and GM plants in the United States.

When such strikes occurred under the former PRI and PAN governments, the president, the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Labor would support the companies and labor boards would declare the strikes illegal. With the tacit approval of government officials, corporate managers, and union officials the strike leaders would be fired and force would be used to break up workers’ rallies and disperse picket lines. The strike would be crushed.

But this time, AMLO’s government took a position of benevolent neutrality, letting the corporations and the workers fight it out without state coercion — and the workers won. Since then, throughout Mexico there have been a series of victories by unions of miners, auto workers and auto glass workers, among others.

These organizing efforts and strikes have been led by independent unions and coalitions such as La Liga which is organizing manufacturing plants in several cities. Still the old corporatist unions, those historically controlled by the state and protecting the bosses, remain dominant and it will take a national organization with international connections to transform the Mexican labor movement. [68]

Marching against femicides.

Other sectors of society are also in movement. The feminist movement in Mexico, with tens of thousands marching with purple banners on March 8, International Women's Day, remains a force.

In the past few years, women won a victory for abortion rights. Mexico's Supreme Court decriminalized abortion in September of 2021 and several states also legalized abortion, yet some have not. In some states abortion is still considered homicide and as many as 200 women remain in prison convicted of abortion. Women are both challenging abortion laws and providing information and abortion pills to women who need them. [69]

Today violence against women, LGBTQ and trans people is at the top of the feminist agenda. AMLO has attempted to coopt the women's movement and has called the independent feminists "middle class conservatives" who oppose his Fourth Transformation. [70]

Politics, the Left, and the Future

Ramón I. Centeno calls the AMLO government a "fake left" administration that produced "a failed post-neoliberal economic transition. [71] Even worse, it sets the stage, if not now in the near future, for a backlash from the right. And there is no genuine left party.

There are today seven parties with a national registration. We have mentioned the PRI, PAN, PRD and Morena. The left-nationalist PRD, once progressive, evolved into a corrupt

party like the PRI from whose loins it had sprung. There are also the small social democratic Citizens Movement, the Green Ecologist Party, and the Labor Party.

The Greens are an opportunistic party previously allied with the PRI and now supporting Morena. The Labor Party (PT), a Stalinist party that supports North Korea, was previously allied with the PRD and now supports Morena.

There is no significant far left in Mexico today. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Mexico like other countries in Latin America, Europe and the United States, experienced a rapid growth of leftist groups — Mexican nationalists, Guevarists, Maoists and Trotskyists, as well as the pro-Soviet Communist Party of Mexico (CPM), which joined with some of the new left and became the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico (PSUM).

The left was a small but significant social and political force. [72] The new left of that period furnished activists for the peasant, labor, and community movements, created parties that tried to give expression to the needs and desires of working people.

All that is gone now. The Communists (PSUM) died by euthanasia, entering the PRD. The Trotskyist parties lost support and their legal status. The Maoists' national organizations disappeared, leaving groups of local activists.

The unfortunate lack of a far left in Mexico deprives the social movements of individuals and groups with a critical anti-capitalist analysis, strategic ideas about organizing for social change, a vision of socialism, and a commitment to immerse themselves in the movements. It also means there is no electoral alternative to the fundamentally conservative major parties.

The constitution permits a president to serve only one six-year term. AMLO, with the tacit approval of Morena, will choose his successor. The leading candidates are Mexico City mayor Claudia Sheinbaum, foreign secretary Marcelo Ebrard and interior minister Adán Augusto López.

Sheinbaum appears to be AMLO's personal favorite, but whether the country can nominate and elect a first woman president who is also Jewish remains to be seen. Former president Vicente Fox of the PAN recently referred to her contemptuously as the "Bulgarian Jew." In any case, while AMLO still has 60% support in the country, charisma is not transferable.

As the election approaches, AMLO is taking no chances. He has seen to it that the National Electoral Institute, which oversees elections, has had its budget cut and its personnel reduced.

He has attacked Xochitl Gálvez, an Indigenous woman, engineer and would-be PAN candidate. She says that her origins are humbler than AMLO's. He called her part of the corrupt elite, a millionaire, an attack that has only made her more popular.

AMLO is almost done and there has been no Fourth Transformation. AMLO failed to deal with Covid, to stop the drug violence, and to really lift up the poor, at the same time that he's undermined democracy and militarized society. His fake left has sown confusion and will over time generate disillusionment and cynicism.

A new Mexican left will have to be built from the bottom up. by workers and farmers, by women and indigenous people, by society's discontents. It's necessary to begin again.

Source: September-October 2023, ATC 226.

Report from the Fourth International's

Revolutionary Youth Camp

4 September 2023, by **Becky Brown**

The first FI youth camp was held in 1984, making this the 38th camp (accounting for a two-year gap over Covid). It holds the idea that young people should be given the space to test and develop their ideas together, emphasising that youth education in politics should not be based on receiving lectures by old men. Likewise, it doesn't expect all groups and individuals participating in the camp to hold the exact same politics - it sees a commitment to international solidarity, non-Stalinism and non-reformism as sufficient common ground to build for healthy discussions. I found this to work well, as strategic discussions tended to focus on actual struggles rather than party building or petitioning our respective liberal/conservative states, allowing us to share ideas on how to build on-the-ground momentum and actively engage in solidarity work. Likewise, I found it helpful to hear from experiences of different groups across the camp, some of whom were from small organisations with no party affiliations and others were youth wings of far left political parties or far left party blocks.

Participants were primarily from France, Denmark, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Portugal and Scotland, as well as some comrades from South American countries who were able to provide key perspectives and experiences from beyond Europe. International solidarity was not simply a form of tokenistic rhetoric. This was nicely exemplified by the organisation of the camp itself, where participation fees were scaled according to the buying power of each country. Want to buy some beer? Then you'll have to go to the bank to exchange your euros for 'toucramer' (burn everything!) with a similarly scaled exchange rate.

Programme

The programme was centred on a different theme per day, these themes having been elected on by a meeting of delegates in Amsterdam during Easter. This is nicely indicative of the way in which the camp is developed mainly by the participants themselves, both before and during the camp, in a way that consciously aims for openness and internal democracy. These themes were selected as key sites of struggle in the present moment, as we face up to a system of ecocidal global capitalism that has led rise to the most recent onslaught of floods, fires, droughts across the world as well as spiralling cost-of-living crises. Likewise, the present growth of reactionary policies and movements has emphasised how questions of anti-racism, feminism and LGBTI+ liberation must also be placed centrally in the revolutionary movements, in acknowledgment of the central role they play in capitalism's reproduction and social-reproduction.

Each day began with a session known as an 'educational', delivering an in-depth analysis of how each of these themes - eco-socialism, anti-racism, feminism, LGBTI+ liberation, social movements, and party and strategy - is situated within the contemporary landscape. The educationals showed how the Marxist method of analysis could be applied to each topic, foregrounding the question of how ruling classes materially benefit from perpetuating a system that is racist, ecocidal, etc. The camp participants ranged from the ages of 15 to 30 and therefore they encompassed a wide range of experiences and prior exposure to this method of analysis. Considering this, it was useful to keep returning to this material analysis, ensuring that all camp participants were developing their critiques on the shared understanding that, for example, racism is not simply a moral

position but that it serves as a useful tool for the benefit of capitalist ruling classes. LGBTI+ oppression was therefore analysed through the framework of the hetero-patriarchal family, using social reproduction theory. It was shown how LGBTI+ identities pose a challenge to the way capitalism has organised the labour force in the public and private spheres, exemplifying how matters of our supposed 'private life' and of identities are not divisible from the economic system we live under.

The camp recognised that people have had different experiences regarding how capitalism has intersected with their identities. A key part of the camp organisation was to privilege several 'closed' spaces, whereby people who had experiences of (1) being racialised, (2) being LGBTI+, (3) womanhood (from a trans-inclusive perspective) and (4) being transgender, were timetabled discussion periods in spaces reserved only for those who identified as belonging to that group. This gave them the opportunity to focus on strategic questions, for example how to organise as racialised minorities in our organisations, or organising the fightback against transphobia, ensuring that liberatory struggles could be developed and spearheaded by those who are most affected. The educational on anti-racism emphasised that the FI camps had had women's and LGBTI+ closed spaces since the 1980s and 90s, and this had not extended this to a racialised peoples until 2017. The camp acknowledged that it had not always recognised the significance of race in revolutionary struggle, and the delegations have never been a good representation of the racial diversity of the countries they supposedly represent.

Unfortunately there was no session timetabled for feedbacking any key ideas developed in the closed spaces, so I do not know what strategic

insights came about within most of the closed spaces. In the women's space, however, participants were keen to hear about the histories of sexual violence within the SWP. Links were drawn to other far-left organisations who have also faced the same problems, and questions emerged surrounding the accountability of organisational structures that have consolidated unhealthy and patriarchal power systems within themselves despite having well-formed critiques when looking outwards.

The themes of accountability and internal democracy emerged in a variety of discussions over the week, somewhat in continuation of these questions surrounding the internal organisation of left groups and the concurrent intersection with identity-based oppression. It seemed that the youth wings of political groups/parties were keen to foreground accountability procedures as a way of fighting against oppressive systems that have marred their groups in the past. It was recognised as worthy of serious consideration and as necessary of consideration as external struggles, something that is not traditionally foregrounded in left wing strategic discussions. The importance of this is painfully clear though from experiences that each delegation brought to the camp. For example, the Swiss party SolidaritéS recently experienced an elected cohort of older men who broke away and appropriated significant finances from SolidaritéS, following disputes about their refusal to maintain accountable to the party.

Workshops

Another key part of the camp programme were daily workshops and inter-delegation meetings. Workshops were led by youth participants from each delegation, who would introduce a prominent issue from their national context (strikes, social movements, policy changes etc) and then open this up to the rest of the group for discussion and comparison with correlate issues from their own contexts. Topics included fights against Airbnb; union struggles; resisting Denmark's deeply racist 'ghetto-isation' laws; Frontex and

fortress Europe; undocumented migrants and refugee struggles; LGBTI+ struggle; French resistance against pension reform; Switzerland's compulsory conscription, amongst many others. There were also practical workshops on how to build a tripod, feminist self-defence and building defensive frontlines against security services.

The Scottish delegation led the workshop on the transphobic movement in Britain. Other delegations reported back how useful they had found this workshop, as Britain's transphobic reactionary movements are further along than the many transphobic movements elsewhere, meaning that key strategic lessons could be developed out of hearing about our experience.

Members of the French delegation delivered a workshop on Soulevement de la Terre and the fight against mega-basins. It gave an overview of why the mega-basins were selected as a target, given that they appear to be less harmful than major fossil fuel infrastructure that is typically targeted by climate groups across Europe. It progressed onto discussing the movement's strategies and the subsequent police repression. It was clear that mega-basins are both ecologically damaging and part of an extractivist agribusiness economy, making them deeply unpopular with the 95% of local farmers who are outside of the agribusiness economy. This shared opposition allowed a strong alliance to form between the local farmers union and the climate movement, building a resistance movement that numbered 30,000 people. It led to conversations about how these lessons of mobilisation could be applied to our own climate movements and fed into a conversation about the fight in Denmark against the building of a new island near Copenhagen, an unjustifiable vanity project that is going to have major impacts on flooding in the future and yet has no public opposition to currently tap into.

Swiss delegates led a workshop questioning the significance of political parties in developing a revolutionary horizon. The workshop was attended by people from a broad

range of views and organisational experiences, from those acting in autonomous groups to members of revolutionary parties sitting within parliamentary left-wing blocks. The participants were keen to discuss the value of parliamentary politics within a bourgeois state, debating if the state's formal power can be vied for or if it inevitably leads to the co-optation of far-left politics once the parties have been absorbed into the political system. This theme re-emerges over and over again - both in and out the camp - and was reiterated by the splits recently experienced by several of the parties/organisations present at the camp.

Interdelegation meetings

Interdelegation meetings were an opportunity to meet with another national grouping to learn more about their context, and to draw comparisons or points of disagreement. Other delegations were keen to hear about the current state of the Scottish Independence movement, as well as about the UK climate movement, the parliamentary left and an assessment of the strength of a far-right movement. The rise of the far-right was a theme that emerged across many inter-delegation meetings, giving a visceral impression of the growing threat they are currently posing across Europe.

I came away with a greater sense of how comparable many of the struggles are and it felt good to be faced with the reminder of how our respective states are acting on similar interests in the protection of capital - meaning that providing space for discussions like these can be invaluable for comparing our experiences of fighting back and sharing strategies. In practice, the workshops actually provided a better platform for comparing tactics, as in the workshops the conversations remained focused on a single struggle and therefore allowed more time for them to be fully explored. The inter-delegation meetings were only an hour long, meaning that they were typically more of a Q&A session where individuals from each delegation

would ask about areas they were interested in. Few of us knew much about the political landscape of the other countries, so the inter-delegation meetings were a good opportunity to ask someone with similar politics for their perspective on their country's political situation and the role/strength of organised struggles. It felt important to learn these things, but meant that the inter-delegation meetings' supposed aim was not necessarily achieved - maybe if the camp was two weeks long rather than one!

Conclusions

In all, the camp was an impressive experience where many ideas were shared, critiqued and developed. Moreover, it was a valuable space where we had the opportunity to live beside one another, sharing our experiences of struggle, resistances, strategies, and to socialise and build friendships across borders. It gave us a taste of what it is like to live with a

sense of consciousness - both political and interpersonal consciousness - as we participated in, maintained and led the camp's programme and logistics, and worked within the camp's internal democracy to make continuous improvements. The result was festive and liberating which stands in stark contrast to the way neoliberalism infects our normal environments. It really did allow us to live out a form of 'revolutionary tenderness', in the words of a previous attendee.

Source: [RS21](#).

Trump Faces Four Trials, Uses Charges Against Him to Fuel Campaign

3 September 2023, by **Dan La Botz**

Trump, the first former president ever to be indicted, has been indicated in four different federal and state courts on a total of 91 charges, many of them serious felonies; if he were convicted of them all, he could face up to 712 years and six months in prison. Still, he remains the leading candidate in the Republican Party and he has used the accusations against him to rally his followers and to raise millions for his campaign and his legal defense. After his booking for his last indictment in the State of Georgia, the Trump campaign put his mug shot on t-shirts and coffee mugs and raised another \$7.1 million. He argues and his followers believe that all of the charges are a conspiracy by President Joe Biden and the Democrats to destroy Trump before the November 2024 election.

The legal issues are complicated.

The hush money case. Trump is charged in the State of New York with 34 counts of falsifying business records. These are the result of Trump paying off porn actress Stormy Daniels in 2016 to avoid a sex scandal. The trial is scheduled for March of 2024.

The documents case. Trump is

charged by the U.S. Federal court in the Southern District of Florida with 40 criminal counts of removing from the White House classified government documents, obstructing justice, and defying a subpoena. The case is set for trial in May 2024.

The insurrection case. Trump is charged in U.S. Federal courts in the District of Columbia with four counts of election subversion. He is accused of attempting to defraud the government, to disfranchise voters, and obstructing official proceedings. This trial is also to take place in March 2024.

The election subversion case. Finally, in the State of Georgia, Trump and 18 others are charged with 13 criminal counts of racketeering, attempting to get a public officer to violate his oath, filing a false document, conspiring to commit impersonation of a public officer, making false statements, filing false documents and committing forgery. The trial is set for October 2023.

Trump will attempt to delay all of these trials.

Given the number and the complexity

of these cases, it is not clear that any of them can take place before the Republic Convention in July 2024 when the party's presidential candidate will be nominated. He might be tried and convicted, but he could still legally run for president. If convicted of crimes but also elected president, Trump may use the presidential power to pardon himself, though that might be challenged in the Supreme Court. And a constitutional crisis thus arises.

The Fourteenth Amendment. In addition to the court cases, some liberal and conservative legal scholars are arguing that Trump could be disqualified under the Fourteenth Amendment's "insurrection clause." Adopted in 1868 after the Civil War, the clause disqualifies anyone who participated in an insurrection against the U.S. government. Cases have already been filed arguing that Trump's role in the January 2021 insurrection and his attempt to steal the election make him ineligible.

Among Republican candidates, according to a Wall Street Journal poll, Trump leads with 59 percent and his closest challenger, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, has only 13

percent. In a national contest the poll suggests Trump would beat Biden 40 to 39 percent with some votes going to third party candidates. Voter turnout and independent voters will be decisive.

Biden is 80 years old, the oldest presidential candidate in U.S. history and at present only 42 percent of voters approve of him. But a recent AP-NORC poll shows that two-thirds of U.S. voters would not vote for Trump in 2024. So though they wish they had

a different, younger candidates, it is likely Democrats will rally to Biden who has proven he can beat Trump. In a future article we will look at the left and the election.

3 September 2023

Labour, protests, and state capitalism in Belarus, three years on

2 September 2023, by Volodymyr Artiukh

August 2020 marked the peak of the mass protests [that will go down in history as the largest episode of mass disobedience](#) and definitely the most spectacular display of police violence in the history of independent Belarus. The electoral protests of 2020 stood out in one more respect: workers' organisations took part in them as a separate collective agent along with other social groups who stressed their distinctive role: women, healthcare workers, pensioners, IT specialists and others. The labour's participation in the mass electoral protests was not new to Belarusian social history, but in 2020 it took an unprecedented scale; [it was unusual, however, for the electoral and anti-corruption protests in other post-Soviet countries](#), including the so-called coloured revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, as well as in anti-Putin demonstrations in Russia.

As I was following those autumn events in Belarus, I had already finished my [dissertation](#) about the workers' movement and the state regulation of labour relations in that country. My background knowledge about the social history of Belarus instilled a pessimistic feeling about the prospects of the success of the protesters as their political leaders imagined it. I did not expect that Lukashenka would resign, but at the end of the first week of the protests [I thought that there was a potential for a positive change in the country and that it could come from the workers' movement](#). Indeed, workers on BelAZ,

MAZ and many other industrial enterprises managed to self-organise and bring their bosses and local politicians to listen to their demands, briefly demoralising the vast state-capitalist elites.

As opposed to street protests, labour unrest on workplaces had the potential of wresting concessions relating to workers' rights and overall democratisation. [The developments of the following three months](#) showed that my pessimism was justified and that the hopes of even moderate progressive changes were shattered. Moreover, the ruthless and violent crackdown of the uprising ordered by Lukashenka and supported from Moscow paved the way for [Belarus's participation in Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#). Belarusian workers' plight was determined not only by the malignant transformation of Lukashenka's authoritarian populism but also by the resurgence of Russian imperialism.

However, it is worth studying those outstanding weeks and months with a view of determining the weaknesses and strength of labour in opposing authoritarian regimes. First of all, let us consider the very fact of workers' participation in anti-government protests with a separate collective identity. This may sound counter-intuitive, as Belarusian propaganda portrayed workers as one of the pillars of support for Lukashenka's populism. Indeed, as opposed to other post-Soviet countries, Belarus preserved a

considerable industrial working class concentrated in state-owned machine-building and chemical industrial enterprises located in the capital city Minsk and in every regional centre. A whole district of Minsk, Partizanski district, is home to giant machine building enterprises, such as Minsk Tractor Plant and Minsk Automobile Plant. No wonder that workers from these and other enterprises marched along the main alley of the district to join the protesting crowd on the main city square.

Thus, the structural power of the working class in an industrial country partially accounts for the protest potential. What about the protest sentiments and the organisational power? [This is where the contradiction of the so-called Belarusian model of post-Soviet development comes to the fore](#). Traditionally, workers have been active in opposing the government starting with mass a protest in the last year of the Soviet rule. Strongly reminiscent of the 2020 events, Belarusian workers took to the streets in 1991 to protest against price hikes and eventually against the Communist bureaucracy. The republic was on the verge of the martial law and the prestige of the communist party was undermined.

These protests gave birth to a powerful reformist movement in the legacy trade union that comprised most of the post-Soviet workers, Belarusian Federation of Trade

Unions; they also brought to life several radical independent trade unions. Volha Britikava comes from this tradition, being one of the leaders of the Belarusian Independent Trade Union established in 1991 after the strikes in Salihorsk potash mines. These reformed and newly emerged labour unions provided the Belarusian working class with organisational resources and an experience of self-organisation. Labour protests were common in the nineties, also after Lukashenka came to power in 1994. After one of such protests in 1995, the new president warned: if people take the main square, there will be tanks. It almost came to that in 2020.

Lukashenka's populist turn was partially a response to the threat of the popular protests with social demands and partially a pre-emptive attack to forestall the emergence of independent political competitors. His decision to pause privatisation of state assets was as much a partial concession to the workers' militancy as an attempt to prevent the formation of politically independent class of large capitalists known as oligarchs in the neighbouring Russian and Ukraine. Lukashenka's political strategy was that of a [Caesarist rule as understood by Antonio Gramsci](#): the new president built his executive power to freeze the balance of the nascent class forces, that of the new bourgeoisie and the proletariat that still held considerable structural and associational power.

Trade unions, however, remained one of the most dangerous challengers. The head of the Federation of Trade Union of Belarus comprising most of the country's workers, Uladzimir Hancharik, ran for the presidency in 2001 and lost to Lukashenka in contested elections. Since then Lukashenka's presidential administration started a two-prong assault on trade unions. It imposed a loyal person on top of the Federation of Trade Unions and issued an

emergency decree introducing short term employment contracts across all industries. Thus, the largest trade union federation became effectively a branch of the presidential administration and the dissident unions became legally marginalised. 1 to 5 year employment contracts along with a series of related emergency decrees introduced a bureaucratically controlled labour precarisation that made workers entirely dependent on the management. Thus, workers ended up in a system of managerial despotism worse than in the Soviet Union since they have been deprived of employment and job security. This condition was soon aggravated by [criminalisation of unemployment that led to protests in 2017](#). The system of short term contracts have been finally introduced into the new Labour Code shortly before the recent protests along with other measures degrading workers' rights.

Lukashenka's populism rested on preserving the structural conditions of the working class but taking away workers' political representation. As the Federation of Trade Union was co-opted to the presidential administration, dissident labour organisations have been marginalised. The marginalisation of the dissident unions, meanwhile, pushed them to rely on international solidarity and reliance on western grants. Their membership plummeted and they lost access to workplaces on most enterprises with a notable exception of the Independent Trade Union in the chemical industry. Effectively, independent trade unions turned into NGOs that promote labour-related rights with a very limited base within large enterprises. Their political agenda was an alliance with political opposition, although some preserved ties with socialist groups. This accounted for the labour's weakness as a collective participant of the 2020 protests.

Most of the workers were drawn to

the electoral protests of 2020 as individuals and not as members of respective labour organisations. Except for the case of the Independent Miners' Union, most of the labour unrest in machine building was [coordinated by spontaneously appearing strike committees with a limited membership of dozens of people](#). Although labour rights were present in the agenda of these strike committees, they borrowed the list of political demands from the political opposition leaders who had no relations with the workers' movement and pursued a populist ideological strategy.

Thus, the initial impetus of the wave of the labour unrest had a limited base. Half of the protests happened in the first two weeks after the start of the protests comprising around 80 enterprises around the country. However, after it became clear that the Federation of Trade Unions remained under the control of the presidential administration, workers were threatened with layoffs and detained inside enterprises, the wave subsided: [spontaneous work stoppages gave way to the work-to-rule tactics, and finally shrank to individual symbolic protest acts](#). The general strike announced by the opposition leaders in the end of October never materialised. Soon prominent labour leaders ended up in jail or in exile.

The defeat of the wave of the labour unrest and the broader democratic protests paved the way to a transformation of Lukashenka's populist model of Caesarism into an outright authoritarian rule supported by police violence; with the failure of the domestic balancing act, the geopolitical balancing also failed as Belarus entered into an asymmetric dependency on Russia and became effectively an accomplice in its imperialist endeavours.

Source: [Commons](#).

A Missed Opportunity? A Closer Look at the Teamster-UPS Agreement

1 September 2023, by **Sam Gindin**

Sober assessments pivot on the relative weights given to context, material gains, building the union, and contributing to broader working-class consciousness and organization. But even here, there are differences that extend beyond 'the facts'. More often than not, disagreements reflect underlying divergences in political perspectives and goals. Making these transparent is crucial to moving forward.

Measured in conventional union terms, the [Teamsters-UPS contract](#) seems a clear Teamster victory. Backed by the threat to strike, the union pretty much achieved the goals it set out at the start of bargaining: no new concessions, some limits on overtime work, throwing out a two-tier structure accepted in the last agreement, and impressive wage increases of \$7.50 an hour over five years across the board, with \$2.75 of that coming in the first year.

UPS also agreed to alleviate excessive heat conditions in trucks by phasing in air-conditioning as trucks are replaced, to eliminate the use of driver-facing cameras for surveillance, and to create 7,500 more full-time job opportunities for part-time workers (and fulfill 22,500 full-time job openings overall). That the union achieved all this and more without having to make the sacrifices involved in a strike can, from an individual workers' perspective, be taken as an added plus.

The Teamsters quickly declared the agreement "historic," and the broad left quite generally concurred. Notably, the [Teamsters for a Democratic Union](#) (TDU), the longtime militant opposition in the union, hailed the agreement. Ditto [Labor Notes](#), prominent since the late 1970s in the rank-and-file struggles for internal

democracy and militancy, and influential in the development of TDU. [Jacobin's](#) coverage has also been generally supportive of the agreement, though a thoughtful article by [Barry Eidlin](#). But the Left's conspicuous and generally unreserved enthusiasm for the agreement - very few exceptions aside - merits serious questioning.

Looking Closer at the Agreement

Against the excited headlines about "ending two-tiers," the reprehensible secondary status for part-time workers - generally the "inside" workers in the warehouses and a majority of the union members at UPS - remains firmly in place, and the promise of more full-time jobs is little more than a paper commitment. Also, warehouse workers saw little or no attention paid to their working conditions. How then do supporters of democracy and militancy so readily accept a settlement, resolved without a strike, that limits workers' active resistance for five years?

The Normalization of Part-Timer Status

At the beginning of the 1960s, Jimmy Hoffa's Teamsters accepted the creation of a new category of workers: part-timers. Until 1982, part-time warehouse workers received the same wages as full-time drivers, but in the early 1980s the wages of the part-timers were slashed and the gap between them and full-timers steadily increased. This expansion of the proportion of part-timers with their dramatically lower wages became a core part of the competitive strategy of UPS.

In 1997, the then-reform-led Teamsters [went on strike](#) in large part

to challenge this creation of a second class of workers among their members. According to polls, the strike - popularly seen as a reaction to the national growth in precarious labor - was supported by the public at a ratio of two to one.

Today part-timers are a majority - 60 percent - of the Teamsters membership at UPS. Five years from now, the [hourly rate for most part-timers](#) will still be only slightly more than half the top rate for full-time drivers (\$26.25 for a part-timer with less than ten years vs \$49 top rate for the drivers). Based on [research commissioned by TDU](#), even if inflation was kept at 2 percent per year over the life of the agreement, many part-timers will still be earning less in purchasing power in 2028 than they did in 1982, a span of forty-six years. Moreover, the agreement includes an entirely new tier among part-timers themselves, with new hires starting at \$21 an hour and reaching \$23 by the end of the contract.

The Teamsters did end a tier introduced in the previous agreement. The Teamsters and UPS had worked out the creation of a new "hybrid" category that the union subsequently defended as a transition to full-time work; the now-infamous "22.4s" combined part-time warehouse work with some driving and provided an intermediate wage that fell between the part-time warehouse workers and full-time drivers. The full-time drivers saw this as the introduction of a lower-paid category that threatened to take more of their own work, and closing down this second-tier of part-time drivers was angrily demanded - and won - in the agreement.

But this came at the expense of a concerted focus on addressing the far larger part-time/full-time differential

in wages. That the Teamsters set aside the move to close this gap at a moment when the union had such great leverage reveals the extent to which their inferior status has, sadly, been normalized. Defending this by pointing to the significant monetary gains the part-timers received misses a clear lesson of the labor movement of the past few decades: the decisive long-term solidarity costs of tolerating the creation of permanent secondary workers within and across workplaces.

More Full-Time Jobs?

The fight for increasing the number of job openings by reducing work hours for full-time workers - so prominent in the early building of the labor movement - has long been abandoned by organized labor. Without the reduced work-time demand, negotiating more full-time jobs is notoriously difficult. The classic example here is the promise, contract after contract since the end of the 1970s, of "job security" for United Auto Workers (UAW) members at the Big Three (General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler/Stellantis) in exchange for concessions. At the end of the day, the concessions accumulated, while UAW membership at the Big Three fell by a stunning 80 percent, from some 750,000 in 1978 to under 150,000 today.

Among other things, the number of full-time jobs is not entirely under the control of individual corporations but affected by broader factors like the state of the economy and competitive pressures. At UPS, the Teamsters won a corporate pledge in 1997 to create ten thousand new full-time jobs (two thousand a year over five years). This was given a high profile in the media, but only a fraction of these jobs materialized for part-timers (a fact less commented on by the same media). And when James P. Hoffa's administration wrested back control of the Teamsters from reform leadership, it had little interest in trying to hold the company to its commitments.

In any case, promises of adding full-time jobs are easy to fudge. For one, in its 1997 "pledge," the company "made clear that all proposed increases in full-time employment under the new agreement would be

subject to [growth in business-<https://www.heritage.org/jobs-and-l...>"]>
<https://jacobin.com/2023/07/ups-part-time-workers-teamsters-union-strike-working-conditions-pay>] and health and safety of the predominantly part-time warehouse workers seems to have had no priority at all. This too reinforces a "two-tier" outlook.

Five Years of "Peace"

Corporations understandably dream of long-term agreements: by avoiding union strikes for a longer period, it promotes corporations' treasured "stability." In the 1980s and '90s, corporations aggressively demanded, and got, longer contract durations. Ron Carey, the reform president of the Teamsters during the 1997 UPS strike, acknowledged that "the union made what he considered a major concession in that agreement - it accepted a [five-year contract](#)."

The new contract continues the pattern of five years. During that period the company will be constantly restructuring work and increasing pressure on workers. The five-year period of "peace" in reality strengthens the ability of the capitalists to wage class war, while severely limiting the leverage of workers because of the no-strike clause in effect for the contract's duration. A worker hired after this agreement is ratified and working at UPS for thirty years can expect to go through bargaining six times in his work life, with perhaps one or two of those culminating in a strike - hardly the kind of involvement that can build a fighting union.

This could be overcome by the continued building of the base through education, continuous local struggles (both legal and illegal), and involving the members in campaigns to spread unionization to nonunion companies, Amazon in particular. There are, however, good reasons for skepticism - starting with the length of the agreement as an indication of union intentions.

The Left's Response to the Agreement

Some have claimed that more could have been won if the Teamsters were more democratic (less bureaucratized)

and more militant (if they had gone on strike in spite of the offer). Opposing bureaucratization and supporting democracy and militancy are of course easy enough to endorse. Yet they don't necessarily take us beyond the terrain of business unionism. Democracy alone, as we've seen, doesn't prevent the widespread ratification of two-tier agreements. Similarly, the admirable militancy of the 1960s ultimately failed because it didn't move on to press for the democratization of investment.

The Teamsters gave credit for their gains to their strike-readiness. Some militants argued that the union should still have gone on strike: If UPS offered the agreement it did without a strike, why not press for more? This misses the point; though the Teamsters did engage in significant organizing and may have been ready to strike for more money, they had not prepared their members to strike over the gaps raised in the previous section. This therefore wasn't a challenge to business unionism, but its modification to a more militant version of what was still essentially business unionism - a response some Amazon comrades trying to unionize Amazon have dubbed "militant business unionism." This may be better to some degree, but with continuing limits and new illusions.

This issue overlaps with the question of workers rejecting the agreement. A rejection would have served as a worker protest, but one of questionable practical and strategic effectiveness *at this late point*. It cannot override the actual achievements in the agreement, cut through the union and media fog about its limits, and overcome potential divisions. It was, for example, too late to suddenly get the full-timers on side now with a strike prioritizing the situation of the part-timers. That could only have been accomplished by making closing the part-time/full-time gap a long-term priority from the very beginning of the preparations for this bargaining round, along with the most intense education and organizing around this issue.

Calling for the rejection of the agreement could, consequently, only

have focused on further wage increases for all, and this would be difficult to sustain. It is one thing to strike over matters of principle like refusing concessions or a monetary offer that lags inflation and other settlements. But it is quite another when it is too late to credibly launch a fight over principle, and the size of the wage package is comparatively good. In such circumstances, the demand for “more” comes up against the cold calculation of losing weekly pay for an uncertain period, to win what would at best likely only be marginal increases.

What of TDU’s role in this agreement? There was a moment in US labor history when democratization and stubborn resistance challenged the corporate-state determination to decisively weaken the labor movement. Groups like TDU fought back courageously and organized effectively, but they were not immune to the pressures and defeats around them. In that context of demoralization and lowered expectations, it is not all that surprising that TDU came to pin its hopes on [the election of Sean O’Brien](#), a defector from the Hoffa caucus, as the new Teamster president.

O’Brien was a breath of fresh air after what Teamsters had been through. He offered TDU a chance to be more influential inside the union, and - in a bow to labor militants - went to the 2022 conference of *Labor Notes* and spoke aggressively, to wild cheers, about shutting corporations down and unionizing Amazon.

The problem was not TDU supporting O’Brien over the Hoffa-chosen candidate, especially since the group could not win on its own and running would split the progressive vote. Rather, the issue was that TDU gave up most of its independence in exchange for an influential role in the contract campaign. It was integrated into the O’Brien camp and - despite some independent organizing early in the campaign - became loyal in carrying out the limited bargaining program.

This meant praising the tentative agreement and tolerating the continued secondary status of part-timers in exchange for higher wages,

not opposing the promise of full-time jobs even if members knew from the 1997 agreement that it was a sham, stepping back from an overall challenge on working conditions, and treating the duration of the agreement as a tactic rather than a strategy (i.e., treating the length of the contract as something to trade off for other gains rather than as a crucial factor in building the strength of the members.)

In its twenty-year retrospective on the 1997 Teamster-UPS confrontation, *Labor Notes* dubbed the strike “a showdown between union reformers and business unionism.” The 2023 tentative settlement raises the question of whether the former reformers are now - in spite of their impressive history - to be understood as promoting simply a militant variation of business unionism, with all its ultimate limits. The largely unqualified support on the Left for the Teamster agreement seems to reinforce this climbdown.

For Class-Struggle Unionism

To be genuinely effective, democracy and militancy - and insistence on strikes and “permanent class war” - need ideology, strategy, and structures to develop and manifest this orientation. A socialist perspective has a key role to play in developing this class-struggle orientation within unions.

The only development that can win lasting, transformative social change is a working class with the vision, understandings, capacities, and confidence to challenge not just employers, but capitalism itself. Building a fighting working class isn’t a matter of taking over unions and making them into socialist organizations, since union membership is not based on common politics but the happenstance of sharing a workplace and concern with self-defense and material gains. It is instead a matter of strengthening unions and moving them toward being more open to class struggle and radical critiques of the capitalist system.

This kind of transformation can in turn also strengthen movements for broader social change: e.g., turning unions into schools that introduce radical political ideas, seriously engaging union members in campaigns for universalist demands like health care and free education, and through all this developing more promising recruitment grounds for left-wing parties.

In light of the profound working-class defeats of recent decades, we are essentially starting at ground zero. How to bring more class struggle and a broader political vision into unions is an intimidating challenge. To take one example of the difficulty, adding specifically socialist goals to the existing mix of worker demands, like suggesting a strike to advance “class formation,” won’t get us very far.

How can we link concrete worker interests and specific tactics to advance our goals? How can workers be convinced that a broader, class struggle-oriented perspective will ultimately match or surpass the gains of militant business unionism? And who is going to bring this perspective to the unions in the first place?

We can make these rather abstract questions concrete by applying them to the Teamster agreement. Four elements seem crucial:

First, while the union leadership grasped that this was the moment to take UPS on, the priorities that leaders set and primarily campaigned on were disappointingly narrow. A socialist-inflected response would have more strongly prioritized the plight of part-timers and the pressures of working conditions from the very beginning of the bargaining campaign, or even earlier.

Second, a more radical set of priorities would have made UPS resistance and a strike *inevitable*. But whereas for O’Brien, as Eidlin noted, “a”strong settlement reached without a strike was his preferred outcome,” what this approach loses is the strategic potentials in building unions through strikes rooted in principled issues. As one [UPS steward](#) observed, “[Not striking] changes the pronouns from *we* as a union to *you* as a leadership.”

Making change through disruptive collective action is a collective declaration that “[W]e did this. We fought for it. We won.”

Principled strikes are a critical catalyst for educating and activating the members (the measure of true democracy), raising expectations (a constituent part of militancy), developing new leaders, and demonstrating that smart bargaining may be effective in the right circumstances, but organizing the members is *always* the primary source of power (none of which excludes taking advantage of the openings offered by the current “right moment”). To be clear, this does not mean fetishizing strikes as something to always call for. But it does mean recognizing and acting on the fact that reversing trends in the labor movement is likely to demand far more than “smart bargaining.”

Third, since questions of the competitiveness of UPS came up, this could be used to stress the importance of moving toward industry-wide unionization and industry-wide bargaining to avoid some workers undercutting others. This would of course be difficult to raise if there is no struggle for equality going on *within* Teamster workplaces.

Fourth, TDU was, like many union oppositions, always vulnerable to short-term calculations. The point of an organized “outside” left is to act as a counter to such tendencies and help sustain militants by keeping the necessity of building class struggle up front - not as an abstract preference, but for the practical reason that in today’s context, only struggling as a class gives us any chance of meaningfully changing workers’ circumstances.

Impact of the Teamster-UPS Agreement on the Labor Movement

Within the Teamsters, the settlement reached will most likely consolidate the O’Brien leadership. It seems to

have given TDU some internal space but at some cost of its independence and ability to play an oppositional role in pushing the leadership further. One question is whether a new generation of TDU activists inspired by the history of TDU - along with some of the old guard - will turn to questioning where the reform group is today.

Will the settlement spur a broader revival in labor militancy? The large wage increases may stimulate larger wage demands, but unlike the 1950s and ‘60s, when a strong collective agreement in a key sector was likely to set a pattern elsewhere, that can no longer be confidently projected. The uneven restructuring of industries, the fragmentation of the working class, and the overall weakness of the union movement does not bode well for others following the Teamsters.

In the case of the UAW, the labor movement’s [next major contract termination date and test](#) (mid-September), the excitement of the wage package may stimulate autoworker expectations. And some may point to the Teamster victory in eliminating the 22.4s as a victory reinforcing the UAW priority of rejecting “two-tier.” But the unfortunate truth is that the Teamsters’ prioritizing wage demands over taking on the status of their part-timers tends to undermine the UAW leadership’s principled focus on ending its own two-tier system.

Moreover, since the Teamsters did not go on to strike to win the settlement, the argument can hardly be that if you are willing to strike and fight, you too can win. An equally credible argument is that the Teamsters had unique leverage and used it, but others may not have the same leverage. It is questionable as well whether wage gains are the key to reviving and strengthening the labor movement as opposed to the principled issues flagged above.

Will the Teamster settlement spur more unionization drives? Perhaps. The positive hype over for the agreement, many union supporters argue, can’t hurt. But this too is not to be taken for granted. Consider the Amazon workers. If they have been

paying careful attention, they will have noticed that UPS part-time workers (who do work that is similar to Amazon warehouse workers) went into this agreement with wages generally below Amazon workers. The wage increase over the next five years might impress, but many Amazon workers may expect by then to be close to the \$26.25 hourly wage that UPS warehouse workers with five to ten years’ seniority will be making (and ahead of the \$23 per hour that new UPS warehouse workers will ultimately reach).

But what Amazon workers might be especially sensitive to is the fact that the Teamster agreement did not demonstrate a solidaristic crusade to end the unequal treatment of low-paid workers. As for the issue that seems at least as important to Amazon workers - the oppressive production rates and repetitive strain injuries to backs, necks, and hands; the ruptured discs, muscle damage, and tendonitis - here too the Teamster agreement is hardly inspiring. Rather, the Teamster agreement tends to reinforce the long-standing union position of wages being the “compensation” for working conditions that can’t be substantially changed.

Some workers may also be impressed with the technical smarts of the Teamster negotiators and their ability to win high wage increases without a strike. But if that is the lesson, it is a bad one - nonunionized workers will, if they unionize, need to struggle and strike to come close to what the Teamsters have achieved over decades. If this lesson is not internalized, we will only end up reproducing the proven weaknesses in the labor movement.

The point is that the crisis in the labor movement is not primarily about union density but about the nature of unions today. It is worth noting that Canada has a union density rate two-and-a-half times that of the United States, but that is hardly expressed in dynamism of its labor movement. The larger question is therefore not so much whether Amazon workers will now flock to the Teamsters to improve their situation but whether, as Amazon workers take up the fight to democratize their workplaces, it will

be these workers, through their stubbornness, determination, and creativity, who might contribute to reviving the labor movement.

This raises issues that go far beyond waving the Teamster agreement at Amazon workers. It raises the question of whether a transformation in the labor movement might begin with developing class support for the Amazon workers. Can the labor movement put competition for members aside and create a common

solidarity fund to back the Amazon struggle? Will unions help recruit hundreds, if not thousands, of young workers from their own workplaces to go into Amazon plants (with a top-up to maintain their wages) to be trained as salaried support staff organizing drives and learning the skills they can later bring back to their home unions?

Will unions invite Amazon workers into their locals to discuss mutual concerns and develop the kind of culture that can later support direct

action alongside Amazon workers - railworkers ready to delay shipments to Amazon warehouses; machinists ready to slow down the loading of Amazon cargo shipments; postal workers and truck drivers ready to take longer lunch hours when needed to frustrate "instant" delivery? In other words, will organizing Amazon become a class project? And won't that begin with transformations of our existing unions?

Source: ***Socialist Project.***