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Hundreds sentenced in the maxi-trial of the 'Ndrangheta, the Calabrian mafia

30 November 2023, by **Hélène Marra**

Today, the 'Ndrangheta is considered to be the most powerful criminal organisation in the world. Its annual turnover is in the tens of billions of euros, and it has branches on every continent.

In Italy, the mafia has always been the other face of power, an instrument of control in the hands of the ruling classes. The mysteries of the Sicilian mafia were revealed through the testimonies of the first repentants, such as Leonardo Vitale in the 1970s and then, above all, Tommaso Buscetta, the key witness in the Palermo maxi-trial (1986-1987), who placed his knowledge in the hands of the magistrate Giovanni Falcone, assassinated in 1992 in the Capaci bombing.

The 'Ndrangheta: a mafia like no other?

Once again, the cooperation of several repentant members, including Emanuele Mancuso, one of the grandsons of the boss of Vibo Valentia, was decisive in uncovering this underground world. The strict observance of the omertà has long been its strength: between 1994 and 2007, out of a total of 794 justice collaborators, only 100 came from the 'Ndrangheta².

The 'Ndrangheta's organisational model is profoundly different from

that of other Mafia organisations. Firstly, it is based on the strength and reliability of family ties, which has enabled it to maintain its secretive nature for longer. It operates on a local scale, with each 'ndrina being autonomous and holding a monopoly over its territory. It is governed by an aggregate of at least 40 "men of honour", with a hierarchical organisation, submission to the "head of the society" and common rules of loyalty³ that make it a kind of archaic franchise system. The other key element is its ability to dominate drug trafficking, by establishing its own men in the producing countries and by allying itself - including through the system of arranged marriages - with the heirs of the "cartel chiefs".

Finally, the 'Ndrangheta has been able to change its skin, moving from the 700 deaths of the second Mafia war (1985-1991) to a strategy of non-violent immersion in the institutions, keeping ambushes and assassinations to a minimum.

Mafia bosses, politicians and law enforcement

officers convicted

No fewer than 388 defendants, more than 400 lawyers and 900 people called to testify: these are the figures with which the Vibo Valentia court, after 35 days in chambers, closed the first instance of a three-year trial against the city's mafia clans. It is one of the biggest trials against organised crime in Italy. A high-security courtroom has been specially built in Lamezia Terme to accommodate the defendants. Prosecutor Nicola Gratteri, a protagonist of the major Palermo trials, launched the investigation and represented the prosecution.

Heavy sentences were handed down to leaders and affiliates of 'Ndrangheta clans in the province of Vibo Valentia. Among those convicted were names from local politics and law enforcement with links to the Mancuso clan, including lawyer Giancarlo Pittelli, a former senator and regional coordinator for Forza Italia (the party founded by Berlusconi) who later joined Fratelli d'Italia (Giorgia Meloni's stronghold), the former marshal of the financial police and the commander of the municipal police. The offences charged are: misuse and disclosure of state secrets, Mafia association or external complicity, extortion,

fictitious registration of assets, murder, receiving stolen goods, money laundering, drug trafficking and usury.

The investigation by the DDA (anti-mafia district directorate) in Catanzaro highlighted the collaboration of the criminal network with the Masonic lodges, but also the internal tensions within the cosche (gangs) that have led to dozens of murders in recent years.

So, thanks to its encounter with rogue Freemasonry, the 'Ndrangheta found a relational springboard that enabled it to enter the highest echelons of the country's apparatus. A secret network of unsuspected people - magistrates, journalists, politicians, businessmen, police - constituting the most obscene face of power.

30 November 2023

Translated by **International**

Viewpoint from *l'Anticapitaliste*.

1.
Le nom du procès est dû à la renaissance souhaitée de la Calabre et au nom de famille de l'agent spécial américain Scott Sieben qui a collaboré avec la police italienne sur les liens entre la 'Ndrangheta et les cartels de la drogue colombiens.
2.
<https://www.filodiritto...>
3.
<https://www.filodiritto...>

Is Milei a fascist threat?

29 November 2023, by **Martín Mosquera**

Argentina is experiencing days of extreme political tension. There is no workplace, family or group of friends without debate and concern. Anguish and anxiety are felt in the atmosphere on the streets. Meanwhile, the Marxist left is in the midst of a controversy that conceals its own "crisis of representation": the left-wing voter is shocked because most of the Trotskyist parties, grouped in the Frente de Izquierda - Unidad (FITU) (Left Front - Unity (FITU)), decided to be neutral in the second round that could bring the far right to the head of the state institutions.

Ordinary people, on the other hand, seem to have a good understanding of what is at stake. And they sprang into action to try to avert catastrophe. Already in the first round of 22 October we saw a defensive reaction of the working class, which was expressed in the recovery of Peronism and the stagnation of Milei. A militant reaction from civil society was set in motion: people getting on public transport to explain the danger posed by Milei, handwritten posters taped to the walls, makeshift tables in the streets, small rallies and demonstrations in different neighbourhoods.

For a few days now, we have been witnessing an intense mass movement, mostly spontaneous and

micro-political. An impromptu popular election campaign. However, the majority of the Marxist left remains oblivious to this mobilization and expresses itself equidistant in the great political struggle underway. At the heart of the FITU's argument is the view that Milei is not a fascist. Let's look at the issue.

The Far Right and Fascism: A Global Issue

The debate on fascism is once again at the centre of international controversies as a result of the growth of the far right around the world. Milei's case in Argentina was no exception.

However, the discussion around fascism at times seems to hinder the analysis of the contemporary far right. It is easy to observe, on the one hand, an indiscriminate inflation in the use of the term. There seems to be a certain intellectual laziness among those who can see in today's extreme right nothing more than the simple repetition of a political phenomenon that owes too much to the exceptional peculiarities of the interwar period: the decomposition of the state monopoly of violence, the brutalization of societies as a result of the war, the

economic depression, the crisis of liberal democracy, the revolutionary threat coming from the working class.

Many aspects of classical fascism are not repeated in any movement today: totalitarian-corporate states, mass parties such as the German NSDAP, paramilitary groups such as the Italian Blackshirts or the German SA. These differences are obvious, and no serious analyst proposes such a mechanical transposition. Hence the new terms that try to capture similarities and differences with the interwar period: neo-fascism, post-fascism, radical right and so on.

However, there is an opposite error, which consists in referring to the differences with fascism between the wars in order to reject any comparison and any validity of this political phenomenon. This symmetrical error shares with the previous position the underlying idea that the analysis of classical fascism is useful only in the case of simple repetition. In my view, since the interwar period provided a unique precedent for reactionary mass movements acting both inside and outside constitutional institutions, and given that we have a wealth of theoretical studies and strategic lessons on this subject, "the lazy thing to do," as Ugo Palheta wrote, "is to deprive yourself of this comparative study."

But it is even more important to look at this issue from the point of view of its practical and strategic consequence: if we look to the fascism of the 1930s as a yardstick by which to measure a threat to democratic rights, we are setting the bar too high and thus disarming the left in confronting the real and current threats to democratic freedoms.

What was fascism?

Classical fascism consisted of a particular kind of authoritarian reaction. In a previous text we stated that "it differs from other reactionary or authoritarian movements in that it puts on the garb of rebellion (against politicians, finance, elites, etc.), and this allows it to capitalize on social frustrations of different kinds (with the economy, with repressive cultural norms)." Fascism had the capacity to bring together a reactionary policy with a mass movement. It thus gave rise to a "counter-revolution from below" that ultimately consisted of promoting a physical clash between one sector of the population and another, at a time when the authority and repressive capacity of the state were notably weakened. Fascism, Hannah Arendt asserted, was "the temporary alliance of the mob and the elite."

This difference with other authoritarian movements was perceived by the most lucid Marxist analysts contemporary to historical fascism. Togliatti defined it as a "reactionary regime of the masses" as he observed the great mass mobilization that accompanies its rise, and which takes the form of a "plebeian rebellion" against the "elites." Trotsky wrote that "in the epoch of the decadence of bourgeois society, the bourgeoisie needs . . . a 'plebeian' way of solving their problems."

In fact, fascism saw itself as a "revolution against revolution": a "total mobilization of society," especially of the petty bourgeoisie impoverished by the economic crisis, to prevent the revolutionary mobilization of the working class. Because of these peculiarities, fascism differs from other authoritarian

movements, such as military dictatorships.

A second very distinctive feature of fascism, and one that has been increasingly studied in recent decades, is the enormous political and state autonomy that it was able to deploy. The theory that fascism was an instrument of big capital against the workers' revolution, which was the official doctrine of the Stalinized Communist International, has been rejected by almost all subsequent academic literature. But we could say that it was also partially rejected by the writings of the most lucid Marxists of the interwar period, who already identified political autonomy as a central factor: Guérin, Trotsky, Gramsci, Togliatti, Bauer, Tasca, Rosenberg. Trotsky said:

The decadent bourgeoisie is incapable of maintaining itself in power by the methods and means of its own creation (the parliamentary state). But the established bourgeoisie does not like the fascist way of solving its problems either, because clashes and riots, although in the interests of bourgeois society, also entail risks for it. This is the origin of the antagonism between fascism and the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie.

However, despite the acuteness of the analyses and intuitions, none of them managed to completely elude the instrumental conception. This is ultimately a consequence of the fact that the instrumental conception of the state was long hegemonic in Marxism. It was not until the 1970s that there was a theoretical debate that significantly advanced the Marxist theory of the state and made it possible to break with rudimentary instrumentalist conceptions. One of the favourite objects of study to assess the autonomy of the capitalist state was precisely fascism.

Nicos Poulantzas, one of the protagonists of this renewal of the theory of the state, devoted himself in his work "Fascism and Dictatorship" to examining the position of the Third International in relation to fascism. In this analysis, he questioned both the instrumentalist and economic perspective and the ultra-left politics that derived from this conception - the

so-called "third period" or "class against class" policy, which consisted of putting an equal sign between reformists and fascists and rejecting defensive alliances against fascism. Poulantzas highlighted the political autonomy of the fascist movements, showing their contradictions with the "monopoly capital" of which they were supposedly their instrument.

Ernesto Laclau, participating in the same debate on the theory of the state, in his excellent work "Fascism and Ideology", went in the same direction. Reviewing the typical argument of capitalist financing of fascist gangs that would supposedly prove that these were "the preferred formula of big capital," he writes: "Monopoly capital maintained alternative policies until the last moment: in Germany the conjunction brought about by Schacht's intermediation took place belatedly, when Nazism had come to constitute itself by its own means as an alternative power, and in Italy the industrial sectors thought, until the very eve of the march on Rome, a political solution through Orlando, Giolitti, or, especially, Salandra was possible, in which the fascists occupied only a subordinate place."

Contrary to what conventional theory suggests, there was not an instrumental relationship between fascism and the ruling classes but a process of mutual adaptation and limitation. The bourgeoisie always prefers, first of all, some form of pluralist regime, typically a parliamentary republic, where it can exert decisive influence on the political system without depending on the personal leadership of a caudillo or taking excessive risks. However, in critical situations, big capital tends to adapt and take advantage of the benefits that an authoritarian regime of exception can offer, while at the same time seeking to control its excesses and avoid unnecessary risks.

Finally, it is important to highlight a third point. Fascism was never implemented abruptly, but was the result of a political process and dynamic that developed over a considerable period of time. That is to say, the implementation of fascism always implies a process of

fascistization that necessarily goes through mediations, transitions, leaps and ruptures. Fascism is not adopted overnight because it is not a button that the bourgeoisie presses in crisis situations, as instrumentalist theory seems to believe. Fascism was not an instrument or an epiphenomenon of the needs of capital, but the product of a complex and autonomous process, where ideological questions, political dynamics, and even unexpected accidents converged.

This processual dimension also makes it possible to keep in mind the difference between a fascist current and a fascist political regime. A fascist political current aims to move towards an authoritarian political regime, but its access to state power does not necessarily mean that it succeeds. Moving from access to government to regime change requires shocks, leaps, and ruptures whose outcomes cannot be defined in advance. For this reason, too, any fascistization of a political regime is a more or less protracted political process, not an immediate act.

Keeping this in mind serves to avoid summary and definitive characterizations of today's far right. Its nature is not something definitive, but unstable, disputed, and ultimately the product of political struggle. If the far right did not manage to fascistize, it is, to a large extent, a political conquest. Bolsonaro's failure in Brazil is illustrative: a neo-fascist current came to power but managed to be blocked by the unitary defensive response of the left and the working class.

Trotsky without isms

The reaction of the Communist parties of the 1930s to the fascist danger led, in Trotsky's words, to "the most tragic page in modern history": Hitler's rise to power, with so little resistance in the country with the largest, best organized, most cultured and most politicized working class in Europe. Stalinist policy consisted in placing an equal sign between fascism and social democracy ("social fascism") and opposing any defensive alliance of the

working class as a whole in the face of the reactionary threat. And in characterizing a future National Socialist government as a small interlude to proletarian revolution ("after Hitler, our turn").

Very few voices opposed the criminal policy of Stalinism within the Marxist left. Among them, two stood out that developed parallel but disconnected efforts as a result of loneliness and isolation: Antonio Gramsci from Mussolini's prison and Leon Trotsky from the Turkish island where Stalin had exiled him. In the words of Perry Anderson, Trotsky's writings on fascism "have no parallel in the annals of historical materialism" and "constitute the only direct and elaborate analysis of a modern capitalist state in all of classical Marxism." Anyone who has taken the time to explore Trotsky's analyses, warnings, forecasts and political indications in that period cannot help but be struck by the acuteness of his interpretations and the accuracy of his predictions. An exceptional theoretical heritage that, however, does not seem to be well valued by a large part of the currents that claim its legacy.

It is difficult to summarize Trotsky's approach in a few lines. It should be noted that he put his utmost effort into combating, at the same time, the equal sign that the Stalinists put between reformism and fascism and the class conciliation of Social Democracy. He counterposed the tactics of the "united front" that the Communist International had elaborated in the 1920s and differentiated both social democracy from fascism and the different bourgeois options from each other. Hence the famous quotes about Brüning and Hitler to which he often returns: "We Marxists regard Brüning and Hitler, together with Braun, as component parts of one and the same system. The question, which one of them is the 'lesser evil,' has no sense, for the system against which we are fighting needs all these elements. But these elements are momentarily involved in conflicts with one another and the party of the proletariat must take advantage of these conflicts in the interest of the revolution."

And then he added: "There are seven keys in the musical scale. The question which of these keys is 'better': Do, Re or Sol is a senseless question. But the musician must know when to strike and what keys to strike. The abstract question as to who is the lesser evil: Brüning or Hitler - is just as senseless. It is necessary to know which of these keys to strike. Is that clear? For the weak-minded let us cite another example. When one of my enemies sets before me small daily portions of poison and the second, on the other hand, is about to shoot straight at me, then I will first knock the revolver out of the hand of my second enemy, for this gives me an opportunity to get rid of my first enemy. But that does not at all mean that the poison is a 'lesser evil' in comparison to the revolver."

Admittedly, this did not imply that Trotsky supported Brüning electorally. This was one of the few arguments put forward by Juan Dal Maso of the PTS, in response to an article of mine about the irruption of Milei and the tactics that the left should follow. His brief text follows the typical combination of avoiding the core of the debate and adding personal disqualifications, a distinctive feature of what we could call sectarian literature. It is true that Trotsky did not support Brüning, but it is necessary to understand the whole of his reasoning in order to give it its precise meaning. Trotsky questioned the Social Democrats for supporting the Brüning government electorally and politically, as he foresaw that the situation was evolving towards polarisation. According to his analysis, this polarization was going to lead to a revolutionary offensive, which would only be possible through the united action of the working class (Communist-Social-Democratic), or, otherwise, in the victory of fascism.

In this picture, Brüning's government could only be an ephemeral government. To support it was to partake of the illusion that it served as a blockade to fascism, when the real way to confront fascism was to unleash the strength of the unified working class that could only emerge from concerted action by Communists and Social Democrats.

What is important about this for our

discussion? Trotsky at no time identifies electoral support with political subordination. That's not the point. That is not the consequence of their refusal to support Brüning. To understand his tactical position, you have to understand his overall understanding of the situation, regardless of whether he was right or wrong. It follows from his differentiation between Brüning and Hitler that Trotsky fully understands the difference between a fascist political regime and one that does not (although, let us remember, he regarded the Brüning government as a "bureaucratic dictatorship"). When we distinguish, in our own conjuncture, the "small daily portions of poison" from the "revolver" calling for a vote against the far right, Dal Maso replies that this would be the equivalent of calling for a vote for Brüning. Dal Maso, in fact, is incapable of giving concrete meaning to the distinction made by Trotsky.

Trotsky understood perfectly well both the importance of a presidential election and that voting does not imply political subordination. As an example of this, it suffices to refer, as Rolando Astarita pointed out in a recent text, to the fact that Trotsky did not advocate blank votes or abstention in the face of the Spanish Popular Front in 1936 (which did not confront fascism, which would only appear later with Franco's coup, but the conventional right!). Also, in 1936 Trotsky questioned the Independent Labour Party for refusing to give electoral support to Labour against the Conservatives (as Lenin had recommended years earlier to the young British Communist Party).

If it's not fascism, then what?

These last examples take us to the heart of our polemic. We will discuss later the relationship between Milei and fascism, but we don't need to go that far. The central question is more elementary: Do we only resort to Trotsky's suggestion of the united front or, more generally, to unitary defensive policies, when we are faced with a fascist threat? And what do we do when we confront military

dictatorships? Or phenomena such as Fujimorism (or others like Bukele or Erdoğan today), which accede to government by legal means and transform the political regime from the inside while maintaining the external appearance of constitutional democracy? as in the case of Thatcherism? Is there any point in saying "this is not fascism"? The question answers itself.

The use of physical coercion, the stifling of democratic freedoms, the authoritarian hardening of states does not necessarily depend on the implementation of a fascist regime or a change of political regime. This is obvious. The use of violence is, of course, a permanent resource of class domination. And its intensification to inflict a long-term defeat on the working class can take all sorts of forms, including a wide range of options in between on a spectrum from the authoritarian hardening of liberal democracy to a fascist regime. Will we treat all forms of authoritarianism routinely until fascism appears with all the features of the interwar period?

Let's see how another PTS author, Fernando Rosso, tried to argue the point. In a recent text, Rosso quotes Palmiro Togliatti: "First of all, I want to examine the error of generalization that is ordinarily made in the use of the term 'fascism.' It has become customary to use this word to designate every form of reaction. When a comrade is arrested, when a workers' demonstration is brutally broken up by the police... on every occasion, in short, when the so-called democratic freedoms enshrined in bourgeois constitutions are attacked or violated, one hears shouting: 'This is fascism! We are in the midst of fascism!' (...) But I do not understand what advantage this can bring us, except, perhaps, as far as agitation is concerned. But the reality is something else. Fascism is a particular, specific form of reaction; and it is necessary to understand perfectly what it consists of in its particularity."

As in the case of Gramsci's reference to the "hegemonic tie," which we discuss in another text, when Rosso turns to Togliatti he does not see the

consequences of the reasoning he uses. If fascism is only a form of reaction, only a way in which so-called democratic freedoms can be "violated," why do we reserve unitary defensive politics for that form alone? What do we do in all other cases? The united front is valid if we were facing fascism, what if it is another variant of the far right?

With regard to the classics in general, and Trotsky in particular, it is simpler and more profitable to try to understand the way of reasoning than to look for literal interpreters of the roles of the past. When studied in a scholastic way, the letter is prioritized over reasoning, and that ultimately prevents us from understanding both the spirit and the letter. Trotsky writes with a specific form of reaction in mind, which was fascism. He opposes a policy of defensive alliance with reformism. In order not to have a romanticized image of the Social Democracy of that time, let us remember that Trotsky defined it, "despite its working-class composition" as "an entirely bourgeois party, run under 'normal' conditions in a very skilful way from the point of view of the aims of the bourgeoisie." It was the party of Noske and Grzesinsky, responsible a few years earlier for the murders of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Trotsky writes about fascism, but that does not mean that the field of application of his reasoning needs Hitler, Hilferding and Thaelmann to be personified before our eyes. They are useful insofar as we understand their reasoning and method and as long as we avoid analogies which are too hasty.

The underestimation of the political-electoral moment

Let us proceed to the next point of the reasoning of our polemicists. While the PTS unambiguously claims that Milei represents a "hyper-reactionary" project, what is it willing to do to prevent it? This is where another central argument appears: the idea that the extreme right is fought in the

streets and not at the ballot box. A few hours before the polls indicate whether a far-right government takes over one of the main countries in the region, this argument is outlandish. But let's try to take it seriously and follow the logic of his argument.

The PTS says in all its communiqués something that can be summed up in what Guillermo Pistonesi wrote: "Marxists understand that revolutionary changes and eventual counterrevolution can only be defined through an open class struggle and not with an election." This statement combines a truism with a ridiculous idea. Of course, for revolutionary Marxism the class struggle is the ultimate force that settles major political events. But does this mean that a presidential election where the far right can come to power is irrelevant? Does the outcome of such an election in no way affect the class struggle? Does Pistonesi find any precedent in the vast Marxist literature for such an extravagant statement? Positions that ignore the election result are not deduced from Marxist literature, at least not from the tradition that goes back to Lenin and Trotsky. In any case, it is closer to autonomist and anarchist approaches or, within Marxism, to the exotic and distant Bordigist tradition.

This idea doesn't seem improvised by a single slip. In a recent text by Gabriela Liszt and Matías Maiello, the PTS describes its understanding of the united front tactic. I don't want to go into too much quotation because it is clear from reading the article that the united front for these authors is reduced to street fighting and, more specifically, to physical clashes against fascist gangs. In other words, for the PTS, the united front does not extend to the electoral question. That is why they constantly oppose class struggle and elections (is it worth asking what the PTS is doing when it intervenes electorally if not by taking the class struggle to that terrain?). In other words, in a mental exercise, if there had been a second round in 1933 between the SPD and the Nazi Party, the PTS would have defended abstention, because any other option would have implied political subordination to social democracy. And, at the same time, it would have

called for common action by the SPD against the physical threat posed by the Nazis.

There was a certain enthusiasm among the "people of the left" when Myriam Bregman stated that "Massa and Milei are not the same" in a radio interview. The PTS takes it upon itself to repeat this phrase in all its documents. However, not to put an equal sign between the two but not to draw the practical conclusions from this distinction is to enter the realm of triviality: nothing equals nothing, as Leibniz's metaphysics demonstrated in the seventeenth century. In the end, it doesn't change much. It is a way of not getting involved in the struggle against the extreme right or, to use Trotsky's expression, of "'capitulating without a fight."

Is Milei a fascist?

As we have tried to show, it is not necessary for Milei to represent a fascist threat to oppose him with a unitary defensive policy. It is enough that he represents a reactionary, Thatcherite and authoritarian response to the Argentine crisis. Milei hypothesizes a potential evolution towards a form of authoritarian Bonapartism within liberal democracy, with the aim of facilitating the implementation of neoliberal shock therapy. This should be enough to know how to orient yourself. Now, what is the relationship between Milei and fascism? I will point out some aspects of Milei—and in some cases of the global far right—that raise some politically relevant relationships with classical fascism.

The increasingly popular character and capacity for social mobilization of the global far right presents a significant symmetry with the interwar period. Former working-class strongholds are beginning to turn towards positions of this kind, such as support for Trump in the North American rust belt or the penetration of Le Pen in the deindustrialized working-class north of France. This shows the breakdown of conventional relations between the popular classes and their traditional political representations.

It is true that classical fascism was based mainly on the petty bourgeoisie, but on a "plebeian" petty bourgeoisie, economically ruined by the crisis. A conventional petty bourgeois does not get involved in paramilitary gangs, but rather makes money from his liberal profession or his small business. And it also grouped behind it popular sectors from various sociological categories, thus consolidating a popular and mobilized base of support.

This popular and exalted base allows the extreme right to increasingly show a great capacity for social mobilization. Of course, there are no paramilitary gangs at the moment, but there is an increase in mobilization, mass politicization and an ability to take the initiative, in many cases, violently. This translates into the ability to organize activist structures that put pressure on the political system (as we saw in the assaults on the Capitol in Washington and Brasilia). This popular base of combat is an additional force that the far right can weigh on in its competition with the traditional right.

In Argentina, Milei's activist capacity is inferior to that of *Bolsonarismo* or Trumpism. But during the election campaign, especially when they felt safe because of the election result and the reactionary upsurge, we already witnessed their ability to embolden small neo-fascist groups, which began to conduct small attacks against symbols of human rights or their organizations, configuring a climate of intimidation towards the left that anticipated the future. Can anyone even doubt that this intimidation would increase tenfold — as it did with Trump and Bolsonaro — if the far right controlled state power? You have to be blind to deny it. Therefore, a radicalization of extra-parliamentary groups cannot be ruled out in the event of Milei's victory.

As it is not difficult to see, there are no rigid or stable boundaries between the right, the far right and fascism. As Alex Callinicos puts it, "it is not so much a question of determining what label to put on particular formations, but of understanding the contemporary far right as a dynamic and rapidly changing field of forces."

Authoritarian radicalization is one of the hypotheses, as is its counterpart, that it enters a process of bourgeois normalization, adapting itself to the conventional logics of politics and becomes a slightly harder version of the traditional right. The result is open. And we are not observers of the situation, but active agents who must fight the extreme right in order to prevent an authoritarian radicalization that, if it comes to power, could take a qualitative leap. That goes for Javier Milei as well.

On the other hand, in relation to the autonomy of politics and the state that characterized classical fascism, there is another element here that is worth replenishing. As in the case of Le Pen's passage to the second round in 2002 or the rise of Trump in 2016, the centre of economic power seems to reject the candidacy of Javier Milei. However, the attitude of the business community and imperialism is more ambiguous than it initially seemed, especially since the agreement with Macri and a sector of PRO was finalized. This was anticipated by none other than *The Economist*, that international platform where the ruling classes dialogue with themselves. In one of its latest issues, the weekly called for a coalition of the right and the extreme right in Argentina in its cover article.

On the other hand, while Biden supports Massa, Trump, who has a high chance of being the future president of the United States, backs Milei. However, it remains true that the core of economic power still perceives Milei as a dangerous venture. There are some sectors of the left that are too enthusiastic about this distrust or that have even made it the definitive criterion for positioning themselves tactically: see the pronouncements of the Partido Obrero (Workers' Party). They would do well to review the history of the 1920s and 1930s or to remember Trotsky's warning when he wrote in a text maliciously called "Learn to Think: A Friendly Suggestion to Certain Ultra-Leftists": "The policy of the proletariat is not at all automatically derived from the policy of the bourgeoisie, bearing only the opposite sign - this would make every sectarian a master strategist."

This does not mean that Milei represents a fascist threat for the time being. But his victory will be a step forward in a process of authoritarian radicalization of the state with an uncertain destiny. It is not fascist, but neither is it a conventional bourgeois party. And that merits a tactic that responds to an exceptional situation.

Digression: Democracy vs. Capitalism

Regardless of the election result, the left must face a long-term debate about its relationship with the democratic conquests of the previous period and, more generally, with the institutions of liberal democracy. This is not just an academic exercise. We are in a historical cycle where there are many signs indicating we are moving towards an authoritarian hardening of states. In the late 1970s, Poulantzas coined the term "authoritarian statism" to describe the hypothesis that an authoritarian distortion could emerge from within the liberal democratic regime. This distortion would not be presented as a "regime of exception," but rather as a "normal" political regime, which would be based on "a radical decline of the institutions of political democracy and a draconian and multiform reduction of formal so-called freedoms." This hypothesis is set for the future, and the global rise of the far right is one of its signs.

The fall of the so-called "socialist camp" at the end of the 20th century left the left stripped of alternatives considered socially viable. Much is written on a daily basis about the need for the left to recover a dimension of the future. On this absence of horizon, the extreme right is also advancing in the popular sectors, that is, individualistic and desperate solutions to the crisis prevail. Reconstructing the hypothesis of a society superior to capitalism is a long-term strategic task. But to achieve this, we must stop thinking of socialism as an "absolute beyond" that we can only approach through an exercise in utopian imagination.

A society stripped of class domination exists embryonically in our present, fundamentally as a product of popular struggles that have achieved conquests and reforms. The relationship between the archaic and the new is more complex and useful than an imaginative exercise. Imagining a new society begins with the conservative attempt to preserve what is worth preserving: democratic freedoms against the increasingly authoritarian evolution of capitalism, social rights against the bourgeois offensive, the outsourcing of sectors of the economy, such as public health, against the drive for privatization.

In every popular conquest, a possible future society breathes with difficulty. From the defensive eagerness to preserve conquests will emerge the offensive struggles for a new society. This approach, as is obvious, is opposed at the apex to the conception that underlies the book published by Gabriel Solano, the main leader of the Partido Obrero, entitled *La democracia fracas* ("Democracy Failed").

In "The Night of the Proletarians", Jacques Ranciere describes the horizon of expectations of the nineteenth-century working class: A "workers' vanguard which thinks and acts not to prepare for a future in which the proletarians would reap the legacy of a large capitalist industry formed by the dispossession of their labour and their intelligence, but also to prepare for a future in which the proletarians would reap the legacy of a large capitalist industry formed by the dispossession of their labour and their intelligence, but also of the proletariat, but to stop the mechanism of that dispossession." That is to say, the workers' struggles of the late nineteenth century did not draw their strength from the utopian dimension of socialism, but from the defence of identities and forms of labour that were being eradicated by the overwhelming extension of capitalist labour exploitation (artisanal labour, fundamentally). From these initially defensive struggles, which longed for a world that was not going to return (that of the self-employed artisanal producer), the union between the workers' movement and socialism emerged.

In the relationship between capitalism, democracy and socialism perhaps we should conceive of a similar dialectic: only the anti-capitalist struggle can defend the civilizational conquests of our time (rule of law, civil liberties, political rights, pluralism) from the threat posed by the authoritarian evolution of capitalism.

The most ignoble passivity

Let's go back to our imminent juncture. In a few days, we face a decisive presidential election, both for Argentina and for the region. The great novelty of the last electoral period was the emergence of a large democratic social movement, in the form of small, decentralized campaign actions. This social movement is a fulcrum for the struggles to come, whatever the election outcome on Sunday. It allows us to rediscover collective action, confidence in our own strength, and the social and democratic reserves that characterize Argentine society, despite the deterioration of the situation in recent years. The absence of most of the parties of the Frente de Izquierda (Left Front) in this mobilization is a major strategic error.

Rubén Sobrero, the most important

trade union leader of the FITU member parties, is a member of the only FITU party that called for a vote for Massa to prevent the victory of the extreme right. He recently declared in an interview: "I will continue to be an opponent of Massa, but I have to call for the halting of those who demand dictatorship." This aroused a current of immediate sympathy that included the social base of Peronism. It is a small example of the transcendental role that the FITU could have played if all its activist forces, mainly through its charismatic presidential candidate Myriam Bregman, had taken their place in the fight against the far right.

It wouldn't even have been necessary to make an explicit call to vote for Massa. A slogan such as "no votes for Milei" (as the French Trotskyist left used more than once against Le Pen) was enough to occupy a militant place in the field of struggle against the extreme right and to connect with the social movement and sectors of the working class concerned about the threat that looms over them. This would have greatly increased the authority of the Frente de Izquierda and would have made it possible to establish a bridge with the popular base of Peronism.

But the FITU's attitude generated the opposite: it buckled up the base of Peronism with its leadership. Let us recall something central to the classic

tactic of the "united front": it was not only a question of defensive unity with the reformists, but also of a policy for the "conquest of the majority," that is, for increasing the influence of the revolutionaries and disputing the hegemony of the reformists. Instead of propagandistic delimitation, constructing a unitary framework where delimitation is a by-product of the reformists' inability to conduct a common struggle is a tactic that has proven far more effective.

A recent successful example was seen in the performance of Brazil's PSOL in the struggle against Bolsonaro: a generously unitary and defensive attitude, calling for the unity of the left and including the PT, allowed the PSOL to grow very significantly in a highly defensive and adverse context such as that imposed by the extreme right in power. activists, parliamentarians and social influence.

To quote the old Russian revolutionary for the last time: as Trotsky said, "The wise men who boast that they do not see the difference 'between Brüning and Hitler' in reality "under this pseudo-radical bluster ... conceal[s] the most ignoble passivity."

17 November 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Jacobin America Latina**.

Faced with the new "republican arc", we need more than ever to unite our class

28 November 2023, by **Fabienne Dolet**

In themselves, given the poisonous atmosphere since 7 October and the surprise of the Hamas attacks, these articles speak volumes about the political climate in France.

A witch-hunt atmosphere

However, their recent existence suggests a (very slight) improvement in public debate. In other words, the climate is one of witch-hunting and the use of all kinds of slander and

intellectual shortcuts to sell the government's line that "in the face of terrorism, Israel had the right to defend itself".

After 7 October, we had to fight to ensure that the context of over 75 years of struggle against the settlements was brought back to the fore. Anyone who dared to do so on

television was suspected not just of explaining but of justifying the killing of civilians. For the Minister of the Interior, Gérald Darmanin, and his prefects, anyone who supported Palestinian resistance was a potential terrorist.

It has to be said that the murder of teacher Dominique Bernard in Arras on 13 October by a fanatical young man served to electrify government action and the media climate.

The BBC in Britain had to justify not using the term "terrorism" as early as 12 October. AFP (Agence France-Presse) also had to account for this at the end of October. And just recently, we learned that the AFP editorial staff was very divided.

For a month, whether or not you denounced Hamas as a terrorist made you a "good" or "bad" citizen. Our organization, the NPA, was not spared by the media storm... and even the legal storm. The publication director of the NPA website was summoned to an open hearing on 2 November because of a report of "apology for terrorism" by associations. [1] While there is no doubt that Hamas's war crimes are shocking and even terrorizing, the term "terrorist" to describe Hamas is not a precise political characterization and we do not endorse it.

On 21 November, Guillaume Meurice, the France Inter humorist, was also summoned for an open hearing for having made a joke about Benjamin Netanyahu. Before him, activists for the Palestinian cause had also been summoned for the same reasons for speaking out at rallies.

Such a climate is unprecedented in terms of both its media and legal-political scope. Chirac's former Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, himself came across as an iconoclast on certain television programmes, referring to the failure to respect international law and diplomatic solutions.

This climate has been compounded by intense repression of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Criminalizing solidarity

In many towns, rallies organized by support groups were banned until at least 20 October because of the risk of "disturbing the peace". And when the NPA called and was one of the organizers of the demonstration, the police chiefs did not hesitate to quote our first press release as proof that the demonstration was dangerous.

In Paris, the first authorized demonstration called by associations in support of Palestine, trade unions such as the CGT and Solidaires, and political organizations only took place on 22 October, bringing together nearly 20,000 people in a very calm atmosphere.

However, the following week, rallies were again banned, resulting in fines for hundreds of people. The prefecture put the number at over 1,000.

Finally, the ultimate symptom of unjust repression, was the expulsion of Mariam Abu Daqqa, an activist with the PFLP - an organization that the European Union and France class as a terrorist organization - on 10 November, when she was due to travel to Cairo the following day. This could only be interpreted as a further humiliation for supporters of the Palestinian cause.

Having arrived in France at the end of September for a series of conferences, Mariam Abu Daqqa was issued with an expulsion order on 9 October, which was challenged by the interim relief judge of the administrative court, who ruled on 20 October that "the Minister of the Interior has seriously and manifestly illegally infringed freedom of expression and freedom of movement". However, on 8 November, the Conseil d'État overturned this, confirmed the order and the expulsion of Mariam Abu Daqqa, who was arrested within hours.

While the French state used all the administrative means at its disposal, the political debate continued its hellish course, which reached its climax on 12 November with the demonstration against anti-Semitism

called by Yaël Braun-Pivet, President of the National Assembly, and Gérard Larcher, President of the Senate.

Terrorism and anti-Semitism: a new "republican arc"

After associating all supporters of the Palestinian cause with the crimes of 7 October and therefore with terrorism, supporters of the State of Israel were able to discredit their opponents by attributing anti-Semitic intentions to them, and by confusing anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, starting on 8 October.

The double standard on all the TV channels and the emotional one-upmanship enabled this discourse to find an audience, one of the first victims of which was La France insoumise and, in particular, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who never wanted to talk about terrorism.

LFI, which has deputies in the National Assembly, has become unattractive to all the other parties to its right. Even Europe Écologie les Verts, the Socialist Party and the French Communist Party, with whom however an alliance had been sealed in June 2022 for the legislative elections, have sought to distance themselves at all costs from the positioning of Mélenchon's movement.

Under pressure, the Macron government has declared its unconditional support for Israel, because France has taken this line since the Sarkozy presidency. State Islamophobia has probably also contributed to these positions for Franco-French reasons.

The "republican front", which used to exclude the Front National (FN), has been replaced by the concept of the "republican arc", which sidelined LFI, first in the Assembly and then in the streets on 12 November.

The new "republican arc" against anti-Semitism therefore includes the far right, which is constantly exploiting the conflict for Islamophobic ends, in

alliance with the Zionist far right. While 12 November was not a great success for the Macron government and the right, with 105,000 people in Paris, it was a triumph for the far right, now legitimized.

That very morning, to express their fight against anti-Semitism, young people from student unions, LFI and the Jeunesses anticapitalistes had called for a wreath-laying ceremony at the Place des Martyrs Juifs du Vélodrome d'Hiver. There were just over a hundred of us. The Zionist far right had planned ahead: to prevent us from honouring the memory by shouting slogans such as "First, second, third generation, we are all children of deportees" or "You won't get our dead". It's true that when the French far right, heir to a political tradition that goes back to Vichy and the ratonnades orchestrated by Papon, marches against anti-Semitism, it's not surprising to see the left discredited in all its battles... in the

greatest confusion.

This grey and rainy day on 12 November will therefore have been dull right up to the end and should give all activists the desire to rebuild the balance of power...

The left, the concrete organization of solidarity with Palestine

If there's one lesson to be learned about the balance of power, it's that the Council of State's failure to dissolve Soulèvements de la Terre on 9 November owes everything to the mobilization of its activists and the support of environmental, trade union and political organizations. Unlike the smaller Gale (Groupe antifasciste Lyon

et environs).

The movement continued to develop in the cities and in Paris, in particular around the Collectif national pour une paix juste et durable, created in 2000, and also around Urgence Palestine.

Numerous debates are taking place on concrete actions in solidarity with the Palestinian people, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and racism in general. A new generation is in the process of becoming politicized, while the older ones are making new experiences. The political debate of recent weeks is reshuffling the cards... for those who want to build a new society.

More than ever, as we say at the NPA, now is the time to be united and revolutionary, to build, without sectarianism, the tools for the emancipation of our class, a future of peace, without colonies. An ecosocialist future!

27 November 2023

U.S. Labor and the Israel-Gaza War

27 November 2023, by Dan La Botz

On October 11, the AFL-CIO issued a statement that condemned Hamas and its terrorism, but did not mention Israel's attacks on Gaza and it has issued no statement since. Though it did express concern "about the emerging humanitarian crisis that is affecting Palestinians in Gaza and throughout the region." Finally, it called "for a swift resolution to the current conflict to end the bloodshed of innocent civilians, and to promote a just and long-lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians." The AFL-CIO has reminded its affiliated unions that they may not take positions on the Israel-Palestine questions because only the AFL-CIO leadership has the right to speak on foreign policy questions.

Nevertheless, a number of local unions, especially teachers' unions have passed resolutions in support of

a ceasefire. The Minneapolis Federation of Teachers' Israeli-Palestinian Resolution of October 25 took a strong position touching on a variety of issues related to the war: "MFT mourns the loss of innocent life in Israel and occupied Palestine. We categorically reject violence against all civilians whether Israeli or Palestinian. We therefore call for an immediate ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza and to de-escalate the conflict. As Americans, we also condemn the role our government plays in supporting the system of Israeli occupation and apartheid, which lies at the root of the Palestinian Israeli conflict." The MFT also called for repealing the state's anti-Boycott, Divest, Sanction legislation."

In response, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and

the Dakotas sent the local school board a letter signed by 800 people that condemned the MFT's resolution as "antisemitic." Some Jewish parents in the district condemned the MFT resolution for encouraging antisemitism that will put their children in danger.

The Oakland Education Association (OEA), a teachers union, passed a resolution that called for solidarity with Palestine and condemned the "genocidal and apartheid state of Israel." Then it posted on social media a statement that the union was "standing unequivocally in support of Palestinian liberation." The resolution said that OEA would distribute educational materials for teachers to use in classrooms to teach about Palestinian liberation.

In reaction, the Oakland chapters of

the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League and Jewish Community Relations Council denounced the OEA positions on Israel-Palestine, accusing the union of being antisemitic and of encouraging Hamas terrorism. The union then responded by moderating its position, issuing a statement saying: "As unionists, we are moved by calls for solidarity from civilians in both Israel and Palestine. We are committed to

continuing the conversation within our union as we engage in our democratic processes. Our union unequivocally condemns anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. We call for the release of hostages held by Hamas. We mourn the loss of life, and we add our voices to a growing collective calling for a ceasefire."

Some locals want to go further than mere words. Labor Notes, the labor education center, organized a

discussion involving several local union officials and hundreds of rank-and-file activists on how to organize around support for Palestine. The participants discussed passing resolutions, co-sponsoring rallies and demonstrations, refusing to handle military shipments, and organizing jobs actions among workers involved in shipping military supplies.

26 November 2023

In Portugal, absolute majorities are also falling

26 November 2023, by Nicole Leitão

Portugal woke up on 7 November to the news that searches were underway in 42 locations, including several ministries and the office of the prime minister, António Costa. The operation was aimed at clarifying suspicions of favouritism towards private individuals concerning the installation of two lithium mines in the north of the country, a computer data centre and a "green" hydrogen project, both in Sines, in the south of the country.

Resignation of the Prime Minister and new elections

After a bewildering morning, five people, including the prime minister's chief of staff and a businessman considered to be his "best friend", were arrested; the infrastructure minister, João Galamba, was named as the accused. In the afternoon, police found €75,800 in cash hidden in the office of the Prime Minister's First Secretary. At the same time, the Public Prosecutor's Office announced that António Costa was the subject of an independent investigation on suspicion of having acted to facilitate procedures relating to lithium mines

and green hydrogen plants.

Earlier this afternoon, the Prime Minister resigned, which was accepted by the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa.

This puts an unexpected end to a government that appeared to be solid, given that the Socialist Party alone has a majority of deputies in the Assembly of the Republic. António Costa has resigned after almost eight years as Prime Minister.

On accepting his resignation, the President of the Republic had two options: either he asked the SP to appoint another Prime Minister, or he dissolved the Assembly of the Republic and called early elections. The latter option was chosen by Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, much to the dismay of the PS, which had proposed Mário Centeno, President of the Bank of Portugal and former President of the Eurogroup, as Costa's successor.

Promiscuity between leaders and business

However, the Public Prosecutor's investigation is notable for its lack of

transparency. As is unfortunately customary, the only source of information on the process is press articles based on leaks.

The Left Bloc, demanding clarification from the Attorney General of the Republic on the extent and nature of the suspicions motivating the investigation into António Costa, considers that, whatever the conclusions presented, the facts revealed so far are another example of the ease and speed with which the most influential interests - treated as "national interest" - are satisfied and the slowness and restraint with which the social needs of the majority are met. This abysmal difference reflects the promiscuity between politics and business.

The Bloc never tires of denouncing the career path of people like Lacerda Machado (the "best friend" that Costa involved as an external consultant in several government processes), who willingly move from public positions to private consultancies that hire them because of their good connections in the sphere of government. The Bloc has given no respite to the eternal followers of these revolving doors.

"This is not the Left", says Mariana Mortágua, coordinator of the Bloc.

"There is a trustworthy Left that has always fought against the promiscuity between politics and business. A left that has also fought against the increasing budget cuts imposed by the government that are destroying the

National Health Service, against the private benefits policy that has created the biggest housing crisis in memory in the country. This left will fight to strengthen itself in the

elections on 10 March.

23 November 2023

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

Far-right electoral victory in the Netherlands

25 November 2023, by **Alex de Jong**

The electoral advance of the far-right largely came at the expense of the (centre-)right. With 37 out of 150 parliamentary seats, the PVV is now well ahead of the second-ranking list, a joint social-democratic and Green ticket that won 25 seats. The total number of seats for left-wing parties remained constant, while the parties that were part of the centre-right government all lost seats, sometimes heavily. In other words, the right has recomposed and radicalized, while the left was unable to advance from its previous weak position. How can this be explained?

On a more immediate level, a tactical choice of the VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), the main party in the previous government, seems to have backfired badly for them. In July this year, prime minister Mark Rutte of the VVD provoked a crisis in the incumbent government by insisting on new restrictions on refugee rights. Rutte deliberately crossed a red line of one of the VVD's coalition partners, thereby triggering the collapse of his own government and new elections.

This was an attempt by the VVD to put the issue of refugees and migration at the centre of the electoral contest. The VVD hoped that by tacking further to the right on this issue, it would be able to cohere sufficient support to once again become the largest party of the country. Rutte stepped aside for a new party leader, Dilan Yeşilgöz. Yeşilgöz, minister of justice in the most recent cabinet, proceeded to sharpen the right-wing profile of the VVD, especially through exaggerated

stories about the supposed ease with which migrants can enter the Netherlands.

The gamble of the VVD was that the elections would play out as a polarization between them and the centre-left on the issue of migration, and Yeşilgöz was presented as the successor of Rutte. This electoral tactic seemed to make sense: Rutte has been prime-minister since 2010, and maintained his popularity throughout. By focusing the electoral contest on migration, the VVD hoped to avoid that issues on which it is vulnerable, such as the country's housing crisis and the increasing cost of living. The VVD however ended up losing 10 seats, winning only 24 seats.

The far-right advance

Paradoxically, the VVD's tactic worked too well. The emphasis on a supposed "refugee crisis" and restriction of migration benefited the party that since its foundation in 2006 has had anti-migrant politics at its core: Wilders' PVV. Not all credit for Wilders' victory can go to the VVD however. A journalistic trope in the last weeks was that Wilders had "moderated" his views, but the PVV programme remained as radically anti-migrant as ever. The party wants to completely close the borders for asylum-seekers and "no Islamic schools, Qurans or mosques" in the Netherlands. Such racist policies are combined with repressive rhetoric about "zero tolerance for street scum", including the deployment of

the army, denaturalizing and deporting criminals with a double nationality and preventive arrests of those deemed to be sympathizing with "jihadism".

Wilders has not changed, what changed is the dynamic between the right and the far-right. Rutte chose an approach of side-lining Wilders, his main competition on the right, by dismissing the PVV's positions as "unrealistic" and presenting his VVD as the party that could implement right-wing policies more efficiently. This approach increasingly normalized the positions of the PVV, positions that were rejected only because they were supposedly impossible to implement. Rather than attempting to position himself as a junior partner for the VVD, Wilders insisted on his posture as the right-wing opposition to Rutte and kept hammering away at his core issues. On 22 November, Wilders harvested the fruit of this long term approach. That another far-right party, the FvD, a party that achieved significant success a few years ago, had entered into a crisis, largely because of the megalomania of its leader Thierry Baudet, also benefited Wilders as he consolidated and expanded the far-right vote.

Wilders is a seasoned politician, one of the longest serving members of the Dutch parliament and able to look beyond the next electoral cycle. He began his career in the VVD in the late nineties, splitting from them to form the PVV in 2006. Initially, the PVV combined its racism and anti-migrant politics with a radical pro-market discourse, a radicalized version of the

neoliberalism of the VVD. In the last decade or so, the PVV however shifted its rhetoric to a kind of “welfare chauvinism”, presenting itself as the protector of ordinary people and of the remains of the Dutch welfare system. For the PVV, the ultimate cause of the roll-back of the welfare-state is the presence of parasitic migrant communities, especially Muslims, in Dutch society and the wastage of money on “left-wing hobbies” such as measures to mitigate climate change. This money, the PVV suggests, would have been sufficient to protect the living standards of the “real” Dutch people. In its election programme, the PVV also presented “progressive” proposals such as abolishing VAT on daily necessities, decreasing healthcare costs and returning the retirement age from 67 to 65.

Such ideas are undoubtedly popular but are secondary to the PVV’s core agenda. For Wilders, they are only means to achieving his end; closing the borders and attacking the rights of minorities, especially those of Muslims. Between 2010 and 2012, the first government led by Rutte was supported by the PVV who, in the words of Wilders, “accepted austerity measures in return for limits on immigration”. In parliament, the PVV proposed a bill that would undercut collective bargaining agreements, voted to further restrict access to social security and opposed attempts at tackling tax evasion. That the PVV’s “social policies” are largely empty rhetoric is however not consistently pointed out by the left parties.

The left stagnates

The total share of left-wing parties in the national parliament has remained roughly the same as before the elections. The number two in the election results was a joint list of the social-democratic PvdA and the Greens (Groenlinks). Together, these two parts gained eight new seats, a modest advance that came as a disappointment. The centre-left ran Frans Timmermans, a former European Commissioner, as their

candidate, attempting to present him as future prime-minister, someone who was progressive but also a safe pair of hands for running the Dutch state. The approach of the PvdA and GroenLinks coalition to combine moderately progressive proposals with an air of technocratic expertise and an orientation to forming a government coalition with parties to its right had some success in attracting votes from the centre but not in attracting many new voters to the left.

The left-wing SP meanwhile lost four of its nine seats. The party has become fixated on combining an increasingly conservative profile on “cultural” issues (migration, but also climate change measures) with progressive social-economic positions. Continued setbacks have not been enough to convince the SP to change course. Its current leader Lilian Marijnissen has had this position since 2017: November 2023 were for her the seventh time that the party saw electoral decline. The last time the party was able to advance in national elections was in 2006, and since then the party has lost tens of thousands of members. The SP’s emphasis on restriction of labour migration in the electoral campaign strengthened the right-wing framework that migrants as such are a problem, while the party neglected to focus on its strong points such as housing and healthcare. The SP ended up losing a large number of votes to the right and far-right.

A bitter pill for the far-left was the disappearance from the parliament of the radical party BIJ1 (the Dutch pronunciation means “together”). Born from especially the anti-racist movement, BIJ1 was able to gather support from different parts of the activist and far-left but it has been wracked by internal fights. The ecologist Party for the Animals lost half of its seats and was reduced to three seats. The Party for the Animals had gradually attracted increasing support for its principled ecological positions, but the party is divided and unclear over how it should relate to left-wing issues in general, not only

ecology. Recent months also saw an ugly fight over the leadership of the party and divisions.

Prospects

A possibility for the Netherlands is the formation of a right-wing coalition led by Wilders. Another big winner in the November elections was a new party, NSC, a split from the Christian-Democratic CDA. The NSC entered the parliament with 20 seats. NSC is a conservative party, a version of Christian-Democracy without explicit religious references. The CDA meanwhile, once one of the major parties in the country, was degraded to a mere five seats. Together with VVD, the right-wing Farmer Citizen Movement (another recently formed party largely based on debris of the CDA’s base) and NSC, the PVV would enjoy a majority. But NSC has said it is unwilling to form a coalition with a party like the PVV that wants to attack fundamental principles of equality before the law and the freedom of religion. And the VVD has said after its defeat in the elections, the party should go into opposition. But such objections might be simply manoeuvres to extract concessions from the PVV. The upcoming government will likely be quite unstable. What is sure, is that very little will remain of the PVV’s “progressive” economic proposals.

The situation is bleak, but remains contradictory; recent weeks saw the largest climate change demonstration ever in Dutch history, but the winner of the elections was a party that ridicules climate change as nonsense. Likewise, Palestine solidarity has brought out many to the streets, but the PVV is proud of its unconditional support for Israel and wants to move the Dutch embassy to Jerusalem. In the coming period, the Dutch left as it exists will be on the defensive. Countering the anti-migrant policies and racism and defending minority civil rights, especially those of Muslims, will need to be central.

24 November 2023

Ukrainian Activists Declare Solidarity With Palestine

24 November 2023, by **Ashley Smith**

Ashley Smith: The Biden administration and other governments including that of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's in Ukraine have drawn an equivalence between Ukraine and Israel. What's wrong with that, and what has been its impact? Isn't the better parallel between Ukraine and Palestine?

Yuliia Kishchuk: Ukraine did not take someone else's land or bombard civil infrastructure, so comparing Ukraine to Israel lacks analytical accuracy. People who compare Ukraine and Israel usually do not think of Israel as a settler-colonial state. In their conceptualization, Israel is a successful country that manages to survive while being "surrounded by enemies."

They also claim that Israel is "the only democracy in the Middle East." This ignores the fact that while proclaiming liberal values, Israel occupies Palestinian land and abuses the rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

In fact, Israel and Russia share more in common. They use the same justification of "the right to self-defense" to invade and occupy a land that lawfully does not belong to them.

Their political regimes are also similar; both are far right and authoritarian and fuel their population with hateful and even genocidal propaganda about Ukrainians and Palestinians. They are both oppressor states.

In this situation, the oppressed nations are Ukraine and Palestine. Both experience occupation, land grabbing and ethnic cleansing. Both Ukrainians and Palestinians feel the United Nations has been and will be largely ineffective as long as Russia and the

United States have a veto in the Security Council.

To pressure Israel and Russia, we both employ sanctions and boycott businesses that are operating as usual. Strong ties to the land prevent Ukrainians and Palestinians from even considering giving up their occupied territories as a solution.

Due to enduring events like the Nakba, Holodomor and Joseph Stalin's forced displacement, both Ukrainians and Palestinians carry deep generational trauma exacerbated by ongoing aggressions. We have a common though distinct experience of national oppression.

In the midst of these two struggles, the question of ceasefire has come up. In the case of Gaza, most on the left support a call for a ceasefire and pair it with other demands like ending Israel's siege, its occupation and its apartheid state. In the case of Ukraine, those that support its struggle do not support a ceasefire. What do you think of this contrast? How should we think about the ceasefire demand in concrete rather than abstract terms?

There is a core difference between the two demands. In the case of Gaza, the demand for a ceasefire comes from Palestinians, while in the case of Ukraine, this demand is imposed on us by the groups of Western leftists who ignore our voices.

Calls for a ceasefire in these two cases have very different targets and politics. The Western left's call to "end war in Ukraine" is mainly addressed to Ukrainians and their allies, not Russia, the invading force. Thus, it is a demand for oppressed people to stop their struggle for liberation and is

therefore reactionary.

In the case of Gaza, protests are directed at Israel and Western governments, urging them to take tangible steps to halt the ethnic mass killing of Palestinians. It is therefore a challenge to Western imperialism and Israel, the oppressor nation, and therefore progressive.

In the Palestinian context, an immediate ceasefire would save the lives of civilians. In the case of Ukraine, a ceasefire or peace talks would ratify occupation of Ukrainian land and subject civilians in those territories to repression, torture and killing.

Both Ukrainians and Palestinians recognize that lasting peace necessitates justice and concrete security assurances. Therefore, in both cases, a ceasefire alone does not represent the ultimate demand.

What is the history of Ukraine's relationship with Palestine? What formal political positions has it taken in the UN and in diplomacy?

Ukraine is committed to the two-state solution. Diplomatic ties between the two nations were officially established on November 2, 2001, marked by the opening of the Palestinian Embassy in Kyiv. Ukraine has consistently backed UN resolutions denouncing Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories.

In the most recent vote in the UN on November 12, Ukraine voted in favor of ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This resolution called for an international investigation into Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories in the West Bank. It is also crucial to note that Palestine did not support the annexation of Crimea in 2014, fully supporting territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Moreover, our peoples have concrete ties. Prior to the full-scale invasion, more than 4,000 Palestinians had made Ukraine their home. Many of them had arrived to pursue education, build families and establish businesses.

Conversely, thousands of Ukrainians, predominantly women and children, were residing in occupied and besieged Palestine, including 830 in Gaza. The exact number of children born into Ukrainian-Palestinian households is not known, but tragically, they now endure the compounded trauma of war, displacement and occupation.

One challenge for Ukraine and its struggle for liberation from Russian imperialism has been winning support from the Global South. By contrast, Palestine has overwhelming support from the Global South as they see in it an echo of their struggles for liberation. What impact has the Biden administration and Zelenskyy's equation of Israel and Ukraine had on these dynamics? How can that be changed?

The recent announcement by Volodymyr Zelenskyy has significantly damaged Ukrainian diplomatic relations with the Global South. Drawing parallels between Ukraine, a nation combating imperial invasion, and Israel, a country engaged in illegal occupation while bombing schools and hospitals, is morally erroneous, confuses the oppressed and oppressor, and disrupts the solidarity between oppressed peoples.

I believe the most significant mistake made by the Ukrainian political establishment, Western journalists and politicians is framing resistance against Russia's imperialist invasion using civilizational rhetoric, reminiscent of Samuel Huntington's racist discourse about a "clash of civilizations." It's no surprise that such rhetoric fails to resonate with the Global South.

By centering the fight as a defense of European civilization, we overlook and fail to acknowledge Western imperialism's colonial past and the

atrocities it continues to inflict on oppressed nations throughout the world. Therefore, recognizing and being more sensitive toward the colonial experiences of the Global South are crucial for building solidarity. Navigating this perspective without sounding Eurocentric poses a challenge that requires careful thought, dialogue and communication.

Simultaneously, Russia presents itself as a decolonizing force that opposes Western imperialism. It does not miss a chance to condemn war crimes committed by its rivals, like in case of Vladimir Putin's recent claims in support of Palestine. But, of course, this reeks of hypocrisy as his regime commits ongoing war crimes in Ukraine.

We must see that Western and non-Western imperialisms operate similarly, and we have to oppose them both. Only such opposition to all imperialisms can foster the real solidarity between decolonial struggles throughout the world.

Russia has carried out an imperialist invasion of Ukraine with the tacit support of China. At the same time, China and Russia have both called for a ceasefire and postured as friends of Palestine, despite having deep economic and diplomatic relationships with Israel. For its part, the U.S. has supported Ukraine in its struggle for liberation but backed Israel, its apartheid regime, occupation and current genocidal war. What does this mean for the relationship of the two national liberation struggles with these various imperialist powers?

Unfortunately, I am quite pessimistic about this at the moment. Pragmatic alliances make it hard to pursue lasting solidarities between Ukraine and Palestine.

Among Ukrainians, it is hard to sympathize with Palestine since it is often equated to Hamas, which is often seen as a Russian and Iranian proxy. There is a common misapprehension in Ukraine and in the West that Palestinians support Russia,

while in fact 71 percent of Palestinians opposed the invasion of Ukraine. So, this is challenging, but we should build bridges of solidarity.

Much of the left in various forms has fallen into a trap of selective solidarity. Many have not supported Ukraine in its struggle against Russia. Others have not supported Palestine in its struggle for liberation from Israeli occupation. What do you think about this pattern? What's the alternative to such selective solidarity?

We must foster solidarity that transcends the simplistic politics left over from the Cold War. This entails supporting all exploited and oppressed peoples irrespective of their governments' political stances.

While a solely pragmatic approach might suggest that there's little room for solidarity between Ukrainians and Palestinians, I hold onto the belief that there exists something beyond mere pragmatism and the adage "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Solidarity is hard work, and it often comes from the place of feeling distress by addressing uncomfortable questions about the existing geopolitical order and problematic alliances. However, it also requires creating a space filled with mutual empathy and understanding.

Last year in Hebron, I met a Palestinian activist whose brother is in the Kharkiv territorial defense units resisting Russian imperialism. I also talked with many people who genuinely empathized with Ukrainians.

I think that moving beyond selective solidarity will only be possible by cultivating mutual understanding of shared experiences of atrocities and occupation. Ukraine is a real place with real destruction and war, so is Palestine. Only by building solidarity from below without exception can we win our common struggle for a better world.

22 November 2023

Source: [Truthout](#).

Campaigning to end Violence against Women

23 November 2023, by **Dave Kellaway**

Twice a week in Italy the same terrible event takes place. A woman is killed by a man. Usually he knows her. Figures for femicide are similar in Britain.

In Italy this has become a regular part of the 24 hour news cycle. There is a daily afternoon TV programme, on the main state channel La Vita in diretta, a similar to Crimewatch which exhaustively goes over the details of these murders. The focus is on the whodunit or lurid aspects of the crimes rather than the patriarchal or sexist structures that produce them.

Recently twenty-two year old Giulia Cecchettin was murdered by her ex-boyfriend, Turetta. As is often the case, he could not accept the fact that she no longer wanted to be with him. She had experienced his controlling behaviour and resentment of her recent graduation as a bio-chemist. He could not handle her achievements and wanted her to slow down her education to match where he was at. He stabbed her, put her in his car thinking she was dead. Police think that he heard sounds so he got out and stabbed her again to finish her off.

Her sister, Elena, has written this eloquent letter denouncing the way the whole narrative of 'monsters' and the 'exceptionality' of these men fails to understand or combat femicide:

Turetta is often referred to as a monster. He is not a monster. A monster is an exception, a person outside society, a person for whom society should not take responsibility.

Instead, there is responsibility. Monsters are not sick, they are healthy children of patriarchy, of rape culture.

Rape culture is what legitimises all

behaviour that harms women, starting with things that are sometimes not even given much importance, but which are important, such as control, possessiveness, catcalling.

Every man is privileged by this culture. It is often said 'not all men'. All men are not murderers, but the murderers are still all men.

No man is good if he does nothing to dismantle the society that privileges them so much. It is the responsibility of all men in this patriarchal society given their privilege and power to educate and call out friends and colleagues as soon as they hear the slightest hint of sexist violence.

Tell that friend who controls his girlfriend, tell that colleague who catcalls passers-by, make yourself hostile to such behaviour. It is accepted by society, but is nothing but the prelude to femicide.

Femicide is state murder, because the state does not protect us.

Femicide is not a crime of passion, it is a crime of power. We need widespread sexual and relationship education, we need to teach that love is not possession. We need to fund anti-violence centres and we need to give those in need the opportunity to ask for help. For Giulia don't do a minute's silence, for Giulia burn everything.

Non una di meno

Femicide has recently become more of a political issue in Italy. Its first woman prime minister, Giorgia Meloni has brought forward new laws that strengthen some anti-domestic violence measures and lays down harsher penalties. Prosecutors will

have some new powers to keep men who threaten women away from them and money for refuges has been increased from 35 to 55 million Euros for 2024.

However in Italy the problem is often whether this money gets to the people who need it and does not get diverted or wasted in byzantine bureaucratic costs. Meloni in fact makes these moves while attacking women's rights and independence with her campaigns in favour of the traditional family and to restrict abortion rights. Violence against women is linked to the inequality embedded in such family structures and condoned by the Catholicism she extols.

Rape culture and sexism have been exposed at the heart of the Italian political elites. Meloni herself broke with her partner, Andrea Giambruno, a TV presenter, after the lewd comments he had made about female colleagues had been exposed.

Beppe Grillo's son was accused of a group rape and his reaction was to immediately question the validity of the charges and blame the victim. Grillo is a leader of the Five Star Movement one of the main opposition parties. One of the top leaders of Meloni's party, Fratelli d'Italia, La Russa, also has a son accused of rape. His response was to speculate why the woman did not report it straightaway and question the charges.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls

This Saturday, November 25 is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

In Britain it kicks off 16 days of action on the issue. There will be a webinar series of talks and discussion. It is also White Ribbon Day.

White Ribbon Day is a campaign that encourages men and boys to take action to end violence against women and girls and bring about cultural change. It encourages them to make a promise on its website and has lots of educational resources that can be used in schools and clubs.

This year's theme calls on "supporters to #changethestory for women and girls. This can start with the smallest action to challenge 'harmless' behaviours."

The White Ribbon organisation has teamed up with corporate sponsors like Sky Sports to get presenters to wear white ribbons and a specially produced video that will be broadcast. Targeting male football supporters is part of their strategy to change male attitudes. Rail companies are also participating and there will be activities at stations.

There are actions and events

organised by other organisations to mark November 15 too - councils, some colleges and trade unions (e.g. NAS/UWT, NEU), women's groups and the Labour Party are getting involved in the 16 day campaign.

Italian feminist organisations like Non Una di Meno (Not one less) are organising a demonstration in Rome to remember Elena and all her sisters who have been killed.

Source: *Anti*Capitalist Resistance*.

1973-2023, the Athens Polytechnic students' revolt "is not a museum piece"!

22 November 2023, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

A year later, the US-backed junta fell, and every year since, massive mobilizations have celebrated this revolt. In recent years, the right, in which former junta henchmen participate, has tried to smear and forget this historic act, whose character, as anti-fascist journalist Dimitris Psarras points out in EF Syn, is "a revolt linking the spontaneous explosion of youth with the organized action of left-wing groups against the dictatorship".

"Education, bread and freedom"

Even today, this is one of the greatest fears of the right-wing government, because the slogan of the time "Education, bread, freedom" remains more relevant than ever. In the demonstrations this year, young people denounced the privatization and exclusion measures in education, and the policy of misery and unemployment. They also denounced the violent repression by the Mitsotakis police, not only against the demonstrations (for example, with the destruction of Exárcheia Square, a symbol of resistance), but also against young people in general. This week,

the police once again killed a young Roma man and beat up several young people.

All of these incidents have fuelled the anger of young people against a government that has been very badly elected (one in five voters) and that is trying to pretend otherwise in order to impose its dirty measures. Hence the importance of this year's 17 November, prepared for by several meetings to debate the link between 1973 and 2023. And so, on the 17th, a large number of demonstrations took place across the country, with anti-fascist and anti-repression slogans as their main slogans, and as always an anti-imperialist dynamic which, this year, took the form of massive support for the Palestinian people, particularly on the banners and by carrying hundreds of Palestinian flags.

A dynamic social movement and the absence of a credible left-wing

perspective

In Athens, the 30,000-strong demonstration, made up of student, radical and revolutionary left-wing and KKE (Greek Communist Party) cortes, marched as far as the American embassy, with many continuing on to the Israeli embassy. At the head of the procession, behind a huge Palestinian flag, were students from Polytechnique, including several soldiers in uniform, to remind everyone of the importance of resisting recruitment. In Thessaloniki and Patras, the processions were massive and anti-imperialist in character, inevitably turned against US policy because of local history and US support for Netanyahu.

What was missing, however, was a denunciation of Russian imperialism, its terrible war of aggression against the Ukrainian people and its dirty role in particular in providing barely disguised support for fascist movements. This goes back to the history of the Greek left, marked by Stalinism and campism, but also, at the time, by strong disorientation and sectarianism, with some rejoicing at the break-up of Syriza (with a "leader" who has no left-wing credentials and

is a grand inquisitor), which has added to the very scattered landscape of the Greek left. In this sense, 17 November

illustrates the paradox of a very dynamic social movement and a lack of credible prospects on the left, which makes initiatives for dialogue

and recomposition very urgent.

Athens, 18 November 2023

State Elections in Germany bring further losses to the Left and upticks for the Far Right

21 November 2023, by **Folko Mueller**

The outright winners should come as no big surprise. The Christian Social Union (CSU) will be reigning again in Bavaria, as it has in every election cycle since WW II in that state – now, for the second time in a row, partnered with the “Freie Wähler” or Free Voters, another center right party. In Hesse, the Christian Democrats (CDU) are again the strongest party and are at liberty to decide if they want to continue a coalition with the Greens or enter talks with the Social Democrats (SPD) or Free Democrats (FDP).

Significant gains for the far-right party, AfD (Alternative for Germany)

The most concerning election results, however, are the inroads made by the AfD. In both states, the far-right party gained several percentage points vis-à-vis the last elections in 2018. In Hesse, support for the AfD jumped by 5.3 percentage points, from 13.1% in 2018 to 18.4% in this election, while in Bavaria the increase was only slightly less, from 10.2% in 2018 to 14.6%. Part of the reason the AfD was weaker in Bavaria is that the CSU has historically been successful at bringing far-right voters into the bigger tent of Christian Democracy. Undeniably, though, the AfD has

consolidated its base across the republic. One can no longer speak of just “protest” voters nor of a significant “East-West” divide.

Moreover, it would be inaccurate to characterize the AfD’s political clientele as economic losers. Certainly, AfD has garnered support among the worst-off working-class voters. Studies have shown that ten percent of unemployed voters support the AfD. The percentage of people without a high school diploma (Abitur) among voters for the AfD is higher than the percent of these voters among supporters of any other political party in Germany. [2] However, there are also numerous documented examples of educated and/or wealthy sectors of German society openly supporting the AfD.

One famous case in Germany was a Leipzig Professor of Law tweeting: “A white Europe of fraternal nations. For me this is a wonderful goal!”. Similarly, a Saxon entrepreneur offered his machine shop to host a local AfD event in 2018. Another entrepreneur present at the event donated 19,500 Euros to AfD in 2017. [3] Other journalistic investigations into the AfD money trail led to the billionaire August von Fink and into Switzerland. [4] People vote AfD for different reasons, but while the party may have started out as a euro-sceptic, neoliberal party, it very rapidly turned into a far-right organization.

In this sense, we can argue that AfD

voters at the very least tolerate, if not openly endorse, the xenophobic, Islamophobic, antisemitic, völkisch-nationalist and sexist messages this party routinely transmits. Unfortunately, this appears to be in line with similar findings here in the US.

Studies conducted here have revealed that:

30% of Americans agree with the statement “I often find myself fearful of other people of other races.”

14% of Americans agree some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.

23% of Americans agree that sometimes other groups must be kept in their place. [5]

In other words, there appears to be a significant percentage (anywhere from about 15 to 25%) of voters in either country, and presumably in others, open to totalitarian and racist ideas.

The drastic demise of the Left

In this election, Left and center-left parties lost across the board in both states. In Bavaria the SPD dropped below 10%, while the Greens dropped 3.2 percentage points to 14.4%. In Hesse both parties dropped by about 5 percentage points, handing the Social Democrats their lowest result ever in that State at 15.1%. No doubt, the fact that both these parties are at the helm

federally, together with the Liberals, in an alliance known as the "Ampelkoalition" or traffic light coalition, due to the colors of the participating parties, played a significant role. Nancy Faeser, who was the top candidate for the SPD in Hesse, is the current Secretary of the Interior.

Far more alarming for us, however, should be the downward trend at the polls of Germany's left opposition party - Die Linke. Die Linke ceded 3.2 percentage points, which dropped the party to 3.1 % at the polls, quite a bit below the 5% threshold required for representation in parliament. Furthermore, this means that Die Linke has now exited out of every single "Western" German State, except for the two smaller city states of Bremen and Hamburg. This harsh reality is clearly no reason to cheer for a party that was trying to shed its "East" heritage and represent the underprivileged across the whole republic.

One of the main reasons for this poor performance was again Sarah Wagenknecht, who has been a thorn in the party's side for quite some time. In particular, the former parliamentary speakers' views on climate change, diversity and migration have been routinely at odds with the remainder of Die Linke's leadership. With regards to migration, Wagenknecht has not been above repeating right-wing platitudes. This has even earned her invitations to join demonstrations organized by the AfD as well as to become a member of the far-right party itself. She routinely seeks the spotlight and uses, for example, her own publications, as well as prime time tv talk shows and interviews, to repeatedly fire against Die Linke. Wagenknecht finally left the party towards the end of October, after the two State elections we are discussing here. The split was in the end inevitable and should have happened much sooner via disciplinary proceedings and an exclusion process but didn't for a variety of reasons. In the end she decided to start her own, highly personalized new party (the temporary name of the new party is "Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht" or Alliance Sarah Wagenknecht) which will further splinter the Left in

Germany. While the split was necessary, Wagenknecht was, unfortunately, able to convince nine other members of parliament to leave with her. This will most likely hurt the party tremendously with regards to both parliamentary status and financial resources, once these members are forced to resign their mandates. For more information on the Sarah Wagenknecht dilemma check out this [interview](#) by Die Linke-affiliated Rosa Luxemburg Foundation:

How can we stop the rise of the far right?

There are no easy answers as to how to resolve the severe crisis of Die Linke. However, there are proven tactics that can and should be implemented to confront the fascist AfD and curb further growth.

The AfD, just like any other fascists, needs to be outed and confronted wherever they raise their ugly heads. Specific actions would include:

1. The existence of the AfD should neither be trivialized nor normalized

Members of the AfD need to be marginalized and branded as the fascists they are, wherever they show up in public - whether on tv talk shows or at their information stands or kiosks during election cycles. Tearing off their pseudo-conservative mask will also continue to make them unacceptable as a coalition partner for the CDU.

2. The AfD and other fascist movements need to be confronted in the streets

The AfD, often in conjunction with other fascist movements such as PEGIDA, tends to take to the streets in order to mobilize its members, recruit new sympathizers and intimidate minorities as well as anybody else who is not on their side. This should never be allowed without the broadest resistance and counterprotests of all and any anti-fascist and anti-racist groups and individuals. This requires broad mobilization across the

spectrum but has successfully been done repeatedly in Germany in the recent past.

One of the most memorable occasions was when an alliance of over 10,000 anti-fascists prevented a march of about 1,300 Neo-Nazis through the City of Dresden in 2006. For a long time, the far-right has been trying to instrumentalize the horrific bombing of Dresden in February, 1945, in which 25,000 civilians lost their lives. Since the late nineties, Neo-Nazis have organized regular annual anniversary marches to commemorate the bombing and exploit it for their own purposes, trivializing the crimes against humanity by the Nazi regime by highlighting this Allied war crime.

3. Education

Efforts have been made, not least through the nation-wide initiative "Standing Up Against Racism" to train people to be able to stand up to right-wing slogans and teach others to do the same via seminars. It is imperative to have broad networks of these trained individuals at every workplace. Furthermore, every union should pass an incompatibility resolution against the AfD!

4. Provide a political alternative

There have been voices calling for the AfD to be outlawed for being "unconstitutional". We should reject these calls on the same basis that we would reject them in this country. As revolutionary socialists from the Marx21 network (a tendency within Die Linke) rightly point out: "...a ban wrongly relies on the state and the repressive apparatus, which in case of doubt is positioned against the left and weakens civil society anti-fascism." [6]

While the AfD has turned into a fascist party, the same cannot necessarily be said of every single person who votes for this party. Germany, like many other countries, is currently feeling the impact of a series of crises, including those stemming from climate change and the Ukraine war. Social spending cuts by successive governments further exacerbate these problems. While it is thus understandable that support for the traffic light coalition members is collapsing, it is not a given that this

leads to success for the AfD. The AfD has nothing to offer but racist slogans and nationalist sentiment. However, it is skilled in exploiting these crises and portraying itself as being “against the current system”, especially in light of Die Linke being perceived as

splintered and weak and somehow not in true opposition to the effects of these crises.

Our hope is therefore that Die Linke will be able to soon pull together, focus on its core values of international solidarity and social

justice for all and sharpen its opposition profile against the status quo. This could result in a first step towards making the AfD politically obsolete.

Source: [Solidarity](#).

Protestors’ Demands for a Ceasefire, End to Support for Israel, Shake American Institutions

20 November 2023, by [Dan La Botz](#)

President Joe Biden, who has strongly supported Israel, as has the U.S. Congress, has opposed a cease fire, calling only for brief humanitarian pauses. That is the position of progressive Senator Bernie Sanders as well.

In the United States for the last seven weeks, however, there have been dozens of protest demonstrations involving tens of thousands of people demanding a ceasefire and an end to U.S. support for Israel. Mostly organized by Jewish and Palestinian groups, these protests for a ceasefire often involve civil disobedience, blocking major city streets, highways, and bridges, occupying government offices, train stations, or university facilities. I myself, like more than 1,000 people across the country, was arrested in one of these huge, multi-racial, religiously diverse protests.

Politicians and the press have accused the protests of being antisemitic and pro-Hamas supporters of terrorism—a patently false claim since many are organized, led by, and sometimes largely made up of progressive Jews. Nonetheless, the combination of Israel’s continued crimes against humanity and our protests have gradually changed the political climate. A recent Reuters/Ipsos poll found that 68% of respondents felt that, “Israel should call a ceasefire and try to negotiate.” Over 80 percent

of Democrats are for a ceasefire. The pro-ceasefire movement’s activities have ramified through American society, affecting government and politics, universities, churches, and the publishing industry, among others.

Let’s start at the top with a rift in President Joe Biden’s administration. In mid-November more than 500 officials from 40 government agencies sent a letter to President Biden protesting his support of Israel in its war in Gaza. [7] After denouncing Hamas for its attack, the letter read:

We call on President Biden to urgently demand a cease-fire; and to call for de-escalation of the current conflict by securing the immediate release of the Israeli hostages and arbitrarily detained Palestinians; the restoration of water, fuel, electricity and other basic services; and the passage of adequate humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

Most of those signing the letter came from the National Security Council to the F.B.I. and the Justice Department.

Bernie Sanders issued a statement on Nov. 18, stating, “While Israel has the right to go after Hamas, Netanyahu’s

right-wing extremist government does not have the right to wage almost total warfare against the Palestinian people. That is morally unacceptable and in violation of international law.” As a condition for U.S. aid to Israel, he called for “an end to the indiscriminate bombing; the right of displaced Gazans to return to their homes; no long-term Israeli re-occupation or blockade of Gaza; an end to settler violence in the West Bank and a freeze on settlement expansion; [and] a commitment to broad peace talks for a two-state solution in the wake of the war.” But he did not join the movement’s call for a ceasefire

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other 20 other members of Congress sent a [letter](#) to President Biden, asking him to support a bilateral ceasefire in Gaza, in order to protect the one million children living there. It stated, “We write to you to express deep concern about the intensifying war in Gaza, particularly grave violations against children...”

About a week before, a group of 14 senators [8] did not go so far, but did call for a short-term stop of hostilities in Gaza because of concerns over the failure to protect noncombatant civilians and the potential escalation of the conflict. Thirty-one members of Congress, senators and representatives, now support a

ceasefire.

Some 300 delegates to the Democratic Party national convention who voted for Bernie Sanders sent a letter [9] to him urging him to support a ceasefire. And some 250 members of Elizabeth Warren's campaign staff have done the same.

Marcy Winograd, a 2020 Sanders delegate and a co-founding member of the Los Angeles chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace, stated, "As a Jewish member of Congress, Senator Sanders' voice would be particularly persuasive in demanding an end to Israel's violations of international law that shock the world..."

Universities throughout the country have been particularly challenged by ceasefire protests. Several have suspended or banned Students for Justice in Palestine and other organizations have had their events canceled. [10] Students at Columbia University in New York, to give one example, have in response called for

an end to censorship of Palestinian groups, and some 250 professors joined the students in the demand for free debate and discussion on campus. [11]

The churches too have become involved. Various Black church organizations have issued statements calling for a cease fire. One Black religious leader, Michael McBride, a California pastor and anti-gun violence activist, said "We are faith leaders in the African American faith tradition, in the Black church prophetic tradition, and we are people familiar with pain and suffering enacted by state actors." [12] A group of Quaker, Unitarian, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran, and Methodist and Baptist churches, and other denominations [13], wrote,

We call on you, President Biden, and your Administration to support an immediate ceasefire, de-escalation, and restraint by all involved. We have made the same

requests to Congress. All efforts, including bilateral and multilateral ones, must be made for this war to be brought to a swift end.

Finally, at the National Book Awards [14], this year's finalists issued a statement reading:

"On behalf of the finalists, we oppose the ongoing bombardment of Gaza and call for a humanitarian cease-fire to address the urgent humanitarian needs of Palestinian civilians, particularly children. We oppose antisemitism and anti-Palestinian sentiment and Islamophobia equally, accepting the human dignity of all parties, knowing that further bloodshed does nothing to secure lasting peace in the region."

While Biden and Congress ignore, this is the dominant sentiment in America today. [15] We want a ceasefire and we will continue to protest until we achieve it.

20 November 2023

"For an independent PSOL"

19 November 2023, by **Ana C. Carvalhaes**

Antoine Larrache: How do you see the political situation and the current government?

Ana Cristina Carvalhaes: Lula has come to power in a completely different political context to the first three PT governments: today, the far right has gained mass support. It came to power with Bolsonaro, governs some of the country's most important states (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais) and has the biggest group in parliament.

Even before the election campaign, Lula and the PT chose to seek victory on the basis of the broadest possible alliance, both on the left, with the PCdoB and the PSOL [16], and above all on the right. This led to the election of Geraldo Alckmin (former leader of the PSDB) to the post of Vice-

President, and to the inclusion in the "broad front" of so-called centre-left bourgeois parties, as well as more explicitly right-wing parties.

Lula was never prepared to seek victory with a left-wing coalition, nor to gamble on popular mobilization. In the second round, the coalition expanded to include parties even further to the right. Part of the bourgeoisie had already explicitly supported Lula in the first round, and a much larger part supported him in the second round. The bourgeois sector that supported Bolsonaro most fervently in the second round was the landowners. This tactic enabled Lula to win a narrow victory in the second round. It was a difficult and important democratic victory, which prevented the advance of neo- or post-fascism in Brazil, and the PSOL rightly

participated in this process by voting for Lula-Alckmin.

Antoine Larrache: So this is a government of class conciliation, isn't it? How do you manage this contradiction between left and right within it?

Ana Cristina Carvalhaes: The government has adopted democratic measures to deal with the destruction caused by Bolsonaro's four years in power. It ordered a huge mobilization of resources to save the Yanomami [17] from starvation and disease when they were attacked on their reserve by illegal mining, to which the fascist leader had given carte blanche, so that a genocide was under way. He is also investigating those responsible for the attempted coup of 8 January 2023. He has

recreated ministries and created the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples.

On the other hand, it has solid commitments to big business and to the stability of the regime: it has a clearly neo-liberal economic policy, a “green capitalism” environmental policy, and it does not seek to mobilize against the right, relying on the Supreme Court and the police to confront it. This is not a “protest government”. Its first nine months have not been a “success” in favour of the workers and the people because, on the economic front, the new fiscal rule negotiated with Congress is a classic neo-liberal adjustment plan that cuts resources from education, health and investment programmes in order to achieve an improbable zero deficit by 2024. On the environmental front, Lula gave a speech at the UN defending the Amazon, while “letting” his right-wing ministers and the fossil fuel industry campaign for oil exploration at the mouth of the Amazon.

The government presents all the insoluble contradictions and inconsistencies imposed by its character of class conciliation. This is not a situation in which a policy of left opposition to the government, as the PSOL has done correctly in its first 12 years, is relevant. But more than ever, it is necessary for the party to be independent, to support what is positive, to fight the government’s measures against popular interests and to be ready to face new attacks (as there will certainly be on the environment and the popular economy), to maintain its autonomous profile and to present its programmatic differences with the government’s action.

Antoine Larrache: What is the situation of the far right?

Ana Cristina Carvalhaes: The threat persists, the far right governs major states and could return to power if the Lula government disappoints. We need to distinguish between several levels: in the narrowest circle there’s Bolsonaro himself, his family and his closest political group (which includes their supporters in the military) with about 20% of the vote, and, around the narrowest circle, a much wider

sector of people who vote for the far right, to a large extent against the left, but who have been disappointed by the most radical. Bolsonarism was considerably weakened by the attempted or simulated coup d’état of 8 January, because bourgeois sectors had to oppose it. This attempt is the subject of a judicial enquiry and the head of the air force at the time is implicated. He has therefore been greatly weakened by these legal cases and the investigations into corruption - in particular the fact that he appropriated jewels donated by Gulf sheikhs. The military officers who have governed with him have also been associated with scandals of embezzlement, mismanagement of resources during the pandemic and now even the diversion of weapons to criminal organizations. This in no way means that they have been defeated, but the confidence of the masses in the armed forces has collapsed. The Supreme Court, which ruled in favour of Lula, and Lula himself, are in the process of dismantling the apparatus created by Bolsonaro “from above”.

Today, the bourgeoisie is counting on Lula to restore order to society. The big problem is that this agreement means that the PT will not mobilize the workers. And this is a very important point, because it is precisely the PT that is leading them, since it has regained its mass influence over the last eight years when it was in opposition. I think things will get worse in 2024. The austerity measures of the “fiscal adjustment” plan will become more obvious: the government is proposing a balanced national budget for 2024, which will have huge consequences, as it will have to cut budgets for education, health and other areas. I think there’s going to be a lot of anger about these choices.

Antoine Larrache: With Bolsonaro out of power for a while, isn’t there a risk of a real fascist movement developing?

Ana Cristina Carvalhaes: In the sense of another coup attempt? I don’t think so, in the short term. Bolsonarism is still very much alive, it has a lot of influence in parliament, and it intends to win 1,500 of the country’s 5,000 mayoralties next year. In other words, it’s all about the institutions. Anything

can happen in Brazil, but their problem is that Bolsonaro is ineligible, because the Supreme Court has made him ineligible, and his movement is openly discussing who will be the candidate in the next presidential election.

Be that as it may, I would not rule out the possibility that at another time, in the event of a deep national and institutional crisis, there could be another coup attempt. We shouldn’t forget another constituent element of the Right in Brazil: neo-Pentecostal Christian evangelicalism. This movement has made enormous progress among the working classes. Today, it represents the majority of the Brazilian population and, in terms of religious influence, it outstrips historic Catholicism and Protestantism. In the favelas, these fundamentalists are the most influential from an ideological point of view. They have one contradiction: they have less control over the women’s vote. Many evangelical women voted for Lula.

The global crisis will also make things more difficult for Lula. This is the big problem with the so-called progressive governments of this second wave. The first wave benefited from a wonderful context, with the commodities boom, but this second wave is faced with a very difficult global economic situation. China continues to grow and, in many Latin American countries, it has become the first or second trading partner, while Brazil is deepening its links with the BRICS. I don’t think China is going to save Brazil or other Latin American countries. I think that the next few years will bring many challenges for the government and that there will be struggles. It’s inevitable that there will be struggles because the country is very unequal.

Antoine Larrache: What is the current relationship between the government and the social movements?

Ana Cristina Carvalhaes: The mass movements in Brazil are led by the PT, either directly or through people who are very close to it. There are a few counter-examples, such as the university teachers’ union, which is

run by people on the left, or Boulos' links with social movements. But these are isolated phenomena. The big difference with what happened under previous PT governments is that the leaders of the mass movements fear the far right and so they put the brakes on themselves. Teachers in the federal public sector are very angry about the government's plans. But they say: "What can we do? We're not going to go on strike and weaken Lula". There are strikes, but at state level. Last week, for example, there was a two-day strike in the Sao Paulo metro.

Perhaps there will be some distancing from the government, but that would be a second cycle of this type. Because the first took place during the PT's first governments, which lasted thirteen years. There wasn't really a honeymoon period: after a number of crises in various sectors, there was a shock break with what had been the basis of the PT's existence. This shock was caused by the pension reform of 2003, when a large proportion of state and federal civil servants, as well as poor civil servants, broke with the PT. Relations then continued to deteriorate, mainly with Dilma. At the start of the 2008 crisis, they managed to contain its effects, but from 2012-13 they were no longer able to do so, and the process of discrediting the government intensified. This process caused the PSOL to grow, in a limited but real way.

Antoine Larrache: Can you describe the main issues at stake at the PSOL congress?

Ana Cristina Carvalhaes: The PSOL held a major assembly of its extended leadership just after Lula's election. At this meeting, there was an initial clash between the party majority, which wanted an even closer relationship with the government, and the minority, which wanted to guarantee the PSOL's independence from the government. The minority presented a motion affirming the PSOL's refusal to participate in the Lula government. The two main currents that form the majority, that of Guilherme Boulos (Revolução Solidária) and that of the previous party president (Primavera), did not want such a declaration, which would have put them in great difficulty

when the government was not even in place. They therefore worked on a more united motion by making concessions, in particular to the left wing of the majority bloc, which included comrades from the Fourth International. This current, called *Semente*, remained allied to the majority with three fundamental arguments: firstly, unity was needed, including with the PT, in the face of the fascist danger - which was right; secondly, the minority sector of the party wanted a policy of opposition to the government - which was wrong; and thirdly, the tactic needed in the period to overcome petismo (support for the PT's historic political project) was to bank on the figure of Guilherme Boulos. In an attempt to influence the majority, *Semente* succeeded in obtaining a majority resolution refusing to participate in the government. The MES [18] and other sectors of the party's minority bloc then agreed to vote in favour of the majority resolution.

However, this declaration of intent is ambiguous: it indicates that the PSOL will not participate in the government, will not send members as representatives of the PSOL, but it leaves the door open to the participation of some of its members in their own name. One exception had already been accepted by all PSOL members: the participation in the government of the leader of the Brazilian Indigenous Peoples' Association, Sonia Guajajara, because this was an explicit request from the indigenous peoples. But when the government was formed, another PSOL member joined it, a representative of the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST - Movimento dos trabalhadores sem-teto). The latter is linked to Boulos. In addition, at Boulos' instigation, it was decided that the group of PSOL MPs would form part of the government's parliamentary group. The president of the group is a member of the PT and the vice-president a member of the PSOL. The ambiguity of the December resolution was intended to allow these choices to be made.

Antoine Larrache: And how was this conflict over participation in the government reflected in the PSOL Congress?

Ana Cristina Carvalhaes: In the tradition of the PSOL since its creation (2005), a congress has been organized every two years. There was an interruption with the pandemic - a long interruption - even though we held a virtual congress. So this was the first congress with a physical presence since 2017. The main objective of this congress, for the leadership, was to obtain approval for participation in the government. Another objective, which was not admitted, was to get rid of all those who were opposed. To understand the dynamics, it is important to understand, without over-personalising, that Boulos comes from the social movement, the MTST to be precise, which is a movement of great value. Boulos relies on it and that gives him considerable weight. But he has always wanted to join a party with no current, no opposition. [19] That's not what those who brought him into the party wanted, but that's the way he's always been, and it's neither new nor defamatory. He is an important leader to the left of the PT, but closer to the PT than to the PSOL tradition. He unequivocally wants to be part of a PT-led government. The other large majority group, *Primavera*, runs the mayor's office in Belém in the Amazon region and is in the political tradition of the Popular Fronts of the 1930s.

PSOL congresses follow a three-month process, with neighbourhood assemblies in the big cities, district assemblies that elect delegates at state and provincial level, and these delegates elect the delegates for the federal congress. Throughout this process, political positions are discussed. An important topic at the convention was a change in the way the leadership operates. Within the opposition bloc, of which I am a member, we knew that our weight would diminish at this convention, due to the integration of the Boulos group since the 2017 convention. But we hoped to have at least enough votes to influence what would come out of it.

Since the founding of the PSOL, which brings together a large number of groups, there has been a tradition of building its stability around pacts, broad operating agreements. In our case, the historic pact was between Primavera and the MES. Primavera

was in charge of management and the main posts, while the MES was in charge of the treasury, even though it did not hold the purse strings alone, as two signatures were required for all expenditure. It was a good pact because it was based on the results of the congresses and allowed the party to function. The leadership around Boulos wanted to call into question the PSOL's founding pact in a context where parties are very rich: the Foundation is a propaganda and popular education body which, by law, has 20% of the party's budget at its disposal. As the President of the Foundation controls 20% of the party's budget, this position is de facto strategic and ranks third in the party hierarchy.

On the eve of the convention, the majority informed everyone that the Foundation would no longer be part of the proportionally distributed leadership positions, but that its leadership would be appointed directly by the winning list. This was a coup d'état designed to ensure that the opposition would not only lose Congress, but would also be completely excluded from central management. Essentially the only sector of the majority to oppose this manoeuvre was Insurgencia, from Semente. This caused great unease within the majority bloc, which was forced to withdraw the proposal. In the end, the presidency of the Foundation will remain among the management positions elected at the Congress and will therefore, in practice, remain with a member of the MES.

Antoine Larrache: Can you explain the deeper reasons for these

conflicts?

Ana Cristina Carvalhaes: I think there are two fundamental issues combined. Firstly, the party's relationship with the government, which is expressed in an attempt to crush those who oppose participation. Faced with this political situation, the PSOL leadership asserts that we are in a "period of united front", that this is our government, that we must be with it and that those who are not with it will end up in the dustbin of history. In concrete terms, the PSOL deputies were divided on the vote on the adjustment plan: 7 voted in favour and 3 voted against (the two MES deputies and one independent deputy). The argument put forward by Boulos, who is the leader of the parliamentary group, is that we must always support the government because the far right could take advantage of its difficulties. And at the congress, Boulos' speech was the same: in an assembly, referring to the collective kitchens that his movement had set up during the pandemic and which are now financed by the state, he declared that these were "much more socialist than all the speeches of the extreme left, which will end up in the dustbin of history".

The second problem is that the PSOL has become so wealthy that taking total control of the party machine and apparatus is becoming a matter of life and death for the majority. In the context of the right-wingization of society and all the corruption scandals of the 2014-15 period, a new law has granted very substantial funds to political parties. This changes a lot of things. For example, the PSOL

received an electoral fund of 99 million reais (\$20 million) in 2022, compared with just the equivalent of \$590,000 for Plinio's presidential campaign in 2010 - to which must be added the party's permanent fund of \$774,000 a month (\$9.3 million a year). That's a mountain of money. It changes internal relations. [20]

Antoine Larrache: When all is said and done, how do you think the PSOL will define itself in relation to the government?

Ana Cristina Carvalhaes: In fact, the victory of the current majority bloc in Congress is already a clear definition: the policy of this bloc will prevail, i.e. open support for the government and participation, if possible. The problem is that, at the moment, there is not the slightest possibility of Lula opening up more space for the PSOL, because, under pressure from the right in Congress, all he is doing is sacking progressive ministers in order to give more positions to the right within the ministry. The current situation suits the PSOL leaders because they can both support the government and claim autonomy.

So the congress was very confrontational. There is a major difficulty for us because the comrades of the FI are split in two, with very different points of view on the leadership of the PSOL. The internal situation between the majority of the PSOL and the minority is very tense, very conflictual, and I think that things are going to get worse.

But we must maintain the prospect of an independent PSOL, because this independence will be crucial in the medium term. □

A fraught election in Madagascar

18 November 2023, by Paul Martial

The presidential election is due to take place on 16 November 2023 for the first round and possibly on 20 December if there is a second

round. [21] Andry Rajoelina, the outgoing president, is one of the thirteen candidates.

Turpitude of power

None of the candidates has emerged from popular struggles or the many

militant civil society organisations. Although this election is taking place among the Malagasy elite, the atmosphere remains particularly tense due to a number of affairs.

These include the questioning of Rajoelina's nationality. The law provides for the loss of Malagasy nationality for any national who obtains another at his or her own request. This is the case for Rajoelina, who was granted French nationality in 2014. This is all the more embarrassing for him as he has adopted a nationalist image in his dispute with France. He has demanded - and rightly so - the return of the Éparses islands without waging a real political and diplomatic battle. The acquisition of French surveillance software called "Predator", sold at the time by the company Nexa, was used against opponents. It was used to imprison journalists, whistleblowers

and opponents. Another case involved the forced resignation of the President of the Senate, preventing him from replacing the President of the Republic during the election period. This function was entrusted to the government, heightening fears of massive electoral fraud.

Corruption and liberalism

Eleven candidates decided to refuse to run the election campaign in protest at the attacks on freedoms. Demonstrations and rallies other than those organised by Rajoelina are banned and fiercely repressed.

The regime is also plagued by corruption scandals. Romy Voos Andrianarisoa, Rajoelina's chief of staff, was arrested in London as she

was about to negotiate bribes worth €260,000 and a 5% stake in Gemfields, a company specialising in the extraction of precious stones. His close associate, a Frenchman, has also been jailed. He is not the only one from France to be swirling in the circle of power. Some are in charge of the Presidency's communications or the "Madagascar Emergence Plan", which essentially consists of major works of questionable utility, such as the creation of new towns.

In 2018, Rajoelina promised education for all children, access to healthcare for the population and decent jobs. The record of his mandate is overwhelming. According to World Bank statistics, poverty will have risen by 81% by 2022, and social inequalities have increased sharply. People are experiencing more frequent and longer-lasting power and water cuts.

Catastrophe in Palestine and Israel: Apartheid on the Road to Genocide

17 November 2023, by **David Finkel**

Any number of illusions lie shattered, *beginning with the biggest* — the United States' government's view that a brokered "normalization" of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, plus other Arab Gulf monarchies, would make Palestine essentially disappear from view. It's essential to state up front the fundamental lesson that U.S. policy, enabling Israel's continual destruction of Palestine and its people's hopes, have made the 100-year Palestine-Zionist conflict into a *permanent crisis* with little hope of resolution.

At this writing the odds of an even bigger regional war, which no state actor wants, are unknown — "God forbid," in the words of professor Rashid Khalidi. But every day's events are more than horrific enough. They cannot be chronicled here, but where they're all too clearly leading has

brought literally millions of people into the streets of the world demanding that the slaughter of Gaza end.

The editors have discussed the U.S. government's pretense of caring about Palestine in our previous editorial, "Palestine and Empire" (ATC 226). Although outdated by the current catastrophe, it may help provide a bit of background.

Also gone was Israel's "security" illusion of impenetrable walls, world-class surveillance technology, all-pervasive intelligence and the certainty of massive retaliation assuring that Hamas was "deterred," as a high-ranking Israeli officials repeatedly boasted. It's replaced by even deadlier delusions that the promised "complete destruction" of Hamas, which can't be accomplished

without *tens and probably hundreds of thousands of deaths in Gaza*, will bring safety.

An illusion among some pro-Palestinian activists — that the Hamas attack represented an advance for the resistance and liberation struggle — also needs to be analyzed. Briefly put, the deaths of 1400 Israelis, mostly civilians, is catastrophic for the Israeli *population* but doesn't threaten the *state*. That will be discussed below.

Mapping the Catastrophe

Israel's government of Benjamin "Mr. Security" Netanyahu is the most viciously racist, anti-democratic and incompetent, and one of the most corrupt — although there is

competition for that distinction — in the country's history. It is now probably also the most widely reviled for its catastrophic failures.

In fact, Israel's mass bombing and invasion of Gaza has one overriding priority beyond all other considerations — keeping Netanyahu's coalition in power and himself out of prison on multiple corruption charges. Neither Palestinian, nor Israeli, nor hostages' lives can get in the way of that supreme goal.

Because the coalition depends on the support of the fascistic, open ethnic-cleansing Jewish Power and Religious Zionism Ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, the dimensions of the war are literally genocidal. That potential has been present in Israeli politics all along, but Netanyahu's need to hold political office for protection from prosecution (sound familiar?) overrides certain restraints on all-out destruction that global politics and U.S. interests usually impose.

Mustafa Barghouti, a physician in Ramallah and president of the Palestinian National Initiative, has repeatedly warned (for example on "Democracy Now," October 19) of a scenario where Israel depopulates and annexes northern Gaza, then turns to ethnically cleansing and annexing the West Bank.

"I never thought I would see Israel carrying out ethnic cleansing in the 21st century," says Dr. Barghouti, "but I admit I was wrong." For a similar warning, see ["Gaza: between a second Nakba and the revival of the Oslo fiction."](#)

In the immediate shock of October 7, with reports from southern Israel exploding in much of the world and especially in the United States, years of accumulating support for the Palestinian people's suffering under occupation began dissolving. The scale and brutality of the Hamas killings generated instantaneous sympathy for Israel. Within a week, in turn, Israel's massive bombing, "total siege" and pending invasion of Gaza was converting much of that sympathy to revulsion.

Since then, we are frequently instructed that Israel's "right to defend itself" overrides consideration of the underlying conditions and history that produced the present situation. All that should wait till "Hamas terror is finished once and for all."

With all due disrespect, I must insist that the opposite is true. As Israeli apartheid embarks on the road toward genocide that many observers have warned as a potential outcome, you can't know where that road is going without some understanding of where it's coming from.

Birthing the Fundamentalist Nemesis

Back in spring 1982 I was on a delegation of leftwing journalists to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, when we visited Bir Zeit University in the occupied West Bank. In addition to Israeli blockades and continual harassment of the school, the nationalist students, supporters of the Palestine Liberation Organization, also told us how Israeli authorities were allowing free passage to rightwing Islamists from Gaza to disrupt their campus activities.

That was an ominous foretaste of Israel's preference then for Islamic fundamentalism over Palestinian nationalism. This cynical enemy-of-my-enemy ploy was not dissimilar to what the United States was carrying out in the same period — supporting Osama bin Laden's Islamic fundamentalist force in Afghanistan against the Soviets, which became al-Qaeda and would ultimately perpetrate the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Our discussion at Bir Zeit, as it happened, was only months before Israel's invasion of Lebanon, culminating in the September Sabra and Shatila refugee camp massacres and the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut.

It was a massive defeat for Palestinian nationalism, and also produced the rise in Lebanon (with Iranian

sponsorship) of the Shia fundamentalist movement Hezbollah, which became and remains Israel's most significant military adversary.

Hamas (an Arabic acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement) formed in 1987, a Gaza wing of the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood. By the mid-2000s, Hamas was gaining strength to fill the vacuum of effective resistance with the decline of the Palestinian left and the Israeli-U.S. success in turning the Palestinian National Authority (PA, created following the 1993 Oslo Accords) into a client of the Occupation.

Even while Israeli settlements spread like an uncontrolled cancer in the West Bank, in 2006 a remarkable breakthrough took place in Palestinian life. An election in the West Bank and Gaza for leadership of the PA was declared free and fair by the Carter Center, and widely viewed as a democratic example for the Middle East.

To the surprise of everyone — including Hamas — the Islamist movement won, defeating the dominant PLO faction (Fatah). A horrified U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton bewailed the failure of the United States to ensure the election result would come out differently.

Yasser Arafat, longtime leader of the PLO and the symbol of Palestinian nationalism, had died in 2004 (quite likely poisoned by Israeli agents although the assassination was never acknowledged). With the PLO's popular support dramatically declining, both parties recognized the reality of their fragile voting bases — most people had not voted for Islamic fundamentalist ideology, but rather in protest against the PA's and PLO's incompetence and corruption.

Accordingly, Fatah and Hamas initiated a process of forming a Palestinian unity government. That exercise in Palestinian democratic politics was absolutely unacceptable to the United States and Israel. What happened next was told by journalist David Rose in an investigative report "The Gaza Bombshell" (*Vanity Fair*, April 2008). As the article's introduction summarizes:

After failing to anticipate Hamas's victory over Fatah in the 2006 Palestinian election, the White House cooked up yet another scandalously covert and self-defeating Middle East debacle: part Iran-contra, part Bay of Pigs. With confidential documents, corroborated by outraged former and current U.S. officials, the author reveals how President Bush, Condoleezza Rice, and Deputy National-Security Adviser Elliott Abrams backed an armed force under Fatah strongman Muhammad Dahlan, touching off a bloody civil war in Gaza and leaving Hamas stronger than ever.

The coup failed, leaving the remnant of the PLO administering the Palestinian Authority in the scraps of territory left to it in the West Bank. Hamas consolidated its control of Gaza.

The strip of land has remained ever since under tightening Israeli siege, periodic operations that Israeli officials call "mowing the grass" with targeted assassinations and bombing civilian infrastructure, food supplies restricted to subsistence levels, electricity supplied for a few hours daily, water increasingly undrinkable, and the matrix of horrors chronicled in unbearable but essential detail in Norman Finkelstein's book *Gaza. An Inquest into its Martyrdom* (University of California Press, 2018).

The caged-in population of Gaza, the great majority of whom are refugees and their descendants from the 1948 mass dispossession and expulsion of Palestinians from Israel, has grown to two and a half million in a strip of land roughly the size of Detroit. After each previous round of pulverization, partial reconstruction is financed from sources in the Arab world, notably Qatar, and some international agencies.

Hamas itself attempted to reconcile its ideological opposition to Israel's existence with the hard facts of its governmental responsibilities. Its political wing in particular signaled willingness to live with some kind of two-state solution, if that was the will

of the Palestinian people. Israel's leadership, of any political bloc, showed no interest. Crumbs of aid and opening a handful of jobs in Israel for desperate Gaza workers would assure what Israel cynically called "quiet for quiet."

So pleased were Israeli authorities with the stability of the status quo that they confidently moved military units to serve and protect fanatical West Bank settlers while they raid and pillage Palestinian villages, burn fields and uproot priceless olive trees. Towns in southern Israel were left barely guarded. But before October 7, what could go wrong?

Facing Brutal Facts

It is necessary to face hard facts of October 7 and the aftermath. The extraordinary organization, secret preparation, complexity and sheer power of the Hamas attack truly shocked the world.

So did the extreme brutality of the mass murders that it committed. Unless there was a breakdown of command and control, it would appear that the raid's principal purpose was to kill people — even more than taking captives to exchange for more than six thousand Palestinian prisoners (including 360 children) held in Israel, many under "administrative detention" orders without charges or trial.

Claims that some Israeli citizens may have been killed in the army's assaults to regain control, for example, "[A growing number of reports indicate Israeli forces responsible for Israeli civilian and military deaths following October 7 attack](#)" are unverified, but wouldn't be unprecedented in Israel's history of dealing with hostage crises.

Nonetheless, large-scale murders on October 7 by Hamas militants are extensively documented in body-cam and cell phone footage as well as survivors' accounts. It included indiscriminate butchery of families in their homes — and of many civilians who could have been captured but instead were gunned down.

The extent of the killing beyond any evident strategic goal marks this as a hideous action, nothing to do with advancing Palestinian resistance or any progressive purpose.

It displays even more appalling indifference to the incineration it would bring down on the civilian Gaza population. In what way would this "advance" the struggle?

The moral and political crimes of Hamas include its failure to carry out construction of civilian bomb shelters and emergency supplies in the face of repeated rounds of Israeli air and ground assault.

Supporters of Palestinian freedom need to face what this says about the real nature of Hamas, as well as the way it has ruled in Gaza. Recognizing the absolutely essential right of oppressed peoples to resist, including with arms, does not absolve us of the responsibility to analyze the methods and politics of the forces acting in their name.

The criminality is all the greater if, as some analysts suggest, a purpose of the Hamas attack was deliberately to draw Israel into a ground invasion. Could the organization's military or political leadership have imagined that regional state powers would come to its rescue?

Inevitably, as always the enormous power of Israel's military machine with full U.S. support rapidly dwarfed the 1400 Israeli deaths on October 7. These were *easily doubled by Palestinian lives lost in just the first few days* of Israel's retaliatory bombing and the "total siege" that Netanyahu promised would "wipe out" Hamas, "change Gaza forever" and "reverberate for generations." At this writing, Gaza's Health Ministry estimates that the death toll among Palestinians numbers over 8,000.

This was *before* a ground invasion of Gaza, *before* hospitals lost the last of their generator fuel, and *before* Israel bombed people who followed its orders to flee south — and for what purpose on the Israeli side?

After Israel's enabling the rise of the forces that became Hamas, can it now

be “eliminated” without a mass slaughter of at least tens of thousands of Gaza civilians and the forced removal of probably hundreds of thousands more? Where would they supposedly go?

Who if anyone would rebuild Gaza this time? Will a “smaller Gaza with fewer people,” as an Israeli government minister promises, re-create Israeli delusions of security? Does Israel intend to reoccupy the place or turn it over to a totally discredited PA, a pathetic client of the Occupation?

There are press pundits promoting all these obscene scenarios and more, all based on perpetuating Israel’s apartheid-colonial control.

The Responses

Amidst worldwide outcry for an immediate ceasefire, the State Department prohibited its officers from the very mention of the term. Beyond “standing with Israel” and rushing more weaponry that it doesn’t even need to destroy Gaza many times over, the U.S. plan seems to consist of pursuing Israeli-Saudi “normalization” over the smoking ruins of Israel’s war on Palestine.

Joe Biden stated the truism that “ Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people...” Indeed, what polling is available indicates that Hamas may be supported by around 20% of Gaza’s population, maybe much less.

(Jim Zogby of the Arab American Institute estimates more like 11%. See also Amaney A. Jamal and Michael Robbins, “What Palestinians Really Think of Hamas,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 25, 2023. This new poll was completed just before Oct. 7 when the Israel-Gaza war broke out. A few of many results: Both Hamas and Fatah have the support no more than 30% and much less by most measures.)

But such U.S. pronouncements hardly square with statements by Israel’s state president Herzog that “Gaza is Hamas,” or Benjamin Netanyahu at the United Nations displaying a flag showing Greater Israel including Gaza and the West Bank. That’s the real-life result that Biden’s pledge of massive new military assistance for Israel will provide.

Meanwhile the new catastrophe has revealed, and deepened, the polarization in the U.S. Jewish community over Israel and Palestine. During the week of October 16 in actions on a scale never seen before, Jewish Voice for Peace, If Not Now and other Jewish-led solidarity organizations shut down exits from the White House on Monday and swarmed Capitol Hill on Wednesday, demanding an immediate cease-fire. The JVP-led October 27 mass sit-in shut down New York Grand Central Station with over 400 arrests.

But a typical establishment response was penned in the *Detroit Free Press* (Sunday, October 16) by Rabbi Asher Lopatin, who has an undeserved reputation as a moderate and conciliating voice:

“ Hamas’ wholesale targeting and murder of families babies, children, mothers and grandmothers — was the worst one-day catastrophe for our people since the Holocaust. And it brought back memories of the pogroms in Eastern Europe before and after the Russian Revolution, when Jews were attacked and killed in brutal raids. But this time even more extreme, like the brutality practiced by ISIS, but this time ISIS is here for the Jews.”

Some historical context is missing here, to say the least! Jewish communities targeted by pogroms in Europe, let alone in the Nazi genocide, were not only defenseless but even more important, had nothing to do with creating the conditions that led to their murder.

The Israeli victims of the Hamas attack, certainly innocent in themselves, were citizens of the grotesquely self-described “nation-state of the Jewish people” — a state that not only claimed to be defending them, but produced the conditions for their murder and helped set in motion the force that perpetrated the October 7 massacre.

Comparisons of Hamas with ISIS, like Netanyahu’s pronouncement that “ Hamas is ISIS” (and Biden’s blather that “these guys make al-Qaeda look pure”), provides a cover for war without limit or restraint, while West Bank settler atrocities escalate by the day. It’s more accurate to see Hamas and the Israeli occupation as asymmetric, but symbiotic, death-spiral dance partners.

One can say that the Israeli government and Hamas, each for their own reasons, wanted the current war, and the United States is either unwilling or incompetent to stop it. On the other hand, none of the state actors want the apocalypse of a regional war — not Israel, not Saudi Arabia or Iran, certainly not Lebanon which would be annihilated, and not the USA.

If, however, states and/or their client forces blindly stagger into a regional war, then no one knows where it will lead or how much the gates of hell might swallow.

Demanding an immediate cease-fire for Gaza has become the global movement’s central driving priority. The spreading outrage around the world, along with the growing protest among U.S. Palestinians, Arabs, progressive sectors of the Jewish community and other allies in solidarity, are the best hope right now for blocking the road to genocide.

October 30, 2023

Source: November-December 2023, ATC 227.

Generals' criminal game in Sudan

16 November 2023, by **Paul Martial**

It is now nearly eight months since General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and Hemedti, leader of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), embarked on a war that is destroying the country and causing one of the worst humanitarian crises the country has ever seen.

Enemy brothers

Even if they agreed to lead the coup d'état together, which overthrew the civilian government that emerged from the revolution in 2018, their competition was far too strong to share power. On both sides, these armed structures are above all tools enabling the SAF's senior officers and the Hemedti family clan to prosper. Each owns conglomerates of companies and gold mines. Faced with popular pressure, the generals were forced to negotiate a sharing of power with civilians. It was the issue of dissolving the RSF that sparked off the hostilities.

The suffering of the population

From Khartoum, the capital where the first battles raged, the conflict continued to spread to the states of South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur, with ethnic clashes between militias allied to the RSF and non-Arab communities. Although the humanitarian consequences have been overshadowed by the conflict in Ukraine, and now by Israel's attacks on Gaza, they are no less catastrophic. According to Human Rights Watch, nearly five million people have been displaced, and war crimes are being committed on both sides. Women are paying the heaviest price, with widespread sexual violence, particularly in Darfur, where the UN is warning that young women are being enslaved in areas controlled by the HWW.

Structuring civilian forces

The USA and Saudi Arabia have relaunched a peace process. Neither side is prepared to accept a

humanitarian truce, let alone peace talks. They have merely agreed to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. At the same time, a meeting was held in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa to structure a civil front against the war, bringing together political parties, trade unions and associations and chaired by former Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok. The idea is to convene a national conference of all the forces of Sudan to impose the voice of civilians in future peace negotiations.

Faced with this initiative, the resistance committees, the linchpin of the mobilisations against the coup d'état, have differing points of view. Some, such as the coordination of resistance committees in the province of Al-Qadarif, are taking part, while others prefer to remain on the sidelines, sticking to their charter of popular power and believing that Hamdok's concessionary policies towards the military are partly to blame for the situation.

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

Political labyrinth in Spanish state

15 November 2023, by **Manuel Garí**

The reactionary Popular Party (PP) won an absolute majority in the Senate and more votes in Congress, but not enough to form a government. Its leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo failed to form a government, despite the support of the ultra-right post-Franco Vox party.

An unstable balance of power

On 28 May, the PP won a major advance in the municipal elections and in some of the regional autonomous communities at the expense of the Socialist Party (PSOE), leading to the formation of an alliance between the right-wing party and Vox. The fear of a

nationwide repeat partly mobilized the left-wing vote in favour of the PSOE.

The "progressive bloc" political organizations that had emerged after the 15-M (Indignant movement), such as Podemos, lost ground electorally. Their lack of political relevance and the failure of their choice to govern at all costs despite the hegemony of the PSOE led to the subordination of Izquierda Unida (IU) and Podemos to

Sánchez, and a crisis for both organizations. The new grouping, Sumar, led by Yolanda Díaz, will not stop the crisis but will make it worse, because its opportunistic companionship with the Socialist Party is not leading to a “resurrection” of space on the left.

We return to the bipartisan formula that has governed the Spanish political system since the start of the post-Franco transition and after the social and constitutional pacts of 1978. The elections took place in a context of profound demobilization of the mass movement, particularly the trade union movement, and the “satellization” of many organizations around the Sánchez government.

In a context of inflation and loss of purchasing power for the working class and record profits for the banks and the big energy and textile companies, the reformist left is not organizing social resistance and the anti-capitalist left is too weak to do so. The effects of the failure and repression of the Catalan nationalist democratic movement are still being felt. All of this has increased social unrest, but the PSOE left has abandoned the streets and protest is increasingly channelled by the populist, neo-liberal and reactionary

options of the right and ultra-right, with a neo-Franco anti-democratic discourse.

Uncertainty and confrontation

Sánchez presided over the coalition government with a neoliberal policy and abandoned important electoral promises in the face of social and repressive laws on housing, labour and trade union rights, and in defence of public health and education.

For a new mandate, Sánchez is now trying to win enough votes from the other parties: small left-wing parties, Basque, Galician and Catalan nationalists and independence fighters, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties such as the Basque Nationalist Party, Junts and Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya. The difference in votes between the two blocs is very small. At the heart of this investiture pact is an amnesty for all those repressed in connection with the mobilizations and proclamations in Catalonia. This is an issue that needs to be resolved for elementary democratic reasons.

This point is unacceptable to the

Spanish right, which has launched a general mobilization with the collaboration of the judicial system inherited from Francoism and the sympathy of large sectors of the army, the police and the media. The agreement is being debated with the issue of support for forming a government at stake. There were street clashes between the far right and fascists in front of the Socialist Party headquarters, as well as calls from the leader of Vox, Santiago Abascal, for the police to disobey and not act against the demonstrators. For its part, the PP called for a mobilisation on 12 November in all the provincial capitals. The right in the streets, the left calling for order and peace among citizens: the worst-case scenario.

Once again, in the Spanish labyrinth, class contradictions and positions and identities on the national question are intertwined. If the PSOE were to obtain the necessary votes in Parliament, this would not amount to a “return to tranquillity”, as it would open up a highly conflictive and unstable legislature.

16 November 2023

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

Two Victories: One for Women, One for Workers

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

In other November elections at the local level, in non-partisan school board elections, liberal or moderate candidates defeated the rightwing Moms for Liberty and the 1776 Project. Those far-right groups have spent the last couple of years in sometimes violent disruptions of school board meetings to demand an end to teaching or textbooks dealing with race and gender issues. The results suggest that the right-wingers only succeeded in mobilizing voters

who are tired of the right’s culture wars, conservative politics and strategy of creating chaos in community institutions.

The Actors Union Wins

The actors’ union, SAG-AFTRA, ended its 148-day strike, the longest in the union’s history, on November 9. Union

president Fran Drescher, former star of “The Nanny,” 160,000 actors struck against both the historic Hollywood Corporations, such as Warner Brothers and Paramount, and the new online streaming companies, such as Amazon, Apple, and Netflix, paralyzed the industry also idling as many as two million other workers, from make-up artists to set builders.

In her angry speech that launched the strike, Drescher said, “they plead

poverty, that they're losing money left and right while giving hundreds of millions of dollars to their CEOs." While Drescher's career made her very wealthy, many actors live hand-to-mouth as they move from one production to another.

In the end, the actors won a three-year contract that improves wages and conditions as well as protecting members from threats from new streaming services and artificial intelligence technology.

Regarding AI, the corporations must now have an actors' signed consent to use their digital replica for specific purposes. Workers will be compensated not only with residuals but also for future viewing of streaming shows. Actors won a 7% general wage increase in the first year, 4% in the second, and 3.5% after that. Background actors won 11% for the first year and the same increase as

others in the next two. Actors who dance or sing will receive additional pay. Intimacy coordinators for scenes involving nudity or simulate sex will be mandated, and hair and make-up artists must properly serve the ethnicity of the actors.

The victory of the actors' contract and women's triumph over abortion access demonstrate a revival of both the labor and social movements. These victories together with the recent United Auto Workers strike and their new contract, the strikes of nurses and teachers, and new life in the Amazon organizing campaign represent a resurgence of social struggle and move the politics to the left a little. And over the last month we have a new movement in solidarity with Palestine that has mobilized tens of thousands in cities across the country.

And, at the same time, we seem to be headed to a rematch between former president Donald Trump, facing several criminal indictments, and president Biden, who has alienated some young progressive voters. We also have the screwball wildcard candidates like crystal-age Marianne Williamson and conspiracy monger Robert F. Kennedy Jr. And now Joe Manchin, an extremely conservative Democrat from West Virginia, is toying with the idea of running for president as the candidate of the No Labels movement. Left-of-center candidates like Jill Stein in the Green Party and the independent Cornel West remain marginal. We on the left don't seem to be able to create the political alternative that we need and desire. So, we have, as usual, this troubling disjunction between the movement and electoral politics to overcome.

12 November 2023

Macron on the side of the Chadian dictatorship

13 November 2023, by Paul Martial

Chad is the perfect illustration of the double standards of the French authorities on the question of democracy in Africa. While they are quick to condemn coups d'état in Sahelian countries, they support the dynastic seizure of power by Mahamat Idriss Déby, whose late father ruled the country for more than thirty years.

Dark Thursday

The seizure of power by Déby's son in April 2021 is the result of a constitutional coup d'état led by a clique of generals who have appropriated the country for decades. From the outset, Déby's son established himself through repression. To put on a brave face, he promised an eighteen-month transition and convened a sovereign

national conference boycotted by the opposition. This conference will act on the junta's wishes. The junta announced that it would extend its rule by two years.

In response, the political opposition and militant civil society organisations called for people to take to the streets on Thursday 22 October 2022. The crackdown on the demonstration amounted to a massacre and will be remembered as Black Thursday. More than two hundred people were killed, and hundreds were arrested over the following weeks. The aim was to decapitate the opposition. Most were deported to Koro Toro prison, 600 kilometres from the capital N'Djaména. Those who returned tell of how bodies were dumped on the way there, and of the inhumane treatment in this prison run by former Boko

Haram prisoners.

Sahelian pivot

The repression on the ground continues, two months ahead of a referendum on amending the Constitution to reinforce the centralist nature of power in a country whose great religious and community diversity would, on the contrary, merit a more federal organisation.

From the Black Thursday massacre to the many human rights abuses, French diplomacy remains silent. Its aim is to preserve the stability of the country, which it associates with the regime in power. As a result, the French authorities did not hesitate on several occasions, in the absence of any parliamentary control, to commit

French forces against rebel attacks threatening the government. Chad remains a decisive country in France's military architecture in Africa. During Operation Barkhane, Chadian soldiers were sent to the front line against the jihadists. Today, it is the only country in the Sahel that still accepts the

positioning of the French army on its soil.

This is a precarious situation, given the growing number of protests against France's military presence. This is a struggle that needs to be taken up and supported in France, because the departure of French

troops from Chad would also mean the fall of a regime that has lasted far too long.

10 November 2023

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Memorandum of shame: more camps and pogroms

12 November 2023, by **Gippò Mukendi Ngandu**

The EU delegation was composed of Giorgia Meloni, Ursula Von der Leyen and the resigned Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte. In fact, the majority currents of European political forces were present, that of reaction and the right represented by the Italian Prime Minister, that of moderate Christians by the President of the European Commission, and that of conservative liberals by Rutte. Seemingly divided among themselves, Europe's main political forces, including those of the centre-left, have in recent years shared the policies of Fortress Europe, which aim to ruthlessly oppose the arrival in Europe of those fleeing hunger, misery, wars, racism and sexism.

What does the memorandum say?

It is based on five pillars: macro-financial assistance, economic relations, energy cooperation, migration and the promotion of people-to-people contacts. [22]

In concrete terms, it already provides for the allocation of €150 million to support the Tunisian budget and €105 million to support its border control. But it also provides for the strengthening of cooperation in the field of energy. Officially, the EU will help Tunisia in its transition to green energy. It will most likely be a

question of strengthening projects already underway, involving Italy in particular, through the already planned construction of submarine cables across the Channel of Sicily, the environmental impact of which is very questionable. What is certain is that the energy crisis caused by the war in Ukraine is pushing European powers to look for new sources of energy supply. From this point of view, the relationship with Tunisia is becoming increasingly strategic for Italy.

However, the Tunisian president will have to wait to secure the €900 million tranche of funding from the EU. The Commission will not budge until the impasse between the IMF and Saied is resolved, with the former demanding sufficient reforms before disbursing the 1.9 billion loan and the latter protesting against the "diktats" of the International Monetary Fund. It is precisely for these reasons that the Commission will play the role of a trusted intermediary between its government and the IMF, especially since some of the planned reforms will certainly also benefit the major European powers.

Gentiloni's precedent

The recent agreement is the latest initiative in the extension of the

outsourcing of funding for the management of migration flows. The memorandum is reminiscent of the one signed in Rome on 2 February 2017 with Libya, between the then Italian Prime Minister, Paolo Gentiloni, and the head of the Libyan government of national reconciliation, already dubbed the "Memorandum of Shame". According to Amnesty International sources, it led to the interception at sea of 82,000 people who were then forcibly returned to Libya: men, women and children who were arbitrarily detained in veritable concentration camps, subjected to forced labour, torture of all kinds, inhuman and degrading treatment, rapes and murders that still have no official culprit.

In the meantime, the number of casualties in the Mediterranean has not decreased and even seems destined to increase. It is estimated that at least 26,000 people have died trying to cross what for centuries was a veritable natural bridge linking populations, cultures and trades, but which is now being transformed into a veritable marine graveyard.

Today, as in the past, the aim of European governments is to condition aid on an increased effort by Tunisia to block departures, without any consideration for human rights and respect for political freedoms.

Saied's authoritarian turn

Once elected president, Saied succeeded in having a new constitution adopted on July 25, 2022, which established a real authoritarian regime corresponding to the strengthening of the counter-revolution that followed the "Tunisian Spring" of 2011. For example, the government under his authority no longer needs to obtain a vote of confidence from the legislature. Saied himself can impose certain laws without putting them to a vote in parliament. In fact, the executive and legislative branches of government are increasingly coinciding with his person.

The authoritarian stranglehold is also visible in the strong repression against opponents who are threatened not only by the police, but also by squads very close to the government. The repression affects all political forces, those that have already been in power such as the Islamists of Ennahda, the left-wing opposition forces as well as those nostalgic for the former Ben Ali regime.

Faced with the economic crisis hitting the country, Saied has relied on nationalist and racist themes to reach a consensus. The Tunisian president has indeed claimed Arab and Muslim culture as the only one belonging to the Tunisian people; He exalted national sovereignty in the face of "foreign interference" that would prevent the people from freely expressing their will; he advocated the theory of "ethnic substitution" dear to European fascist and reactionary forces.

His speech delivered on 21 February 2021 in the wake of the violent attacks – veritable pogroms – against migrants in sub-Saharan Africa is emblematic. According to the Tunisian president, "hordes of irregular migrants from sub-Saharan Africa" have arrived in

Tunisia and "violence, crimes and unacceptable behaviour have followed": an "unnatural" situation that is part of a criminal plan to "change the demographic composition" to make Tunisia "another African state that would no longer belong to the Arab and Islamic world."

It is a question of blaming migrants for the capitalist and neoliberal policies that he has totally accepted. On this point, the nationalisms of all countries are in agreement. It should come as no surprise, then, that Saied is willing to facilitate the repatriation of his own citizens, while refusing to repatriate citizens of other nationalities, which is indeed provided for in international law, although increasingly EU members only take this into account when it serves their interests.

This policy of anti-migration and security cooperation has increasingly dramatic consequences: between January and May 2023, there were 534 deaths and disappearances near the Tunisian coast, more than 3,500 arrests in Tunisia of sub-Saharan migrants for "illegal residence" and 23,093 migrants intercepted by the Tunisian authorities. Despite this, the year was marked by an increase in arrivals to Italy. For many, the situation has become untenable in many parts of Tunisia and Africa: how can we believe that borders, no matter how fortified, can prevent migrants from trying to cross? The only consequence of this escalation of security is the explosion of the number of deaths.

Combining racism, authoritarian impulses and the demands of the bourgeoisie

Governments of all colours in the EU and nationalists of all kinds seek, on the one hand, to feed the security impulses of a petty bourgeoisie that no longer sees a way out of the crisis and, on the other hand, to fuel the war between the poor while seeking to be the most reliable bearer of the interests of the bourgeoisie.

The discourse on closing borders only serves to maintain an increasingly authoritarian and police power, playing on division and racism. At the cost of thousands of deaths and unspeakable suffering. This serves to divide workers at home, to grant them differentiated status in return for miserable wages and living conditions.

It is no coincidence that reactionary and centre-left forces share the policy of quotas for immigrant labour. It seems paradoxical that, on the one hand, they call for a ruthless fight against illegal immigration and, on the other hand, they bow to employers' demands for immigrant labour.

The warning is clear! You can come to Italy, illegally or legally, but only for the least protected jobs. And, if necessary, one is fired. And in any case, the condition is precarious. For these reasons, it is necessary to combat the racist and pro-business logic that unites reactionaries, moderates and social democrats in the defence of Fortress Europe.

The struggle for the opening of borders, for the closure of camps, for the respect of human rights, for the end of neo-colonial relations and of Europe's imperialist domination of Africa must therefore be intertwined with the defence of collective agreements for working conditions and wages (a battle that is developing in the logistics sector), and with the struggle for equal rights for all workers, including the right to a residence permit, housing, health, education.

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Unprecedented humanitarian crisis amidst imperialist intervention and counter-revolutionary revenge in Yemen

11 November 2023, by **Frank Prouhet**

The revolution was strong enough to oust President Saleh from power. But there was no question for US and also French imperialism, or the neighbouring Saudi monarchy, or the old Yemeni military-tribal reactionary forces, of letting the revolution rule. The Bab el Mandeb strait, through which a third of the world's oil passes, could not be under the control of a revolutionary government. Saudi Arabia, where even the country's name is privatized by a single clan, could not accept a revolution that ousted the tyrant. The wealth was to go back to the old clan elites marginalized by the Saleh clan.

This reactionary coalition first blocked the birth of a new democratic constitution, then imposed a government of continuity with the old regime by placing Hadi, the former prime minister of the ousted president, at the head of a transitional government. It united, then tore apart to conquer power, plunging the country into a never-ending military and humanitarian crisis. A crisis multiplied tenfold by the adventurous military intervention Decisive Storm, launched in 2015 by Mohamed bin Salman (MBS), the new strongman of Saudi Arabia, with the support of his ally and mentor Mohamed bin Zayed, of the United Arab Emirates, under the aegis of the American, and more discreetly French, umbrella. The aggression of the wealthy Saudi kingdom against the poorest country in the Arab world was supposed to solve in a few months the problem of the Houthis, supported by Iran, who had taken control of the capital Sanaa, in alliance with the deposed former president Saleh, in a spectacular reversal of alliance. Eight years later, Yemen is more divided than ever, and the war is still there, culminating in

today's stalemate.

“Decisive Storm,” a reactionary adventure

MBS's Yemeni adventure can be explained as much by the desire of the new Saudi strongman to consolidate his young regime within the kingdom as by the muted confrontation that has pitted the Saudis against the Islamic Republic of Iran since the fall of the Shah. A confrontation punctuated by the Iran-Iraq war, where the Saudi kingdom financed the Iraqi aggression, or by the clashes between Iranian pilgrims and Saudi police in Mecca in 1987. These tensions have only been heightened by the rise of Iran's nuclear program. Along with Israel, Saudi Arabia denounced the signing of the 2015 nuclear deal, which left a civilian nuclear component and reintroduced Iranian oil to the market at a time when its price was collapsing. Not to mention the Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia, the majority in the Al-Hassa region, Saudi Arabia's main oil region, seen as a perpetual internal threat. For the Sunni kingdom, protector of the holy sites, the Arab Spring was nothing more than an Iranian desire to constitute, against the Sunnis, a Shiite arc from Bahrain to Yemen via Syria and Iraq.

In Yemen in 2014, riding the wave of popular discontent, the Houthis militarily drove Hadi's transitional government out of the capital Sanaa, which on the one hand caused the price of gas to explode for Yemenis, but on the other hand sold it off repeatedly to Total. The Houthis are

descended from a particular branch of Shi'ism, the Zaydis, who dominated Yemen for centuries and then were marginalized by the Republic and then reunification. More than a protagonist in a religious conflict - Shiites versus Sunnis - the Houthis represent a minority that loudly criticizes President Saleh's alignment with US imperialism, under the pretext of fighting terrorism after 9/11. A very convenient adversary, an ally of Iran, despised by US imperialism, against whom Saleh sends bombs, but also ultra-Orthodox Sunni Koranic schools, such as Dar al-Hadith, in the heart of Shiite territory, to reactivate a religious conflict that was not very real at the beginning. Ironically, Saleh, like many members of the Yemeni elite, is from the Zaydi minority! What wouldn't he do to keep power for 33 years and to get American subsidies? He would go so far as to ally himself with yesterday's adversaries! And it is an unlikely and unstable alliance between the Houthis and Saleh, just ousted from power, that is expelling the new transitional Hadi government from Sana'a. The Hadi government, which emerged from the fragile compromise between the forces that wanted to bring the revolution into line and divide the country, had to take refuge in Aden, in the south. It owes its salvation only to the military and financial support of the reactionary international coalition of the United States, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Opposing coalitions

fragment

In Sana'a, the Houthis and ousted former president Saleh, for a brief time allies, were once again tearing each other apart. Saleh was assassinated. The Houthis were the sole masters of the game at the end of 2017. In the south, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, allies and financial and military backers of a heterogeneous anti-Houthi coalition, are seeing their respective protégés confront each other with heavy weapons. This is because Saudi Arabia is supporting Hadi's militias who have taken refuge in Aden at arm's length. They took with them Al-Islah, the military-tribal party linked to the Muslim Brotherhood. The same militias that waged the war against the southerners in the 1994 secession attempt, which left thousands dead in the southern ranks and swept away hopes for autonomy. The United Arab Emirates, an ally of Saudi Arabia, is mainly financing the militias of the southern movement, which is certainly opposed to the Houthis, but has created a Southern Transitional Council against the proteges of the Saudis who took refuge in Aden, to confront militarily the Hadi government and its supporters in Al-Islah.

This improbable cohabitation has indeed awakened the old north-south divides. The north emerged from the Ottoman occupation and the struggle against the monarchy, with the Yemeni Arab Republic. The south emerged from the occupation by British imperialism of the port of Aden and its hinterland, to secure its empire and the route to India. It also stems from the abortive experience of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, which followed the forced withdrawal of the British. This very advanced experiment, with free education and healthcare, formal equality between men and women and anti-imperialist positions, was the target of many attacks that limited its development, fostered internal fractures and pushed it into the arms of the USSR. It ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall and ended in 1990 with a reunification entirely dominated by the elites of the northern Yemeni Arab Republic.

But the fractured anti-Houthi front in the south can also be seen against a backdrop of growing economic competition between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. MBS wants a Saudi kingdom that is no longer just a petromonarchy. He wants to initiate a grandiose and probably very unrealistic transition, to develop services, tourism, foreign private investment, with his Vision 2030 project. He is pressuring multinationals to repatriate their headquarters to Riyadh, which inevitably puts it in competition with Dubai, the Emirates' largest city. In 2021, Riyadh issued an ultimatum to large foreign groups. No more public contracts after 2024 if you don't locate your regional headquarters in the kingdom, which hosts only 5% of international headquarters compared to 76% for the Emirates. It must be said that the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a court journalist who had become a critic of the Saudi government, the kidnapping of hundreds of princes locked up for many months in the Hilton Riyadh and robbed of their money, the forced resignation of Saad Hariri, Lebanese prime minister, a Sunni and ally of the West, after his kidnapping by MBS in Riyadh, have chilled more than one foreign investor and angered the United States.

The picture of Yemen's fracturing would be incomplete if we did not add al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP, and the Yemeni branch of Islamic State, which are taking advantage of the clashes to gain territory, notably the port of Mukalla and the Hadramaut Valley. Not to mention the U.S. drones that regularly strike markets and tribal leaders. An infinite politico-military fragmentation, the main victim of which is the Yemeni people.

Both sides bogged down

After eight years of war, Saudi Arabia has failed to defeat the Iranian-backed Houthis, who control the northern two-thirds of the territory. Its alliance is fractured, Yemen balkanized. The Yemeni government-in-exile that it makes and unmakes, has power only

over the rooms of the luxury hotels it occupies in Riyadh. A stalemate that is costing the kingdom dearly. Worse, Saudi Arabia and its oil terminals have been repeatedly targeted by Iranian-designed Houthi drones, temporarily reducing its capacity to export oil, an essential asset that accounts for 90% of the state's revenues. Mohammed bin Salman will remember that the United States did not move a finger when Iranian drones hit his country.

The war is unwinnable for Saudi Arabia, which wants to refocus on its economic agenda, whose bright horizon is still receding with the covid crisis, and whose actuality is less and less dictated by its exclusive relationship with the United States, which did not support it, and which must resume talks with Iran to get out of this quagmire. Similarly, the Houthis, firmly established in the north, cannot hope to conquer all of Yemen's territory. Their deadly failure, with the deaths of tens of thousands of fighters, including many child soldiers, in an attempt to take control of the oil-rich region of Marib, sounded the death knell for their hopes.

Yemen is hungry, Yemen is thirsty!

The war is estimated to have claimed more than 100,000 civilian lives. Nearly four million people have fled the fighting and bombing. But hunger, malnutrition and thirst kill even more surely than the bombing of schools, hospitals, markets and weddings by the Saudi coalition. The UN speaks of 200,000 indirect civilian casualties. Twenty-four million people, 80 per cent of the population, need emergency assistance. This is a figure never reached by any country in the world. More than half of the population does not have enough to eat. 7.4 million people are malnourished, including 2 million children, according to Oxfam. The health system is bled dry, the few functioning health facilities, especially those of NGOs, are bombed by Saudi planes. Prices are skyrocketing while incomes are collapsing. To financially stifle the Houthis, who levy customs duties and hold humanitarian

organisations to ransom, Saudi Arabia is blocking the delivery of humanitarian aid, which is already vastly undersized in relation to the immense needs. The humanitarian crisis is worsening with the Saudi blockade of the port of Hodeidah and the airport of Sana'a. The country is ranked 191st in the UN Development Index. This is the price paid for the intervention of imperialism and the revenge of the old military-tribal hierarchies against the revolution.

We remember French participation in the dirty war in Yemen. Despite the French government's denials, the leak of a memo from the Directorate of Military Intelligence confirmed the accusations made by French NGOs. In the midst of the Khashoggi affair, it revealed that 48 Caesar cannons manufactured by Nexter, 100% owned by the French state, with a range of 42 km, were deployed by Saudi Arabia on its border with Yemen. The delivery was completed in 2018, well after the conflict began. A new export contract was even signed in December 2018, in the greatest secrecy, for Titus armored vehicles and 105LG towed guns. After the United States, France is the main supplier of the dirty war that is martyring and starving Yemen.

Yemen is hungry, but Yemen is also thirsty! In one of the driest inhabited regions in the world, global warming is further reducing the level of precipitation, transforming it into rare torrential rainfall episodes that tear up arable land, all the more easily since terraced crops are no longer maintained because of the war. But the collapse of the water system did not date from the war. It has been exacerbated by the joint effects of the aid policies of neoliberal international institutions and the former Yemeni central government. Both have favoured, by means of subsidies and by turning a blind eye, the anarchic multiplication of water pumping from deep boreholes, which only the large landowners can afford. This is to produce quaat, the euphoric water-hungry plant, which yields a lot of money but pumps 40% of Yemen's agricultural water and to produce export crops, such as bananas or mangoes, for multinationals. These boreholes deplete aquifers, divert water from subsistence village crops,

and multiply conflicts over water. The surface wells of small farmers are drying up. This further increases their dependence on tribal chiefs and their tankers that bring deteriorating drinking water to the countryside and the city. In 2017, Yemen recorded the world's worst known cholera outbreak, with more than one million cases, while its health system collapsed. This water management model is unsustainable in the short term. It pumps more than water resources can replenish, while renewable water is only 72 m3 per inhabitant per year, already far from the 500 m3 defined as a scarcity threshold.

Saudis seek withdrawal

On this field of ruins, the revolution put down, with no hope of victory for any of the many reactionary camps, direct negotiations between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia have begun to bear fruit, under the watchful eye of UN special envoy Hans Grundberg. Prisoners are being exchanged, the October 2022 ceasefire agreement has halted Saudi aerial bombardments and Houthi drone attacks, access to humanitarian aid improves, discussions have begun on the payment of Houthi officials on Yemeni oil revenues, managed by Saudi Arabia, a key demand of the Houthis. All this constitutes a fragile hope for peace, but in a country devastated and fragmented by the old hierarchies and imperialist aggression, which seems to have killed the democratic and unitary hope of an entire generation of youth. This is a fragile hope for peace, which is nevertheless essential for the reorganisation of Yemeni civil and democratic society, which is the only real bearer of hope.

Because a "victory" for the Houthis, through the withdrawal of the Saudi enemy, and the end of its financial and military support to the various anti-Houthi fronts, is not synonymous with the victory of democracy or women's rights. Far from it! The numerous imprisonments, assassinations, disappearances, Kalashnikov volleys in the legs that the Houthi government has inflicted on its opposition, the

multiple corruption cases or the campaigns for decent Islamic dress attest to this.

But the Saudi horizon of withdrawal from Yemen cannot be understood solely through the failure of its military adventure. It must be seen in relation to the evolution of the international situation, and to the more autonomous role that MBS wants to play in it. Two international events illustrate this new situation. A month before the US mid-term elections, Saudi Arabia chose to cut OPEC production by two million barrels a day to increase its oil revenues. This dealt a severe blow to Biden by sending oil prices higher just before a difficult election for the Democrats. And it gave a breath of fresh air to Putin, who saw oil revenues soar despite sanctions against his invasion of Ukraine. While Biden went so far as to shamefully shake MBS's hand in Jeddah, after calling for his isolation following Khashoggi's murder, and did everything he could to block Bernie Sanders' Senate resolution on war powers to limit U.S. support for the war in Yemen, while U.S. courts granted immunity to the prince, Biden has not been able to count on the support of Saudi Arabia in his standoff with Russia over oil.

In April 2023, during a spectacular meeting in China, under the aegis of Xi Jinping, Saudi Arabia and Iran re-established diplomatic relations, which had been severed since 2016. Another sensational announcement was the creation of a Chinese-made drone assembly plant in Saudi Arabia. Or participation in the BRICS alongside China and Russia. At the same time, Mohammed bin Salman put on the table the proposal to establish formal diplomatic relations with Israel, in exchange for a binding commitment by the United States to defend Saudi Arabia in the event of aggression. MBS's desire is clearly to disengage from the Yemeni quagmire, to move forward in peace negotiations with the Houthis, against the backdrop of the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, to make the most of the oil rent, even if it means putting the American godfather in difficulty, to refocus on his 2030 horizon, by taking advantage of a

multipolar world and the tensions between China and the United States

to better negotiate a more autonomous place. Again, even if it means offending the United States.

4 October 2023

West Bank: faced with attacks by the Israeli army and settlers, fear, despair and anger among Palestinians

10 November 2023, by **Théo S**

Friends in Beit Jala/Bethlehem and in the Dheisheh refugee camp confirm this dramatic situation for the Palestinians. Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, a mainly Christian town with a population of 12,000, is located 10 kilometres from Jerusalem. Tens of thousands of Palestinians left Beit Jala for Chile after 1948, and since then they have continued to go into exile to escape the constant threats from the Zionist state. There is talk of 100,000 people from the Beit Jala/Bethlehem region being exiled or descended in Chile and the Americas. Spanish is spoken by many people in these towns. The houses abandoned by the exiles have taken in refugees from the Nakba.

Ten kilometres from Jerusalem

The town and refugee camp are surrounded by settlements, and the wall of hatred and shame built by Israel cuts through, encircles and imprisons the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Since the wall was built, people have had to spend hours at checkpoints to get from Bethlehem to

Jerusalem, 10 km away. Today, Palestinians have nowhere to go. They are prisoners of a permanent state of siege.

The images they were able to send us confirm the state of occupation and siege: threatening settlers, villagers violently chased from their fields at olive harvest time; deserted streets crossed by overarmed Israeli soldiers; Palestinians violently arrested at dawn, hands and feet tied, blindfolded...

Michel*, who lives in Beit Jala, talks to us about all the army checkpoints in the town and tells us that horrible things happen everywhere in the Bethlehem region, especially in the villages and near the settlements.

Exile? Where to?

Hassan* lives with his wife and their three very young children in Dheisheh. Stuck in their small flat. They have not been able to see the rest of the family for several weeks. Armed soldiers and settlers, settler leaflets ordering Palestinians to leave for Jordan, three people murdered in a fortnight,

including a 16-year-old boy. We see the lifeless body, the blood, the funeral...

When asked about work, he replies that there is "simply no more" and that it's not easy to manage to provide for his family.

The Zionist and colonial state is waging an all-out war in Gaza. It is also attacking all Palestinians. The situation in the West Bank is equally serious. Fear, despair and anger are palpable in our exchanges. Our friends are asking the question: "Should we also leave, as the settlers and the Zionist state want us to, before it's too late. But where should we go?"

They would still like to believe in international solidarity and keep a little hope alive. It's our duty to demonstrate our solidarity en masse, to put pressure on our government to say: "Stop this situation". That's the least we owe the Palestinian people.

11 November 2023

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

*First names have been changed.

The war in Gaza and the Germany's "raison

d'état"

9 November 2023, by **Jakob Schaefer**

One might think that this attitude is an inescapable duty in the context of the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany. However, on closer inspection, it turns out to be no help to the Jews. Out of a total of 3.5 billion Deutsche Marks in "reparation", only 500 million (via the Jewish Claims Conference) went to those directly and indirectly affected by the Holocaust. All the rest was spent on supporting the apartheid state of Israel (a third of which was spent on goods from Germany, particularly weapons). But above all, the 1952 agreement was Germany's entry card into the Western world after the Second World War.

Support for Israel, but no greater security for Jews

The political support given to Israel by the German government also has the effect of promoting the colonialist system, which has resulted in the continuation and hardening of the policy of colonisation in the West Bank and the closure of the Gaza Strip for the last sixteen years. Ultimately, this

only perpetuates tensions in Israel-Palestine and in the region.

It does nothing to improve the security of the people of Israel, and this was not visible until the attack on 7 October. Finally, how great must the anger and despair be to launch an action such as that of 7 October against such a vastly superior military power? The oppression of the Palestinian population for decades obviously does not justify the murders and hostage-taking of civilians, but it does demonstrate that there can be no peace with the apartheid state and the social and military oppression in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The German *raison d'état*

More than in many other countries, anti-Semitism is widespread in Germany. In order not to be reproached for this by world public opinion and to preserve its anchorage in the "Western community of values", the German governments - as well as all the major media and other "opinion leaders" - position themselves as unwavering supporters of the Israeli governments, whatever the latter's

murderous actions, as if the respective Israeli governments were the exclusive representatives of all Jews, wherever they live.

This attitude of unconditional and uncritical support for all Israeli governments is described by German governments as "German *raison d'état*". This attitude is accompanied by heavy repression of all organisations and individuals who criticise the Israeli government. In principle, the government and the media equate criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. Combined with general racism, this particularly affects people from the Arab world. They are harassed, regularly arrested at demonstrations and criminalised. Freedom of expression in general is undermined, not just on the subject of Israel.

This makes solidarity with Palestine even more difficult in Germany than in other Western countries, but it remains an indispensable task of internationalist solidarity.

8 November 2023

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

Migrants, Italy's "state protection" and Ursula Von Der Leyen's 10 points

8 November 2023, by **Fabrizio Burattini**

Peace with the

banks, war on

migrants

While the demagogic proposal to tax the billions in super-profits accumulated by the banks on the

backs of citizens forced to pay astronomical loan interest (a proposal that had made the gullible believe that the government was on the side of the poorest) has just been cancelled, they want to make money on the backs of migrants. Indeed, the government is aware of the fact that, despite the memoranda signed with dictators, despite the “ten points” issued by the President of the European Union, Ursula Von Der Leyen, despite the threatening messages of the Prime Minister and her ministers, migrants will continue to flow into Italy and Europe.

This extortion, decided on by the government, is supposed to weigh on migrants arriving from “safe countries,” i.e., countries where there is no war or restrictions on democratic and human rights. But the question arises, especially for the countries of the South, which countries can be described as “safe”?

The other measures provided for in the new emergency decrees will not solve the so-called emergency and will undermine the rights and human dignity of migrants, but also constitute a new and increasingly serious attack on democracy in our country. Just to mention them:

- the multiplication of Permanent Centres for Repatriation (CPR), their codification into veritable concentration camps (“easy to monitor and placed in areas with very low population density”);
- extension of the duration of “administrative detention” to 18 months even for “asylum seekers”;
- delegation of the management of the CPRs to the Ministry of Defence, i.e., to the armed forces,
- renewed threat of a “naval blockade” through memoranda and agreements with dictators in countries of origin and transit.

A fantasized emergency situation

There have been cries of urgency because, in one week, tens of thousands of migrants have arrived in

Italy. But let’s look at the numbers: according to the most recent data, the total number of people worldwide fleeing persecution, conflict and violence is estimated at 108.5 million. 40% of refugees are children. The countries hosting the largest number of refugees are Turkey, Iran, Colombia, Germany and Pakistan. Three-quarters of the world’s refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income countries.

In 2022, there were 880,000 asylum seekers in the European Union and 540,000 in 2021 – less than 1% of the world’s refugees and less than 2% of the European population. But, despite the manageable dimensions of the phenomenon, the approach of delicate elections (the European parliament elections next June) is pushing all the governments and institutional parties of the EU to compete to distance themselves from any serious reception policy and to postpone indefinitely the revision of the Dublin Treaty.

A racist and classist visa policy

On the other hand, neither the EU nor its member countries have ever considered redefining access policies for “third-country nationals,” which have always been marked by explicit racist and discriminatory principles.

Since 2001, the European Visa Regulation (Regulation (EC) No. 539/2001) has listed the countries whose citizens must be in possession of a visa to enter EU countries (crossing the “external borders”), dividing them into a “white list” (countries whose citizens are exempt from the visa requirement) and a “black list” (countries whose citizens are subject to visa requirements and for which the European consular authorities therefore have discretionary powers).

In reality, even this “discretion” is extremely limited and classist because, in practice, it grants visas to non-EU nationals of countries on the “blacklist” only if they can prove that they have assets and income that exclude immigration for business purposes.

Of course, in the EU visa regulation, “race,” religion and social class are not explicitly mentioned as criteria for the establishment of both the black- and whitelists. But the discriminatory, racist and classist approach is nevertheless obvious: all African countries (none are excluded) are blacklisted; for Asia, only Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Taiwan, East Timor, the United Arab Emirates and Israel are excluded. Religious orientation also has an impact since – with the exception of Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and the United Arab Emirates – citizens of all Muslim-majority countries are subject to visa requirements, as are all countries with a Hindu or Buddhist majority. And an objective examination of both lists also reveals a strong class correlation with the GDP per capita of different countries, in some ways even stronger than that with skin colour and religious orientation.

On the other hand, in the 22 years since the initial lists were drawn up in 2001, the two lists have been amended only marginally, as, for example, with the modification of the visa waiver list for several Caribbean islands (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago), Mauritius, Seychelles and some Pacific islands (Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). The “touristic” motivation for these list changes is obvious.

Moreover, it is the very concept of “political refugee” that needs to be reconsidered, by including in the criteria the reasons that often justify the choice to migrate, such as the real lack of economic prospects, devastating environmental insecurity, growing inequalities, elite corruption and so on.

And the racist refrain of “let’s help them at home,” even assuming this is “in good faith” and provided with adequate funds, structurally clashes with the responsibilities of the former colonizing countries. Didn’t the latter entrust their former colonies to

leaders who were totally untrustworthy and complicit in the predatory behaviour of neocolonialism, not very different from the direct colonialism of the nineteenth century?

The EU President's Plan

The ten points of the "European plan" presented by Ursula Von Der Leyen after her visit to Lampedusa in September do not present any new elements.

Point 1 (the promise of "European aid" to Italy to deal with an invented "emergency") only serves to mask the culpable unpreparedness and demagogic inertia of the Meloni government (which has been denounced by the citizens of Lampedusa).

Point 2 ("stepping up efforts" by the EU to transfer migrants to other destinations, based on the 'voluntary solidarity mechanism') is also a pious intention, explicitly thwarted not only by the sovereignist countries, but also by other countries that are part of the "EU core".

Point 3 ("Support of Frontex structures for repatriations"), point 4 ("increased actions to fight traffickers"), point 5 ("intensification of air and naval surveillance" by Frontex), point 6 ("concrete actions against traffickers' logistics"), guaranteeing the seizure and destruction of the boats used) are all

statements that approach the problem of "traffickers" in a conspiratorial logic, as if the phenomenon of mass migration were a consequence of the actions of traffickers and not the result of the desperation of entire communities of thousands of people ready to do anything to leave.

Point 7 ("Assistance by the staff of the European Asylum Agency" to speed up the examination of applications submitted by migrants by rejecting those that are not substantiated and sending back to their countries of origin those who have submitted them) may be useful in speeding up the scandalous slowness and approximation with which the Italian commissions in charge examine asylum and protection applications, but its effects ultimately depend on whether or not there is a willingness to make a serious reception policy, which is totally belied by the choices made by the Meloni government in recent months.

Point 9 ("Strengthen cooperation with UN agencies" to ensure the protection of migrants also during repatriation) and Point 10 ("implementation of the memorandum with Tunisia") show the EU's total complicity with the refoulement policies that the Italian government would like to implement.

There remains point 8 ("Offering viable alternatives to illegal routes by strengthening humanitarian corridors"), which is perhaps the only novelty of the plan, but which is probably destined to remain a dead letter, in the demagogic context of the electoral campaign and the cynical use

of the issue to try to increase the political weight of the various parties.

The real reasons for government policy

The answer to the question of "migrants" is not only measured in the "humanitarian" field. For the economy of Italian capitalism, the possibility of exploiting a workforce that can be blackmailed because it is "irregular" is an absolutely non-negligible factor of profit. This is the source of the constant opposition to any hypothesis of regularization of migratory flows.

It also has a political "use value." The constant denunciation of a "scapegoat," the recurrent discourse about an "emergency in the face of invasion" contribute to diverting the petty-bourgeois but also popular electorate from the real social problems and the real responsibilities of the ruling classes. They are trying to build consensus around those who want repressive measures to be taken. Measures that in reality will be used not only against migrants, but against everyone.

We are - and we say this loud and clear - in favour of the immediate granting of residence permits to all and for full freedom of movement to be recognised everywhere.

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Marrakesh: contributing to a political dynamic against imperialist institutions

7 November 2023, by **Antoine Larrache**

Can you describe the situation in Morocco after the earthquake, what were its effects, how the authorities reacted?

The violence of the natural disaster had both class and spatial dimensions, exacerbated by decades of neoliberal policies in Morocco. The violence of

the earthquake affected the poor populations of the villages, who saw their homes completely destroyed. Already fragile communications were

cut. The Marrakech-Safi region, hit by the earthquake, is one of the poorest regions in the country, according to official data.

The earthquake evoked other natural disasters, such as the 2014 floods in southern Morocco (Guelmim) and the Lâarach fires in the north in 2022. Populations remained isolated in the face of the horror of these natural disasters.

In all cases, the state only intervenes when it is too late. For the Moroccan state, it is above all a question of minimizing the scale of the disaster in order to reduce its impact. Which helps maintain its image while preparing to repress any social anger and any fight against the results of its policies which aggravate natural disasters. Its reaction to the earthquake in the Haouz region was also marked by the context of preparation for the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which took place in Marrakech from October 9 to 15, 2023.

The state mobilized its repressive apparatus (army, police and gendarmerie) to support the popular solidarity caravans launched spontaneously to help the victims of the earthquake. As for social services (medical staff, ambulances, etc.), they were very timid and reflected the extent of the deterioration of the public health sector since its opening to the private sector, reminiscent of what happened during the pandemic of Covid-19 in 2020.

Concerning foreign aid, the state treated it in a logic of political calculation, refusing to receive aid coming from France and Algeria, due to political differences between the regimes of the two countries and Morocco.

Similar to its response to the effects of the Covid pandemic, the state created the Special Earthquake Impact Management Fund, with the aim of concentrating fundraising. It has already implemented the recommendations of the World Bank in the field of combating natural disasters, by creating in 2018 the Fund to Combat the Effects of Natural

Disasters, the management of which was delegated to insurance companies, while the Solidarity Fund against Catastrophic Events was allocated to the poorest.

The earthquake of September 8, 2023 once again revealed the great fragility of effective means of intervention against natural disasters as well as prevention infrastructures. In the logic of liberal policies, priority is given to road infrastructure in regions where national and foreign private capital is invested, particularly in coastal cities like Tangier, Casablanca and Agadir. The rural world remains marginalized.

How is the social movement trying to intervene in this situation?

It is very difficult to talk about a real social movement in our country. The ecological crisis and the resulting natural disasters are absent from the agendas of the movements of struggle in Morocco, in particular their organized sector, the trade unions.

As during the Covid-19 pandemic, the trade-union movement mobilized behind the state under the slogan of national consensus, by refraining from criticizing state policies which exacerbate the effects of natural disasters. The major trade-union centres mobilized to participate in solidarity convoys – on the sidelines of popular solidarity convoys – and to help collect in-kind contributions (food, tents, blankets, etc.). But without any political intervention that would call into question the liberal development model which makes poor populations the main victims of the violence of natural disasters. Furthermore, popular solidarity convoys began spontaneously, notably in the Rif region (northern Morocco), which itself experienced a violent earthquake in 2004, treated by the state with criminal negligence, which triggered a wave of anger and large demonstrations. Convoys then began to arrive from all regions of the country, demonstrating a lack of confidence in the effective intervention of the state to help victims of the earthquake.

This wave of popular solidarity quickly weakened, due to the lack of an organizational structure which could

centralize it and give it a broader horizon than that of simple solidarity. The state has been able to contain it within its official channel through the Earthquake Impact Management Fund. Despotism is always afraid of any popular gesture coming from below, initially tolerated as long as the state can replace it and justify its neoliberal agenda (article 40 of the Constitution of the Kingdom), but it must not exceed its limits to become a space for political debate, asking questions and proposing alternatives.

What is the overall situation of the regime, what analysis do you make of its course and its relations with imperialism?

The Moroccan regime is a disguised dictatorship, dependent and anchored on a social volcano whose pressure is increasing due to the pursuit of neoliberal policies and repression. It benefits from the unwavering support of its imperialist allies: the European Union, the USA and the reactionary Gulf regimes. It serves the interests of imperialism by incurring debts and so-called free trade agreements and opening the country to multinationals to plunder and exploit cheaper labour.

The Moroccan regime also plays a role in the sub-management of migratory flows from Africa to Europe, as well as in the so-called “fight against terrorism” policy. It is linked to the USA by a strategic military partnership embodied in the defence cooperation roadmap 2020-2030, signed in October 2020, during the visit of the American Secretary of Defence to Morocco, as well as by hosting the “African Lion” exercises, the largest joint military training of AFRICOM forces.

The integration of the regime into the imperialist policy of the region has taken on an additional dimension with the accelerated development of economic, security and military relations with the Zionist state since the latter's recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

The monarchy manages and controls the political situation despite the explosive social crisis resulting from the consequences of the free rein given to Capital to over-exploit the

working class, impose a very high level of unemployment and precariousness, destroy the modest public services and take advantage of a wave of unprecedentedly high prices. This control results from the weakening of its political opponents, whether it is the historical bourgeois opposition or part of the Islamist movement (these opponents who always intervene to help it overcome moments of social upheaval and political) and its success in defeating popular *hiraks* (protest movements).

The *hiraks* counterbalanced the negative aspects on the labour scene, where bureaucracy played a destructive role, undermining the potential of the workers' struggle and preventing it from uniting with that of its popular counterpart. Now that the *hiraks* have faded, the state of inactivity has become evident and is strongly reflected in the morale of the vanguard of the struggle.

The regime has stepped up repression against freedom of expression by repressing critical journalists and orchestrating massive dissuasion of oppositional voices on social networks, considered the main source of danger after taking control of the political arena, particularly after the the impact of the consumer goods boycott campaign in 2018, while continuing harassment against the embryos of workers' organization in the private sector.

The regime benefits from its success in defeating the struggles of youth. The so-called reform of university education and the control of the Ministry of the Interior (undermining the student struggle by stirring up "factional violence") completely destroyed the student organization in its historical form. State management of graduate unemployment and the subjective flaws of the unemployed movement, linked to the overall situation of the radical left, caused this movement and all its components to disappear. Its militant impulse is limited to an occasional awakening which quickly fades.

The state also benefits from the deep integration of trade-union bureaucracies, which was very clearly manifested in the social agreement of

April 2022, by which the union leaderships accepted a law de facto prohibiting strikes, a new offensive on pension systems and a revision of the Labour Code, responding to employers' demands for more flexibility.

How does the IMF and World Bank summit fit into this analysis? What were its objectives?

The choice of Morocco to host the annual assemblies of these two institutions, which since their creation in 1944, have only been held once in Africa, in Nairobi in 1973, is a political decision to support the regime and promote its neoliberal "development model".

The World Bank has intervened, since the beginning of the sixties, to support a dependent capitalism established since the colonial era, and to put in place the mechanisms of neo-colonialism through massive debt while strengthening the despotic regime.

For its part, the International Monetary Fund intervened in the early 1980s after the worsening of Morocco's debt crisis and its inability to repay it, and dictated a structural adjustment programme. This liberal programme further increased the debt, opened up the country to capital and goods and permitted the repatriation of profits, particularly with Morocco's accession to the World Trade Organization in the mid-1990s, and the generalization of "free trade".

So, this trio cooperates with the ruling classes to give more opportunities to big foreign and local capital to monopolize the country's wealth and consolidate political despotism. Normalization with Zionism is part of the strategy of imperialism and the regime to accelerate predatory capitalist penetration into the African continent and strengthen the role of Morocco as a gateway to Africa. The Moroccan regime therefore considers that the success of the annual meetings of international financial institutions will bring it political (being a reliable and stable ally) and economic (being an economic gateway to Africa) advantages.

Through the counter-summit we want to show the other side of this neoliberal model: mass unemployment, endemic poverty, marginalization and the poverty in which the majority lives while a minority becomes scandalously rich.

More generally, these two institutions participate in the neocolonialism of the richest countries and exacerbate climate change, to the detriment of the people of the South and the periphery of the North.

The counter-summit aimed to bring together all the components of social movements on a global scale against the financial dictatorship of the IMF-WB, to discuss, from the point of view of the people, the crises of capitalism and the alternatives.

Can you tell us how the counter-summit was organized, what it was used for, its concrete results?

The international counter-summit to the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank held in Marrakech from October 12 to 15, 2023 was a success. It brought together more than 300 representatives of social movements from four continents: Europe, Africa, Asia, and America. Its preparation, which lasted more than eight months, was a collective and democratic process, with monthly expanded meeting at all levels - global, Africa, North Africa and the Middle East/Arab region and Morocco. In the latter, a national coordination of around twenty organizations served as a reception structure and monitored organizational issues on the ground. It was able to overcome the challenges which were aggravated by the terrible earthquake which struck the Marrakech region on September 8 and claimed nearly 3,000 lives. Working groups on the programme, communication and information, and logistics as well as a [site](#) in four languages (Arabic, English, French and Spanish) were set up. An appeal "[Let us raise the voice of social movements](#)", [June 27, 2023](#) and an activity programme were developed jointly.

The counter-summit began on the morning of Thursday, 12 October with

a protest march with more than 500 participants. In addition to slogans against the IMF and the World Bank, the denunciation of Israeli bombings on Gaza and solidarity with the Palestinian people were strongly chanted by the demonstrators. An opening conference was organized in the afternoon on the responsibility of the two institutions in the exacerbation of phenomena of social injustice, inequalities linked to neocolonial power, and the exploitation of the working class, with the speakers Aminata Dramane Traoré (Malian author and activist), Fernanda Melchionna (Brazilian MP, PSOL), Éric Toussaint (spokesperson for CADTM International), and Gilbert Achcar (professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London).

The mornings of Friday 13 October and Saturday 14 October were reserved for workshops: fifty-six workshops in total focusing on analyses to understand the multidimensional and interconnected crises of capitalism (social, food, economic, health, ecological, migratory, warmongering, democratic), on possible alternatives and prospects for mobilization. Plenary conferences in the afternoons contributed to reflection on its crises, financial colonialism, environmental injustice and debt.

The main conclusions of the workshops were presented in the plenary session on the morning of October 15 in the form of recommendations followed by a final declaration "[Marrakech Declaration: 79 years of exploitation and neocolonial destruction of the WB and the IMF, enough is enough!](#)", 17 October 2023. The work of the counter-summit was closed in the afternoon with a plenary conference in memory of Thomas Sankara, for the cancellation of the debt and on what synergies to build between social movements in the South and the North in the context of the new geopolitical situation.

The counter-summit was an opportunity to exchange experiences of struggle and to help the convergence of militant actions against the dictates of multinationals, imperialist powers and international

financial institutions, including the WB and the IMF. Indeed, the interventions of the IMF and the WB are increasingly violent following the worsening of the multidimensional crisis which has affected the world, in particular since 2020. The populations of the South and the North bear the burden of the neoliberal policies and indebtedness imposed by these two institutions through the generalization of austerity, the privatization of public services, the reduction in income, the increase in unemployment, etc. Popular protests are increasingly repressed and democratic freedoms flouted. In this context, the counter-summit relatively revived the hopes of anti-globalization mobilizations against these international financial institutions, hopes that were initiated by the mobilization of September 26, 2000 in Prague, where 5,000 demonstrators marched against the annual meetings of the IMF and the WB.

A part of civil society, marked by its alliance with the regime, adhered to the official propaganda, organized parallel initiatives at the IMF-WB assemblies in Marrakech and tried to sow confusion at the counter-summit. Another initiative, from the Moroccan Social Front, failed to be visible.

The counter-summit directly targeted the IMF and the WB, but also despotism and its alliance with Zionism and imperialism. This is a first initiative of this kind in Morocco since the first intervention of the World Bank in 1962 and that of the IMF in early 1980 which generated three major popular uprisings in 1981, 1984 and 1990. It is a small step in the perspective of anti-imperialism in our country, in the context of the major demonstrations of solidarity with Palestine and against normalization with the Israeli entity, and more broadly across our region (North Africa and the Middle East /Arab region) in the current context marked by the counter-revolution, whose main actors are despotic regimes, imperialist powers, Zionism and fundamentalist reactionary movements. The counter-summit created an anti-IMF-WB social dynamic, particularly in Iraq and Tunisia, and also in Egypt, limited by strong repression. This can help draw

lessons from popular uprisings in the region which were limited to social and political demands that did not directly clash with imperialism, which is the key political element.

It is in this spirit that the Al Mounadilaa current issued the call "[Against international financial institutions, instruments of imperialist domination, Against dependence on neo-colonialism, For the right of peoples to their sovereignty](#)" for a political dynamic against imperialist institutions in parallel and in support of the summit of social movements against the IMF-WB assemblies. Meetings were held with some left-wing organizations in Tunisia and Iraq. We organized an international conference on the crises of capitalism and ecosocialist alternatives on 11 October, with the participation of around a hundred people.

Much work still remains to be done to build a working-class and popular centre of struggle against despotism and imperialism and to overcome the dominant sectarianism in radical left organizations in Morocco and the region.

Popular demonstrations in Morocco against Israeli aggression on Gaza

Since the start of the Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, demonstrations have continued in several towns and villages in Morocco. The slogans focus on the need for emergency aid to the victims, an end to the bombings and to normalization with the Zionist entity.

On October 20, 2023, more than 114 towns and villages saw marches in response to the call of the Moroccan Front for Support of Palestine and Against Normalization (which includes left-wing political parties, political

Islam associations and also liberals). The Front has already called a national popular march in the capital, Rabat, on October 15 in which tens of thousands of people participated.

The Democratic Confederation of Labour also called for a one-hour work stoppage. Students from several universities also demonstrated for Gaza.

Normalization of the Moroccan regime with the Zionist entity

The Moroccan regime has historically maintained benevolent relations with the Zionist entity, with secret security, economic and political cooperation agreements. The latter are maintained by a strong presence of Jews of Moroccan origin who emigrated to Israel (around 600,000 people) and by the role of the regime in the imperialist strategy in the region.

King Hassan II officially received Shimon Peres on July 21, 1986. A liaison office was opened in Rabat in 1994. It was closed on October 23, 2000 following a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation announcing that Morocco took this decision due to "the failure of the peace process following the inhumane acts committed in recent weeks by Israeli forces against the unarmed Palestinian people and their use of a military machine to kill innocent civilians ." In 2003, Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom met

with Mohammed VI in Morocco. On December 10, 2020, Israel and Morocco agreed to establish full diplomatic relations, under the auspices of the USA, which will in return recognize Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara. It is true that this latest normalization aroused less popular anger because of its link with the Sahara issue, generally used by the regime as a blackmail card. The continuation of Israeli aggression and the intensification of its violence fuel popular anger, which in the long run will exert more pressure on the regime to review its normalization with the Zionist entity to avoid the expansion and radicalization of the popular movement in an anti-imperialist perspective.

The mobilizing role of the Palestinian question in local struggles

The Palestinian cause has played an important role in rallying many generations to social struggles. The wave of radicalization of youth that the world experienced in the 1960s coincided in our region with the shock of the defeat in 1967 of the armies of the Arab regimes against the Israeli army. A new left emerged outside of the nationalist and Stalinist communist parties. On the other hand, the influence of fundamentalist reactionary movements has continued to increase since the 1980s. However,

this does not deny the fact that the Palestinian question remains a factor which fuels the struggles in our countries, pushing the people, and on the front line youth, to join the movement of struggle for the liberation of Palestine and against the regimes which participate in the strategies of imperialism.

The calls by regimes in the region to stop the war against Gaza come rather from their fear of this wave of popular solidarity with Palestine, which could encourage a questioning of their complicity with the Zionist enemy.

Reactionary fundamentalist movements in our region benefit politically from widespread popular anger in support of the Palestinian struggle because of their organizational strength and because the largest factions leading the Palestinian struggle belong to the same ideological and political school. This allowed them to come back in force after major setbacks since 2013, with the defeat of their largest organization, represented by the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt, the collapse of the regime of Omar Al-Bashir in Sudan, the involvement of religious militias in crimes against the Syrian people, Hezbollah's opposition to the Lebanese people after the Tishreen uprising and the role of sectarian militias against the Iraqi Intifada. The radical left must join popular solidarity movements, present internationalist perspectives to the Palestinian question, and mobilize in global campaigns to break down reactionary alternatives to the Palestinian question that only worsen human tragedy.

Auto Workers Strike Wins Victory that Could Transform the U.S. Labor Movement

6 November 2023, by Dan La Botz

This strike has four significant results. First, in terms of wages, it will raise

the wages of the 150,000 unionized auto workers by at least 25 percent

over the next four-and-a-half years. It will also raise second and third tier

workers to the same level as their co-workers, meaning a wage increase of more than 150 percent for some. Many temporary workers will become permanent employees. The new contract also restores the cost-of-living adjustment lost in 2008, which could lead to an additional 5 to 10 percent wage increase. By the end of the contract, auto workers will make \$82,000 per year, perhaps as much as \$100,000 with profit-sharing, bonuses and overtime. Auto workers will be significantly better off financially than they have been in decades.

Second, the UAW encroached on what are usually corporate prerogatives regarding investments. It made demands on the corporations that should protect union members as the industry makes the transition from internal combustion engines to electric vehicles. Ford and GM workers at new battery plants that the companies are building in Tennessee, Ohio, and Michigan will be covered by the union contract. And the union got Stellantis to reopen a plant in Belvidere, Illinois that it had closed last year.

Third, the strike also had political dimensions, strengthening the Democrats ties to the union. Senator Bernie Sanders joined Shawn Fain at a rally where he declared the UAW was waging a strike against “corporate greed and to tell the people on top, this country belongs to all of us not just a few.” In September in Michigan President Joe Biden became the first chief executive ever to join workers on a picket line. He did so to support the UAW strikers, to help achieve his green transition embodied in his trillion-dollar Inflation Reduction Act, and to compete with Donald Trump for workers’ votes. Biden said the new contract would, “reward autoworkers who gave up much to keep the industry working and going during the global financial crisis more than a decade ago.”

Finally, the UAW’s victory positions it to organize the non-union plants that produce half of all cars made in the United States. Toyota, Mazda, Honda, Volkswagen, Volvo, BMW, Mercedes and Hyundai have all been hiring more

workers. The UAW has already announced it is launching campaigns to organize Toyota and Elon Musk’s electric Tesla. Toyota in response increased its workers’ wages, though less than the UAW contract would have.

For forty years, U.S. labor unions, especially unions of industrial workers, hardly struck at all. Union leaders—partners with the corporations, bureaucratic, and, like the old UAW leadership, sometimes corrupt—negotiated concessions that gave away workers’ wages, health care benefits, pensions, and power in the workplace. Workers felt economically cheated, alienated from their jobs and their unions, and deeply demoralized. Now the UAW has vindicated the strike as labor’s most important weapon. UAW president Shawn Fain declared the union was striking not just for auto workers but for the whole working class against the billionaire class. And this strike does seem to have opened a much bigger battle for workers’ power.

5 November 2023

The noose tightens in Sudan

5 November 2023, by Luiza Toscano

At the beginning of October, it was estimated 9,000 people had been killed and 16,000 wounded. [23] The figures, which are constantly changing, must be taken with caution. The figures given by the UN are usually those of the Sudanese Ministry of Health, which counts deaths recorded by hospitals, and are therefore lower than the figures mentioned above. It is estimated that, of Sudan’s 45 million inhabitants, more than 7 million have been displaced, 4.3 million of them in the aftermath of the conflict. At the outbreak of the war, the country was also hosting one million displaced people from South Sudan, Eritrea, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Syria.

As of 9 October, 1,105,791 people had fled the country, the majority of them to Chad, but also to South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, CAR and Libya, 67% of whom were Sudanese, according to the International Organization for Migration. [24]

The uncounted victims of this conflict are women who have been gang-raped, kidnapped or disappeared. Prisons and secret detention centres count inmates in the thousands. Many schools are no longer functioning, with dozens of them serving as shelters for the displaced. 19 million children are out of school. [25]

Dozens of hospitals have been bombed and many health facilities are now functioning only on the voluntary basis

of civilians, but there is a lack of clean water, medicine and trained personnel. Deadly epidemics of cholera, dengue fever and malaria are spreading, as well as childhood measles. [26]

It should be added that in this country, where the eastern regions are spared by conflict, the economy and agriculture have been devastated: these six months have seen episodes of drought, then floods, which have led humanitarian agencies to speak of the risk of famine for half of the country’s inhabitants. To this must be added those who died of hunger, due to the military siege of localities. The recent floods in Nile State pose a health risk to the population, as the

water carries the mercury used for gold mining. [27]

Towards a de facto partition?

In mid-September, the UN special envoy for Sudan, Volker Perthes, resigned, warning of a risk of “civil war.” While this resignation is not a great loss, as the envoy focused his efforts on negotiations that included counter-revolutionary forces and neglected the Resistance Committees that refused to negotiate with the forces that emerged from the 2021 coup, his warnings reflect a total blindness. “Civil war” is not a “risk” but a reality. In the west of the country, in Darfur, where the RSF is concentrated, the massacres of non-Arab populations, particularly the Masalit, began last June. And the call for the mobilization of the RSF has met with a positive echo among Arab tribes. When we know that the RSF are the heirs of the Janjaweed militias who have to their credit an ethnic cleansing that has left 300,000 dead (again not counting the rapes) and two million displaced in Darfur since 2003, this is not a hypothesis. In 2010, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for then President Omar al-Bashir, including charges of genocide. [28]

The evolution of the conflict is redrawing the map of the forces involved, which could suggest a partition of the country: Khartoum, the capital, is the object of fierce daily fighting: the RSF, which does not have an air force, has managed to conquer several areas and the capital is under bombardment by the SAF. In western Sudan, the RSF is hegemonic on ethnic grounds. The east of the country is controlled by the SAF. In the south, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) forces have taken advantage of the conflict to launch offensives since the summer in

South Kordofan and Blue Nile. While the latter two regions have in turn experienced serious social problems (lack of schooling, health and rising prices) since the SPLM went to war against the SAF, this third actor has only a marginal role compared to the other two.

Indeed, the al-Burhan/Hemedti war is not only local: it would have already ended for lack of ammunition or weapons. The former is supported by Egypt, Qatar, Turkey and the latter by the forces of Marshal Haftar (eastern Libya) and the United Arab Emirates. The war has become internationalized, with the Wagner militias having always supported Hemedti, while in response, Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian president, met with Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Ireland on September 23, implicitly confirming the rumours of attacks, filmed on social networks, by Ukrainian FPV (immersion piloting by ignited camera) drones against the RSF. Lavrov met with al-Burhan and Hemedti on 9 February. Sudan is, after Algeria, the second largest importer of Russian arms in Africa and there is talk of finally establishing a Russian naval base on the Red Sea in Port Sudan. Nor is it in Russia’s interest to support one over the other too much, but rather to maintain good relations with both, in order to preserve, whoever wins, its access to the country’s gold mining areas. Thus, the conflict will drag on, or lead to an East-West partition, completing ethnic cleansing in the West.

Forgotten populations

In any case, if no political solution is possible, humanitarian interventions are in turn blocked by the fighting, or non-existent. Thus, at no time was there an airlift or evacuation envisaged, or even discussed to exfiltrate populations as was the case for Iraqis in 2015 or Afghans in

2021, although these latest initiatives were selective and limited.

Fleeing to neighbouring countries is not a solution: nearly half a million people live in Chad’s camps with difficulties in accessing water, food and medical care. They are demonstrating for their rights, as they did in Iridimi on 30 September, to obtain unexpired food. [29] Egypt has set limits: only women and girls, and men under the age of 16 and over 50 can enter, but with valid passports. Other men have to apply for visas and are met with a lot of refusals. Ethiopia requires entry visas for African Union nationals. Only South Sudan does not require visas or resources, but there is little assistance at the crossing point and the region itself is unsafe. All that remains is escaping with smugglers. During the floods in Derna, Libya, 155 Sudanese died, not to mention the missing. [30]

France closed its diplomatic representation in Sudan in April, forcing those who can travel to neighbouring countries, such as Ethiopia, which requires an entry visa. The French embassy in Khartoum, before closing, destroyed all the passports of Sudanese in search of visas, in a decision it considers “inevitable,” locking up those who had wanted to flee a country at war. The U.S. has reportedly done the same and many European and other embassies have not responded to passport holders. A Sudanese refugee in France had applied for family reunification for her two minor daughters. The latter were stranded in Sudan following the destruction of their passports by France and their mother did not succeed in getting the French authorities to issue them a pass, although they are supported by several associations, at the end of a legal marathon that ended last July.

October 2023

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

“We need to consolidate the path of democratization”

4 November 2023, by **Sumaila Jaló**

In what political, social and economic context did the parliamentary elections in Guinea-Bissau last June take place?

Last June's elections took place in an exceedingly difficult context of deeply violent authoritarianism. A dictatorship has been in place since 27 February 2020, entering its fourth year. The unilateral accession of the current President Umaro Sissoco Embaló to the presidency took place before the electoral dispute had been settled by the Supreme Court. Since then, and especially until the June elections, Guinea-Bissau has experienced a climate of political persecution of opponents of the president and his political sensibilities, with kidnappings and beatings of citizens who do not align with his authoritarianism or who oppose his dictatorship and that of his political family, as well as the total dysfunction of the public administration. The clearest example is that from 2019 (this is a legacy of the previous government) until 2022, public schools simply did not work in Guinea-Bissau. In other words, we had three years of invalid schooling. And our health system, which was already profoundly weak, became chaotic under the regime of Umaro Sissoco Embaló.

To give you an idea, during the pandemic, from 2020, when more cases of Covid-19 infection began to appear in Guinea-Bissau, and until the end of 2022, instead of using health centres, hospitals, and the health system to mitigate the spread of the pandemic and protect the population, the security forces were used to repress citizens, especially women – who are the basis of the national economy through their informal activities in the various markets of our country – by denying them access to

the places where they carry out their activity for the sustenance of their families. The police were everywhere, especially in the cities, in the most urban areas, chasing people, denying them activities essential to their survival. This persecution generated a wave of famine, which also ended up accentuating the spread of the pandemic itself throughout the country, and aggravating other forms of disease that the very weak health system was already fighting with few resources.

In the wake of the pandemic, attempts have been made to excuse the regime's inability to resolve the demands of state schoolteachers who, since 2019, have been demanding unpaid salaries. Hundreds of teachers were removed from the education system on the grounds that the government could no longer afford to hire them and pay their salaries. We are talking about a context where there are localities in the interior of the country where schools are simply not functioning, due to a lack of teachers. In other words, even if those hundreds of teachers had stayed in the system, we would still have localities without teachers and schools with closed doors because there is a shortage of professionals. It is in these circumstances that the state withdraws teachers from the system, on the pretext that there are not enough funds to pay their salaries. At the same time, the state itself continues to train teachers, so that they find themselves unemployed and in a situation of precariousness, unemployment and total abandonment.

It was in this situation, with all these difficulties and while the country was ruled by a violent dictatorial regime, that the last elections were held in June.

But it is necessary to make a parenthesis and say that the electoral system in Guinea-Bissau, despite all the difficulties faced by the country, is a relatively secure system, and the elections are monitored by electoral observers such as the European Union, the African Union, the CPLP and other international observers. Although the latter have a habit of shirking their responsibility to take clear positions on the various attempts that may be made to jeopardize the electoral truth, the fact remains that they have a significant role to play in the electoral process. If this check is done correctly, it is difficult to falsify the results of the popular vote, as the system is designed in such a way that the process is monitored from start to finish.

It was in this context that we participated in the elections, in which the people gave a strong response against the parties that supported the government of Umaro Sissoco Embaló.

Before I talk about the elections themselves, I would like to address a point. Along with the impoverishment of the population, there is an elite that is concentrated around Umaro Sissoco Embaló and feeds on corruption networks. Is the institutionalization of corruption also a feature of this regime?

In Guinea-Bissau, corruption has not been institutionalized by this president or this regime. It is the whole political system that is rotten. It is the entire political system that is riddled with clientelism, corruption and other evils that prevent public resources from being channelled towards building opportunities for a more dignified life for the Guinean population.

The coming to power of the current president and his political family has exacerbated corruption. At his side are Guinea-Bissau's most perverse politicians and businesspeople. People accused of other forms of crime, such as drug trafficking, participation in coups d'état that have already taken place in the country and the looting of the public treasury itself, because these are people who have always had access to public positions that also allow them to have the means to draw on the public treasury to feed their dividends.

This political family, which is particularly perverse, supports the president and does not hesitate to use all repressive mechanisms to stay in power and ensure the continuity of the harmful practices of the political system. These impede the country's progress and political transformations that have a real impact on the structures of the state and on people's lives.

You talk about national interests. But are there also foreign interests involved today?

Yes, there are also foreign interests. Guinea-Bissau is part of a community dominated by the former French colonies. And this community is the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), where France has a free hand by imposing a currency, the CFA franc, whose exchange value is controlled by France. In other words, the West African subregion uses a currency that is French and whose dividends serve France's finances and interests more than those of the countries of the subregion. We are fighting to change this, and it is not yet clear to what extent we have managed to take this domination away from France.

But there are other interests as well. Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde are two West African countries that belong to the community of Portuguese-speaking countries. I am speaking of official Portuguese, because this language is not spoken in Guinea-Bissau, let alone in Cape Verde. This community is dominated by Portugal, a country that has used this space for its geopolitical and diplomatic interests, and which takes

refuge in the use of the official Portuguese language in these structures to impose Portuguese domination in a subjective but very marked and present way, even influencing the orientations of power. For example, the consolidation of Umaro Sissoco Embaló's regime was only possible with the participation of the Portuguese state. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and António Costa [the Portuguese president and prime minister] made it possible for Umaro Sissoco Embaló to make several trips, even though the electoral dispute was pending before the Supreme Court of Justice. Umaro Sissoco Embaló's trips to Portugal, official visits to Portugal and the visits of the prime minister and president of Portugal to Guinea-Bissau, between 2021 and 2022, have contributed to restoring the image of this dictator at the international level and legitimizing him in the eyes of international bodies that were hesitant to position themselves in the face of Umaro Sissoco Embaló's unilateral accession to the presidency.

So, this dictator doesn't seem to be bothering French or Portuguese interests. Can we put it this way?

It is precisely because its presence and permanence in power gives these countries greater access to the instrumentalization of Guinea-Bissau for their interests, not only economic, especially on the part of France, but also geopolitical, in the case of Portugal.

What were the repercussions of the Guinean people's dissatisfaction with the current situation on the last parliamentary elections, and what was the role of youth in particular?

Since 2012, Guinea-Bissau has undergone interesting social transformations in the field of youth political engagement, through social movements of various kinds. I am talking, for example, of artistic movements including rap musicians who in their songs denounce the situation of poverty and precariousness in which the people live, directly and objectively blaming the corrupt political class that through all these years has taken power to oppress the people. Or movements

related to the visual arts, with murals that not only connect the present to the past, through a dialogue established with the heroes of the struggle for the independence of Guinea-Bissau, but also highlight examples of the struggle for social transformations that have an impact on the lives of the population.

But I am also talking about politically organized social movements, unrelated to political parties, because they do not recognize themselves in the programs of the parties that make up the national political system. Through street demonstrations, social networks and protests in the media, in the Guinean diasporas and in Guinea-Bissau itself, especially in the city of Bissau where most of the political and public protests are concentrated - these movements denounce the system and offer a new way to take action for power to be truly popular, and for this popular power to be exercised for the benefit of the people. Among these social movements, three of them, which are very much present, are student movements, not in higher education, but in primary and secondary education.

There are also women's and feminist initiatives. Women's movements that, starting with the National People's Congress, fight for women's space in politics and have even obtained a parity law that allows political parties to require that at least 36% of their candidates for the position of deputy be women. Although the latent patriarchy in the political system has prevented the adoption of measures to make this requirement mandatory and has deprived the parity law of its most transformative part (which could have had a greater impact on women's presence in politics), it is an important step towards a greater presence of women in politics and in decision-making that changes their status as subaltern persons.

Another priority for women, more prevalent among 20-30-year-olds, concerns issues such as domestic violence, harassment in public spaces, the freedom for women to participate in public life on an equal footing with men, and for men to assume the same parenting tasks, social duties and responsibilities as women, including

within the family space. It is a struggle in several directions that has gradually led to deconstructions and new constructions in the direction of a more just and egalitarian society.

All this is relayed by social movements and by people who, on the basis of these social movements, express themselves in the direction of a new political and social configuration in Guinea-Bissau. It is an ongoing struggle that, if it continues, could bring positive and profoundly progressive changes in Guinea-Bissau towards what Amílcar Cabral and his comrades dreamed of, and which was the basis of their mobilizations for the struggle for independence. I mention Cabral to say that this is not something new, we did not invent it today, it is a continuation of a struggle knowing its ideological basis and knowing the complexity of the national context, which is also part of a difficult international context.

What do we expect from the election results and what is the risk of a political and constitutional crisis, given that the president does not seem willing to accept regime change?

The state of Guinea-Bissau is not democratic. If we analyse it in all its social, political, cultural and other aspects, it is not a democratic state. But what is at stake is whether we choose the path of democratization, a process we began in 1991 and which still has a long way to go, or whether we choose the path of stagnation, of institutionalizing fear and deeply retrograde ideas – which would prevent this process of democratization.

The two political camps do not offer any real guarantees. Within the political elite vying for power, there is a less reactionary sensibility with which democratization can be discussed. It was more or less this sensibility that won the parliamentary elections in June. But as long as the other, more reactionary sensibility with more retrograde ideals continues to occupy the presidency of the Republic, we run the risk that the possibility of a struggle for democratization, alongside the less reactionary sensibility, will be

interrupted and that we will return to the situation of the last three years, from which we have not quite emerged. That is why the next presidential election will be crucial.

Beyond a less reactionary version of the current government, beyond this version that allows for another form of public debate on the country's priorities in social, cultural and political terms, and on agendas for major transformations in the lives of Guineans, there is a primordial issue, and that is the next presidential election.

This election will be fundamental to consolidate the return to the path of democratization. If we emerge from this election with a president from the least reactionary faction, we will return to the path of healthy debates and confrontations within a framework of democratization with a lesser degree of state violence against those who disagree, those who oppose, those who indicate other paths in a democratic and peaceful way. If we continue with the most reactionary version in the presidency, we are jeopardizing the framework of government that began in June with the victory of the coalition of the least reactionary faction in the legislative elections.

That is why the upcoming presidential elections are crucial. Everything we do, all the conquests, big or small, accumulated up to the presidential election will be jeopardized if we continue with the current president after the elections, which will take place next year.

You emphasize that the electoral framework is fundamental in this conflict. But isn't social mobilization, the struggle taking place in the streets of the country, essential for this political change?

It's fundamental. And these movements are becoming increasingly politicized. These are movements that came into being with the aim of responding to the demands of the moment. And as they progress, they discover that there is a bigger problem, that there is an outdated political system that needs to be confronted. Some of these movements

are already moving towards this increasing politicization, which involves understanding that women's demands will not be resolved if the political space is dominated by patriarchal and sexist sensitivities. And also, that changes in the education sector will not happen if the most reactionary version of the political system remains in power.

There is also the question of consolidating Guinean identity itself, which is particularly important in a context where several identities exist in the public space. Amílcar Cabral and his companions did not imagine the dynamics of identity construction by chance. They did not propose the unity of Guineans as a formula to then legitimize unity with Cape Verde, as many tend to say. It is a unity between different ethnic identities which, if they do not unify, jeopardize the Guinea-Bissau project. In fact, the current president is openly doing everything he can to undermine this project, adopting discourses of identity division in the political arena and assuming that a part of the population can keep him in power and guarantee that he will remain there, according to his religious and ethnic sympathies. This opens the door to a problem that Guinea-Bissau did not have before: conflicts between these identities that then lead to the kind of radicalism that occurs especially in Guinea-Bissau's neighbouring sub-region countries: Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mali and so on.

Therefore, these social movements, I would say, face the challenge of becoming increasingly politicized. But at the moment, this politicization must not be done through partisanship. Partisanship is not a crime, and it would be a way forward if there were a party with the same program, with the same progressive ideals and with the goal of transforming society towards more justice and equality. As long as such a party does not exist, politicization must take place within these movements and in the dynamics of the struggle.

We will soon see what happens in political terms, but the assumption of this political bias is fundamental. The transformations that we are demanding, all the women's

transformations, the social transformations, in terms of education and health, employability and employment of a predominantly young

population, social justice and equality in Guinea-Bissau will never happen if we do not have people and institutions at the head of state that give priority

to these goals.

17 September 2023

Translated from [Esquerda.net](https://www.esquerda.net).

Netanyahu will have to pay the price for hubris

3 November 2023, by **Michel Warschawski**

On 7 October 2023, Israel was once again surprised, this time by thousands of Hamas militants from Gaza, who broke down the fence encircling their territory, entering Israeli territory and committing bloody attacks that left more than a thousand dead; the Gazans also managed to kidnap several hundred hostages and bring them back to their own territory, which they brought back to their territory and which will probably be used in a future exchange of prisoners.

The common denominator between these two events has a name in classical Greek: hubris, i.e. blindness caused by an excess of power, or apparent power. Shortly before the 1973 war, General Moshe Dayan boasted that Israel had given itself the means to impose a "no war, no peace" for the next hundred years (sic). Fifty years later Benjamin Netanyahu and the thugs who surround him were convinced that the two million Gazans would accept the siege imposed on them imposed on them for over 15 years by simply launching the occasional rather primitive rockets. This time it is thousands of civilians who are paying the price, particularly in the localities that belong to the so-called "Gaza envelope".

It has often been repeated: Gaza is a pressure cooker under which the fire of Israeli aggression burns permanently, and is undergoing a barbaric siege, in which the Egyptian authorities are participating. Sooner or later the pressure cooker will explode. "The best intelligence

services in the world" (as we already saw in 1973!) never saw it coming: they too were trapped by hubris.

Hubris and corruption: because beyond the political blindness, the Netanyahu regime is also characterized by an unprecedented level of corruption. The Prime Minister, his wife and his rogue son (sent into luxury exile on the other side of the Atlantic at the express request of Netanyahu's personal security), love money and luxury. They are surrounded by millionaires who shower them with gifts, in exchange, of course, for services rendered. Not to mention the astronomical budgets for the religious parties and their institutions in exchange for their unwavering political support.

And the crack up. Twice recently Israelis have been able to see and hear Netanyahu on television: he's not the same man. The man who was considered to be the most effective in Israeli politics was a shadow of his former self, a man who was frightened. Some journalists, generally well-informed, no longer hesitate to speak in medical terms. Let's not forget: the Prime Minister is under indictment for three corruption scandals and there is a real risk of suffering the same fate as his distant predecessor Ehud Olmert (who went to prison for corruption). If it had not been for the pressure from his wife Sara and the rogue, it seems that Netanyahu was prepared to accept a deal with the public prosecutor to plead guilty in exchange for a lighter

sentence and retire from politics.

Netanyahu knows full well that once the current war is over, the establishment of a national commission of enquiry will be the main demand of the mass movement which, before the current crisis, mobilised against his corruption. This movement has not disappeared, but for the time being it has recycled itself in taking care of the displaced people in the "Gaza envelope". Because there too, the Netanyahu state was totally absent, and it was civil society that took charge of the tens of thousands of displaced people, their material needs psychological support and children's education.

The civilian population of Gaza is paying a colossal price for having dared to defy Israeli colonialism. What the Israeli army has been committing for a month now belongs in the category of crimes against humanity. The State of Israel and its rulers will have to answer to the international courts, as will their accomplices, from Joe Biden to Emmanuel Macron.

Even if the rage of the people of Gaza has claimed many civilian (and therefore innocent) Israeli victims, it must be said loud and clear that they were driven to this extreme reaction by a barbaric siege, thus confirming an old lesson from history of history: the barbarity of the oppressor often rubs off on the oppressed and the oppressed and barbarizes them in turn. This is yet another crime to be blamed on of the Israeli colonial occupier.

Ukrainian Letter of Solidarity with Palestinian people

2 November 2023, by **Collective**

As activists committed to freedom, human rights, democracy and social justice, and while fully acknowledging power differentials, we firmly condemn attacks on civilian populations – be they Israelis attacked by Hamas or Palestinians attacked by the Israeli occupation forces and armed settler gangs. Deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime. Yet this is no justification for the [collective punishment](#) of Palestinian people, identifying all residents of Gaza with Hamas and the [indiscriminate use of the term “terrorism”](#) applied to the whole Palestinian resistance. Nor is this a justification of continuation of the ongoing occupation. Echoing multiple UN resolutions, we know that there will be no lasting peace without justice for the Palestinian people.

On October 7 we witnessed Hamas' violence against the civilians in Israel, an event that is now singled out by many to demonize and dehumanize Palestinian resistance altogether. Hamas, a reactionary islamist organization, needs to be seen in a wider historical context and decades of Israel encroaching on Palestinian land, long before this organization came to exist in the late 1980s. During the Nakba (“catastrophe”) of 1948, more than 700,000 Palestinians were brutally displaced from their homes, with [entire villages massacred and destroyed](#). Since its creation Israel has never stopped pursuing its [colonial expansion](#). The Palestinians were forced to exile, fragmented and administered under different regimes. Some of them are Israeli citizens affected by structural discrimination and racism. Those living in the occupied West Bank are subjected to apartheid under decades of Israel's

military control. The people of the Gaza Strip have suffered from the blockade imposed by Israel since 2006, which restricted movement of people and goods, resulting in growing poverty and deprivation.

Since the 7th of October and at the time of writing the death toll in the Gaza Strip is more than [8,500 people](#). [Women and children-<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/1...>]> <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-18-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-Jerusalem>] people have been injured. In recent days, Israel has bombed schools, residential areas, Greek Orthodox Church and several hospitals. Israel has also cut all water, electricity, and fuel supply in the Gaza Strip. There is a severe shortage of food and medicine, causing a total collapse of [a healthcare system](#).

Our solidarity comes from a place of anger at the injustice, and a place of deep pain of knowing the devastating impacts of occupation, shelling of civil infrastructure, and humanitarian blockade from experiences in our homeland. Parts of Ukraine have been occupied since 2014, and the international community failed to stop Russian aggression then, ignoring the imperial and colonial nature of the armed violence, which consequently escalated on the 24th of February 2022. Civilians in Ukraine are shelled daily, in their homes, in hospitals, on bus stops, in queues for bread. As a result of the Russian occupation, thousands of people in Ukraine live without access to water, electricity or heating, and it is the most vulnerable groups that are mostly affected by the destruction of critical infrastructure.

In the months of the siege and heavy bombardment of Mariupol there was no humanitarian corridor. Watching the Israeli targeting the civilian infrastructure in Gaza, the Israeli humanitarian blockade and occupation of land resonates especially painfully with us. From this place of pain of experience and solidarity, we call on our fellow Ukrainians globally and all the people to raise their voices in support of the Palestinian people and condemn the ongoing Israeli mass ethnic cleansing.

We reject the Ukrainian government [statements](#) that express unconditional support for Israel's military actions, and we consider *the calls to avoid civilian casualties by Ukraine's MFA*-><https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/comment-mfa-ukraine-adoption-united-nations-general-assembly-resolution-protection-civilians-and-upholding-legal-and-humanitarian-obligations>] *belated and insufficient. This position is a retreat from the support of Palestinian rights and condemnation of the Israeli occupation, which Ukraine has followed for decades, including voting in the UN.* Aware of the pragmatic geopolitical reasoning behind Ukraine's decision to echo Western allies, on whom we are dependent for our survival, we see the current support of Israel and dismissing Palestinian right to self-determination as contradictory to Ukraine's own commitment to human rights and fight for our land and freedom. We as Ukrainians should stand in solidarity not with the oppressors, but with those who experience and resist the oppression.

We strongly object to equating of Western military aid to Ukraine and Israel by some politicians. Ukraine

doesn't occupy the territories of other people, instead, it fights against the Russian occupation, and therefore international assistance serves a just cause and the protection of international law. Israel has occupied and annexed Palestinian and Syrian territories, and Western aid to it confirms an unjust order and demonstrates double standards in relation to international law.

We oppose the new wave of Islamophobia, such as the brutal [murder](#) of a Palestinian American 6-year old and assault on his family in Illinois, USA, and the equating of any criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. At the same time, we also oppose holding all Jewish people all over the world accountable for the politics of the state of Israel and we condemn

anti-Semitic violence, such as the

[mob attack](#)

- We call on the Israeli government to immediately stop attacks on civilians, and provide humanitarian aid; we insist on an immediate and indefinite lifting of siege on Gaza and an urgent relief operation to restore civilian infrastructure. We also call on the Israeli government to put an end to the occupation and recognise the right of Palestinian displaced people to return to their lands.

- We call on the Ukrainian government to condemn the use of state sanctioned terror and humanitarian blockade against the

Gazan civilian population and reaffirm the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. We also call on the Ukrainian government to condemn deliberate assaults on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

- We call on the international media to stop pitting Palestinians and Ukrainians against each other, where hierarchies of suffering perpetuate racist rhetoric and dehumanize those under attack.

We have witnessed the world uniting in solidarity for the people of Ukraine and we call on everyone to do the same for the people of Palestine.

2 November 2023

Source [Commons](#). Follow the link to see the signatures and sign.

The Left is Underestimating the Danger of the Extreme Right

1 November 2023, by [Martín Mosquera](#)

It is difficult to overstate the political upheaval arising from the August 13 primary election. Furthermore, it is not easy to capture all its dimensions. Firstly, the extreme right was left at the gates of power. What seemed impossible now seems inevitable. An almost non-existent political force, which does not have a party structure, provincial candidates, senators or governors, achieved a surprising position in a political system designed to prevent the entry of outside forces. And yet to reduce the earthquake of August 13 to the irruption of Javier Milei would be to underestimate the magnitude of the changes underway. As is often the case, it is only the symptom ("morbid", to use the usual expression) of tectonic changes that are not immediately detectable.

Javier Milei's performance is closely related to what is probably the fundamental event of this situation: the crisis of Peronism, the celestial body around which the Argentine

political system has orbited since 1945. Peronism is a party unlike any other. Its social capillarity, its mimesis with the structures of the State, its territorial networks (militant or clientelist), its link with the labour movement and social movements, make it a political force of rarely seen resilience. Between 1946 and 1983 it never lost an election in which it ran (that is, in which it was not banned). Whenever it was able to run as a unified slate in presidential elections, its electoral result was always around 40%. In the current framework of primary elections, its most modest result was in 2015 when it reached 38% of the votes, however on that occasion it competed with another Peronist list that reached 14%. On August 13, it went to the polls unified (but divided into two internal lists, which probably avoided a greater fall) and its share of the vote was reduced to 27%. For the first time, Peronism is about to lose its majority in the Senate and is ceding control of governorates

historically considered its strongholds (Santa Cruz, San Juan and Chaco are notable examples).

In the face of each of the great crises that the country has experienced since the democratic restoration (1989, 2001, 2019), Peronism appeared as the "party of order", being capable of limiting the collapse of the state and restoring governability. Due to this specific capability, a crisis of Peronism of this magnitude is in itself, to a certain extent, a crisis of the State.

Nevertheless, the impact of the changes that are taking place is not limited to Peronism. The traditional right, which was self-confident, preparing to receive power within the framework of a conventional electoral alternation, is now facing its own possible collapse. In the primary for Juntos por el Cambio [JxC or Together for Change], Patricia Bullrich, the candidate with the most aggressive adjustment programme and the one

who openly supported the use of repression against social mobilisation, was the winner. If it were not for the emergence of Milei, she would be the one who would rightly monopolise attention: for the first time since the return to democracy, a majority party presented a candidate with an openly far-right orientation. However, JxC experienced an electoral setback compared to the extremely bad election of 2019, at the end of Macri's term. The right, which hoped to return to power, is now closer to an internal crisis than to obtaining government, and is at risk of being excluded from the second round whilst facing internal divisions.

Finally, the August 13 election marked the highest abstention rate in the history of presidential elections, with 69% of the registered electorate participating. The level of absenteeism increased by more than 6 points compared to the 2019 election, a volume of voters that could be decisive in the final result.

In the context of a probable organic crisis of the State, according to the term that Gramsci coined in the 1930s, the coming to power of the extreme right would raise the possibility of realising what the social power relations of the previous period had failed to achieve: neoliberal shock therapy that would decisively break the social block against the adjustment that was imposed after 2001. This situation could give rise to a "Caesarist" solution, following Gramsci's terminology, which seeks to unblock the social deadlock that we are experiencing through a solution of force.

The economy and its discontents

Although there would be much to analyse around the sociological changes in the working class, the ideological impact of the pandemic or the tendencies towards the individualisation of the workforce, there is a more obvious explanation for current events: the long phase of stagnation that has affected Argentine capitalism since 2011-2012, which became a recession and open crisis

starting in 2018. Throughout an extensive inflationary process, the purchasing power of salaries in Argentina decreased 25% between December 2017 and 2023, with this reduction being even more marked among informal workers. Although the most critical point of this decline was recorded in 2018 during the Macri government, the Peronist government continued the downward trend and worsened the gap between formal and informal workers, a difference that became more pronounced since the pandemic.

This period also saw the destruction of formal private employment and an increase in informal employment. That is, informal workers saw their purchasing power decrease while occupying an increasingly significant segment of the global workforce. This new socio-labour panorama especially makes Peronism crack, as an official party at a time of crisis and by damaging its own social base through the various adjustment measures it is implementing. This continuous deterioration in the material life of the working class, produced in a period that involved governments of the two major political coalitions, has laid the foundations for a growing social unrest that finally transformed into a general crisis of representation.

It is likely that we are heading towards an organic crisis of the State. Gramsci used this term to illustrate a symptom of a general hegemonic crisis: a radical rupture of the ties between representatives and represented. Although the collapse of support for traditional parties may be the most visible sign of an organic crisis, it tends to expand to all mediations of civil society. As this crisis deepens, it leads to a decline in the ability of the ruling classes to maintain their leadership through conventional means. However, in a crisis of this type there is an asymmetric relationship in terms of the capacity for intervention between the dominant classes and the subordinate classes, which is only compensated in exceptional situations of mass offensive. According to Gramsci:

The various strata of the population do not have the same capacity to orient themselves quickly and to reorganise themselves at the same pace. The traditional ruling classes, which have numerous trained personnel, change men and programmes and reabsorb the control that was slipping from their hands with greater speed than that possessed by the subaltern classes.

The explosive emergence of a figure outside the political system, in a context of general political crisis, would not have surprised Gramsci, who analysed the political process of Europe in the 1930s. As Stathis Kouvelakis explains:

"The organic crisis triggers a recomposition of the political personnel — which can take various forms — from Bonapartism that preserves the parliamentary façade, to the various Caesarisms and the 'state of exception', with the aim of resolving the situation in the interest of the dominant bloc. Therefore, the field is open to solutions of force, as represented by Gramsci's 'providential men.' "

The "providential man" who can impose a "solution of force" does not necessarily have to meet very outstanding personal conditions. Let us remember Marx's caustic comments about Louis Bonaparte, asking what exceptional circumstances "allowed a mediocre and grotesque character to play the role of hero."

The long Argentine crisis

The current economic crisis is not an unexpected phenomenon, but is part of a history of recurring cycles. Argentina is characterised by its constant political and economic instability. As research from different economic schools has shown (Piva, Gerchunoff), this instability has one of its roots in the relative strength of its working class, which hinders a long-range capitalist restructuring that

resolves macroeconomic problems through a lasting flattening of wages.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider a second reason, involving factors of an international nature, linked to the transformations in global production in recent decades: the country's long-term trend towards an economic and social decline that began almost half a century ago with the crisis of the Peronist welfare state in the framework of internationalisation of production and the crisis of post-war national development models. Since then, Argentine society experienced successive jumps in poverty and inequality indices, which led each generation to have its own direct perception of decadence, even when their reference points, for reasons of age, are different. The country has gone from having a 4% poverty rate in the 1970s to reaching 40% in recent years, reflecting a trend of almost constant social regression with few parallels in the world. The tendency towards organic crisis becomes, consequently, a distinctive feature of a society that amalgamates relations of force between classes that prevent a conclusive resolution of instability for the benefit of the dominant classes, at the same time that it experiences constant economic deterioration that fuels social tensions.

Although this decline develops gradually and in a non-linear manner, with periods of sharp declines followed by partial recoveries, at critical moments social unrest acquires an explosive character as we observed in the 2001 crisis. Kirchnerism emerged in 2003 as a political response to that crisis, taking advantage of exceptional political and economic conditions. At this moment, we are witnessing the dismantling of that very device that managed to resolve the crisis two decades ago. Furthermore, the crisis affecting Kirchnerism is dragging with it a broader crisis within Peronism, the magnitude of which we cannot yet fully assess.

The particularity of the current situation lies in the fact that, for the first time, Peronism is dealing with the acute crises that periodically affect the country as the government. It is

difficult to exaggerate the importance of this phenomenon. As is often the case, the formation of a mass base for the extreme right cannot be understood without a prior breaking of the links between the popular classes and their traditional political representation. If Peronism has historically played the role of a stabilising factor that has cushioned the recurring tendency towards organic crisis, the current crisis of Peronism could open the door to a political crisis of greater magnitude.

A popular right-wing ideology

Initially, interpretations of Milei's emergence focused on the protest vote that was behind his emergence. That explains part of the phenomenon: there is a still relatively liquid social unrest that found in Milei the most effective instrument to make its discontent known. In addition, there were contingent and circumstantial factors that influenced its electoral performance, such as the splitting of 17 provinces that held their elections on dates other than the national election. This split, driven mainly by Peronist rulers who wanted to avoid the negative influence of a national election that they considered unfavourable, had a decisive impact on the results. In those districts where local elections were held simultaneously, support for Milei was 13 percentage points lower than in the provinces that split. Among the current factors, the economic and logistical support that Peronism provided to Milei is also important, according to the calculation that fragmenting the right-wing vote would increase its chances in the election.

However, neither the protest vote nor current factors are sufficient to explain the August 13 electoral results. Firstly, because the way that social unrest finds expression is not usually completely innocuous. The currently fluctuating and heterogeneous nature of this electoral base should not obscure a developing process: the growing consolidation of a popular right-wing ideology, to which Milei contributed by ensuring it reached social sectors that were

outside the reach of the traditional right. Likewise, the fluid state of his electoral base changes as the political process progresses, as Milei's rise generates retroactive effects on his base. As Ernesto Laclau used to say, the "representative performs an active function" over the person represented. Political leaders are not only the result of power relations and currents of opinion present in society, but they also model and influence them. We are not only dealing with a discomfort that erupts in random ways, but rather with the reactionary metabolisation of that discomfort. Although this situation is not necessarily irreversible, it is an element that we cannot ignore.

Nancy Fraser's analysis of these issues may be helpful. Fraser coined a term to explain the global rise of the far right: "progressive neoliberalism." She uses this concept to describe the "historical bloc" that combines neoliberal economic policies with progressive policies of "recognition" or "acknowledgment". The politicians of the so-called "third way" (Clinton, Blair, Schoeder, and later their heirs: Obama, Hollande, Matteo Renzi, etc.) implemented neoliberal policies while superficially adopting multicultural, ecological, feminist and LGBTQ+ rights and demands. The working class, attacked by regressive economic policies, and sometimes uncomfortable with the real or apparent advances of oppressed groups (women, LGBTQ+, etc.), began to react against the progressive neoliberal bloc by adopting a "reactionary populist" profile that unified demands for social protection with the rejection of the policies of recognition of its adversary.

The Argentine case finds a parallel with this situation but presents an important difference. On the one hand, the government applied an economic policy that continued the orthodox adjustment of the previous mandate, and lends itself to leaving the government with almost all social indicators (poverty, salaries, inequality) worse than when Mauricio Macri left. On the other hand, it adopted a progressive approach in several aspects, such as the legalisation of abortion, the promotion of inclusive language, the

implementation of job quotas for trans people, among others. But the Argentine case allows us to add an additional element. The difference with Fraser's progressive neoliberalism is that in the case of Peronism, it made the neoliberal adjustment in the name of the fight against the neoliberal adjustment. This is what Pablo Semán refers to when he talks about the "mimicry of the State": the preaching of the "present State" was the ideological cover for a progressive deterioration of the material benefits that the State provides in the name of income redistribution and social justice. This is part of the reason that explains the anti-statist response that progressive neoliberalism received. If Trump, Le Pen, Meloni are critics, at least apparent, of neoliberal globalism, Javier Milei is an extravagant anarcho-capitalist who dreams of the complete elimination of the State.

The deterioration of living conditions during a government that promotes a progressive and redistributive narrative paved the way for an anti-statist discourse to find an echo in various social strata, even among those who significantly depend on the State's social protection to survive. The collapse of a populist experience, which maintained its rhetoric of redistribution even when applying harsh adjustment measures, resulted in the costs of orthodox policies not being attributed to their main intellectual defenders. This process demoralised and confused the working class, resulting in social unrest shifting to the right. The crisis of governmental progressivism extends to the crisis of the values and ideas associated with it, such as the progressive redistribution of income, the active role of the State, human rights and social mobilisation. As often happens, the rubble of the crumbling wall falls on the entire spectrum of the left and its ideas.

According to electoral sociology studies, Milei garnered support across all social classes and age groups. In ideological terms, studies indicate that approximately a third of his voters correspond to a profile of an ultra-right nature, another third represents a classic neoliberal orientation vote and the remaining third comes from a

popular and "pro-State" base, affected by indignation and confusion. Even if we discard this last segment and only add the clearly ideological vote that Patricia Bullrich obtained in the primary elections (16%), it is undeniable that there is an electoral base for the extreme right of between 25-30%. These are very high numbers, which can provide a mass base for an authoritarian neoliberal experiment.

This electoral base is still in a fluid and unstable state. However, its mere existence highlights the excessive optimism that has prevailed on the left, which assumes that the experience of an eventual Milei government will necessarily break ties with its electoral base. Many reasons or sequence of events (success in a stabilisation plan, demoralisation of the combative popular sectors, political disaffection of the working class) could lead us towards an opposite alternative, as happened in the case of Bolsonaro in Brazil. Although the former captain lost the elections in a very close second round (51/49), he managed to unite his own base, eliminating any previous loyalty of his voters towards the traditional parties.

Is a Milei government unfeasible?

One way to diminish the perception of the danger posed by the far right is to assume that a Milei government will lack political support and will crumble under the pressure of popular mobilisation. This is the predominant approach in the Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores - Unidad [FIT-U or Workers Left Front-Unity). The Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas [PTS or Socialist Workers Party] even compared Milei to Liz Truss, the British Prime Minister who in October 2022 was thrown out of power 45 days after taking office. This is a dangerous prognosis, largely imaginary and tailored to the political needs, not of the class struggle, but of the presidential campaign of the Left Front. The FIT-U candidacy has the problem that it could encounter a democratic response from society that

will try to block the way for Milei by resorting to the only position that can have a practical impact in that sense, which is that of Peronism. Focusing the electoral campaign on reducing the danger that Milei represents, in order to slightly influence the electoral result of the Left Front, is a petty and irresponsible strategy.

It is not surprising that the PTS downplays the threat posed by the far right, given its attitude in previous similar situations. Given the rise of Bolsonaro in 2018, the PTS maintained that "a possible Bolsonaro government is already born weak" and, in another text, expanding its position, it noted that "when Bolsonaro wants to apply privatisations, legislation that degrades working conditions and life of the working and popular population, among other attacks on the democratic rights of women and oppressed minorities, he will have to face the class struggle (...) In a context of political and economic crisis and polarisation, we can expect great social explosions." They developed similar reasoning in their analyses of Erdogan's Turkey or the French National Front. None of their predictions were confirmed.

These errors of analysis are not accidental, but reflect theoretical and strategic limitations, which manifest themselves in various aspects: the tendency to underestimate the democratic risks represented by the extreme right, the assumption that it could only lead necessarily to weak governments, the fantasy of possible social explosions as a by-product of their arrival in power, the disdain for unitary defensive tasks and the emphasis on combating reformist or progressive currents, which often seem to be a more important enemy than the extreme right itself.

This ultra-leftist conception led the PTS to call for a null vote in all the recent elections in Latin America that were settled in a second round between a progressive or center-left force and the extreme right: Lula against Bolsonaro, Castillo against Fujimori and Boric against Kast. Their allies in the Left Front held similar positions. Ultra-left blindness to the danger of the extreme right is not an

exclusive property of the Stalinism of the 1930s.

Governance and “authoritarian populism”

In any case, we will have decisive battles ahead. Thatcher could only advance after the great defeat of the miners' strike of 1985 and Menem after defeating the great struggles against privatisation. The future is uncertain like few times. The legitimacy of an eventual Milei government will be more fragile than the electoral result would imply. It cannot be ruled out that a wide-ranging social response and political and parliamentary instability will lead his government to a dead end. However, we should not exaggerate this possibility or play with fire on the edge of the cliff.

The conditions to provide political and parliamentary sustainability to a future Milei government can be built (Bullrich, for her part, would not have this problem). There could be a fracture of the right that would add a relevant sector to a new government coalition. Parliamentary support from a large part of the Peronism in the provinces in the interior of the country is also likely; this has already given governance to Macri, and is also in charge of territories where Milei swept the presidential election. While the internal affairs of Peronism are resolved for the next cycle, which could take several years, it is likely that a significant part of it will come to the conclusion that it would not be bad policy to support a new government that can take care of a heavy burden, that frightens all political forces (stabilisation plan, structural reforms, confrontation with the mass movement). In this sense, there were already sectors that showed signs of rapprochement, and there was even no shortage of relevant leaders of the union bureaucracy who made their rapprochement public. An eventual government led by Milei, especially if it manages to overcome a short-term crisis, could begin an unprecedented political reconfiguration. This would

imply the possibility of breaking the other two political blocs and attracting sectors of both coalitions, obtaining the parliamentary support necessary to consolidate his leadership.

Both Milei and Bullrich seem not to fear, at least in the same way as the Macri government, social mobilisation. On the contrary, as happened, for example, in Sarkozy's France or in Thatcherism, they are willing to use it to their advantage, responding in an authoritarian manner and assuming a profile that we could call populist: the people represented in their president against corporate minorities who defend their "privileges."

This is a combative right that will try after years of economic crisis and demobilisation controlled from above, to take advantage of the combination of partial erosion of the capacity for resistance, to isolate social protest so that it appears as a blockage to the resolution of the country's economic problems.

Here the term “authoritarian populism” with which Stuart Hall characterised Thatcher may be useful. Regardless of its viability, Milei announced that he will resort to a plebiscite when Congress opposes his measures. Milei can claim to directly represent the people against the political or social opposition that will be accused of being undemocratic and not letting them govern. We would be facing a plebiscitary populism, in which Milei will speak on behalf of the people against sectoral interests (all those to whom they are referred to through the empty signifier of “caste”: politicians, union leaders, picketers, etc.) A discursive construction of this type would have a precedent in Macrista criticism of the “privileged.” In the language of the Macri government, “privileged” were the mafias and corrupt politicians, but also unionism, the formal worker protected by labour rights that “inhibit the generation of employment” or those who are “above the law”, for example a picketer who blocks an entrance to the city. Although it is not necessarily the majority, this type of ideological construction has been building up in relevant sectors of society for years.

This is simply a hypothesis, since in a situation as uncertain as the current one, no one can be certain about the future. However, this is a possible scenario supported by historical precedents and feasible conditions. In such a critical context, it is unreasonable to take unnecessary risks.

Taking the risk of the far right seriously

It is curious to note that there are two contrasting responses on the part of progressive sectors to the rise of the extreme right. On the one hand, some are paralysed by panic, sometimes with exaggerated characterisations that lose all sense of proportions. However, on the other hand, it is also common to observe a general feeling of disbelief in another sector. What until August 13 was a prediction of the type —“this-cannot-happen” (a victory for the extreme right)— became in some cases a “this-cannot-be-that-serious”, which is actually an adapted form of the first. This is what happens in cognitive dissonance: the psychological discomfort generated by the experience of contradictory perceptions, generally the contradiction between previous beliefs and information from reality, is resolved through secondary adjustments that allow congruence and essentiality to be restored of the initial ideas.

The extravagance of some of Milei's proposals facilitates disbelief: the sale of organs, a market for minors, the privatisation of the streets. Nobody thinks that these measures are implementable on planet Earth. Even his star proposal, the abandonment of the national currency in favor of the dollar, is highly problematic in terms of viability. But the problem is not in the extravagant proposals. There is, however, another package of measures that are not in the realm of fantasy, whose successful application would mean a long-term defeat for the working class: an aggressive labour reform, like the one carried out by the ultraliberal Paulo Guedes in Bolsonaro's government, a fiscal

adjustment based on the privatisation or closure of public companies and the massive dismissal of state workers, a large-scale attack on public education and health or a pension transformation that eliminates the state pay-as-you-go system, among others. On the other hand, it is evident that the extreme right would seek to launch an ambitious offensive in the area of gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights (illegalisation of abortion, elimination of sexual education, the trans quota, etc.), generating state endorsement to hate, homophobic and patriarchal speeches, just as Trump and Bolsonaro did.

Such an anti-popular shock policy will not be able to do without an authoritarian hardening of the State: the judicial persecution of social leaders, support for police violence, free access to the carrying of weapons, the revitalisation of the Armed Forces, the pardon for the military condemned, an attempt to weaken the influence of unions in the workplace and, above all, the fight against the presence of the picketing social movements in popular neighborhoods, a fundamental social subject of the last political cycle. (The latter could be the preferred enemy of a future extreme right-wing government, which could count on the support of a part of the union bureaucracy and would find some support in a certain "anti-piquetero" common sense built governmentally over the last few years taking advantage of the social fatigue caused by the constant presence of street demonstrations).

In summary, if these measures were carried out successfully, it would mean a great social and democratic regression, hand in hand with an authoritarian hardening of the State and an attempt at social discipline and demobilisation of protest. In other words, it would represent a strategic defeat for the working class.

How would one build a sustainable mass base amidst such aggressive shock therapy? The main source of eventual support, passive or active, is if the future government is preceded by a catastrophic economic crisis that offers authorisation for drastic measures. At the time of writing these

lines, we are bordering on such a crisis. In the experience of Menemism, the hyperinflation of 1989-1991 sowed despair in the population, liquidated the outgoing government and allowed Menem to take office with a huge delegation of presidential authority and with a blank check to take unpopular measures "to restore order." As Adrián Piva shows, this economic catastrophe offered weak hegemony around a negative consensus: economic stability built on the shock of the preceding hyperinflation. Perry Anderson, in the same sense, when analysing stabilisation plans in Latin America, wrote: "There is a functional equivalent to the trauma of military dictatorship as a mechanism to democratically and non-coercively induce a people to accept the most drastic neoliberal policies: hyperinflation."

An extreme right-wing government (and in this aspect Bullrich and Milei will not present significant differences) will also play with the fragmentation of the working class and the contradictions between the victims of adjustment policies: informal sectors against the "privileges" of the unionised working class, workers against unemployed who survive on social assistance, "uberised" jobs against unions, etc.

In any case, it must be noted that an aggressive process of counter-reforms does not necessarily require massive support from the population. To refer to the classic example of Thatcherism, which has mobilised countless studies, Thatcher's offensive against the social State did not have the support of the majority of the population (as shown in the classic texts by Bob Jessop and others published in the *New Left Review*). Domination can accept forms that combine consent and coercion but also resignation, apathy or disaffection.

A cesarean solution to the social stalemate

The extreme fragility of the economic situation which the reactionary rise is

part of is a characteristic that differentiates the Argentine situation from the global wave of far-right governments. The risk involved in that conjunction cannot be underestimated. There is no need to refer to the German hyperinflation of the 1920s to illustrate the point. This scenario has several recent precedents, one of them especially expressive. During the 1980s, Peru also suffered the effects of a long decade of stagnation that accelerated into a hyperinflationary peak. In that context, Alberto Fujimori took office. It is important to remember that his meteoric electoral rise was with a marginal political force (*Cambio 90*), basically electoral, without great social or business support. The economic catastrophe provided him with the legitimacy to apply shock therapy: a stabilisation plan, privatisation of public companies and liberalisation of the economy, as well as authoritarian hardening that included the closure of Congress. The neoliberal remodeling of Peruvian society and the massive violation of human rights (victims number in the tens of thousands) constituted a historical turning point from which the Peruvian working class has still not managed to recover.

It is curious that this correlation (inflationary crisis-authoritarian government) is not sufficiently present in the public debate of the left, especially in a situation where monthly inflation has reached double digits and the net reserves of the Central Bank are negative. A banking crisis cannot be ruled out in the event that one of the two far-right candidates prevails, especially taking into account that they seem to be aware of the benefit that would result in triggering economic panic by announcing radical "pro-market" proposals with catastrophic effects on the short term (such as the abrupt exit of banking "stocks", the elimination of withholdings on exports, dollarisation, etc.). Milei's good result on August 13 already showed a tendency towards panic in the "markets": falls in bonds, increase in "country risk", stagnation in stocks.

In his book on the last political cycle, Fernando Rosso takes up the term "hegemonic tie" from the Argentine

Gramscians of the 1970s, who used it to describe the long period of instability in Argentina between 1955 and 1976. Rosso recovers the term to characterise the political dynamics during the last twenty years in which social relations of force have prevented the dominant classes from launching a full-fledged offensive. But an impasse of this type may find an opportunity to unblock itself in the combination of economic catastrophe and political authoritarianism. Precisely Gramsci's analysis leads to evaluating a scenario of this type, hence the "catastrophic" character of the "catastrophic tie." If Rosso is inclined to think that Milei will once again crash into the "cemetery of hegemonic projects" that is Argentine society, he would be prematurely ruling out a typically Gramscian alternative: that Milei embodies the possibility of overcoming that blockade.

It is striking to refer to Gramsci to analyse the "hegemonic tie", but not to evaluate the central hypothesis that the Italian thinker proposed as a possible solution for this type of situation. What Gramsci detected in situations of tied power relations is that they generate the conditions for an alternative leadership that has a catastrophic effect for the tied forces. Gramsci said:

"It can be said that Caesarism expresses a situation in which the forces in struggle are balanced in a catastrophic manner, that is, in such a way that the continuation of the struggle cannot but end in mutual destruction. When the progressive force A fights with the regressive force B, not only can it happen that A defeats B or vice versa, it can also happen that neither of the two conquer, that they weaken each other and that a third force C intervenes from the outside, dominating to what remains of A and B."

Gramsci in his analysis most likely considered first the specific conditions that allowed Italian fascism to emerge. In this regard, it is relevant to remember Angelo Tasca's formula when he defined fascism as a "posthumous and preventive counterrevolution" that arose in an intermediate situation where

revolutionary threats had been defeated, but the labour movement had not yet been completely suppressed. Fascism did not directly defeat the revolution, but rather intervened to consolidate its power when revolutionary attempts had already failed. This is also a way of describing the "hegemonic tie": the working class was no longer in a period of ascendancy with the expectation of imposing its own project, but it still retained enough strength to stop a global capitalist offensive. In that interval a strong solution emerged from the exceptional characteristics of interwar fascism.

Of course, currently there are no revolutionary attempts in sight (nor fascist threats in the strict sense for the moment), but we are witnessing a prolonged situation of social stalemate that is exhausting the energies of the actors involved. In the working class camp, this translates into a tendency towards social demobilisation and political disaffection. Although the popular classes still maintain the ability to block the adversary, their relative weakness at the same time opens the door to the possibility of a "Caesarist" solution. Confirming this gives Gramscian analysis of the "catastrophic tie" an importance and precise meaning, which are often overlooked in current uses.

Gramsci's analysis also serves to avoid overreliance on a simplistic assessment of the accumulation of forces of the Argentine working class as a reserve insurance against an authoritarian reaction. Solutions of force arise precisely in places where there are social forces that block a conventional resolution (classical fascism in countries like Germany, Italy and Spain illustrate the point).

It is precisely from here that the optical illusion of the "instrumentalist" explanation of fascism, widely criticized in specialised literature, emanates. Fascism was not an instrument or an epiphenomenon of the needs of capital, as the Communist International believed, but the product of a complex and autonomous process, where ideological issues, political dynamics and even unexpected accidents converged. But, in its own way, the instrumental explanation

captures something important about the dynamics of action and reaction in critical moments of the class struggle, where the specific conditions that favour the advancement of solutions of force tend to take shape. These authoritarian reactions serve the functional needs of the dominant classes, not because they are mere instruments, but because they represent political outcomes that become plausible in particular political contexts.

To illustrate this with Argentine history, it can be remembered that the military dictatorship in 1976 did not appear because the country had a weak union and social organisation, but on the contrary: because the working class had managed to block attempts at a capitalist offensive by conventional means (The Rodrigazo of 1975 was the last example). This social force, by having the capacity to block the adversary project but not to impose its own, gradually created the conditions for its exhaustion: by not being able to resolve the situation in its favour, its blocking capacity tended to generate chaos, instability and social fatigue. This not only facilitates the formation of a mass base for radicalisation to the right, but also puts pressure on the working class itself, which progressively begins to feel that it is in a dead end, loses confidence in its own strength and begins to demobilise. It is in this conjunction of elements that the feasibility of a force solution emerges. Due to this combination of factors, the 1976 coup was experienced by broad sectors of the population as a relief.

An electoral victory for the extreme right could, then, have strategic content. The ruling classes could find an alternative way to take direct combat for the benefit of an ultraliberal policy. For at least a decade, power relations have prevented the counter-reforms demanded by the business community. Now the ruling classes could, in Caesarist fashion, delegate to an "external" figure the dirty work that the organic forces of the bourgeoisie do not seem to be in a position to carry out. Too much dependence on social consent wrecks all political projects. Perhaps a "madman", with little past and without fear of the

future, without his own strength that demands sustainability, can be useful to cut the knot that has blocked Argentine capitalism for two decades.

If this were to happen, in the future we will analyse the current political moment as a decisive turning point, where Milei's electoral victory played a strategic role, offering an instrument and a reorganisation to the bourgeoisie that it itself could not find.

The political moment of the class struggle

An instinctive response of the social and political left to the advance of the extreme right is to call for mobilisations and social struggle. However, this strategy has an important gap: the extreme right is on the verge of seizing state power. Is a response in the political field necessary and feasible or can we do without that dimension?

There are usually two ways of underestimating what is condensed in a presidential election: on the one hand, the movementist rejection of all "institutional politics", and on the other, classic ultra-leftism for which all bourgeois options are on the same level. More in line with this second option, the predominant strategy on the left is based on calling for protest against the effects of economic policy as a way of confronting the extreme right, according to the reasoning, largely correct, that the extreme right emerges on the ground built by the destructive effects of economic adjustment. But we are not witnessing any relevant social struggle, and in a few days we will face the election that can concretise an extreme right government! An exclusively social struggle diverts from the need for a mass political struggle against the extreme right. And weeks before the elections, this is what worries relevant sectors of the population and affects it in such a way that it could unleash currently latent social energy.

It is essential to understand that the State is not simply a passive reflection

of "external" relations of force, which are resolved only in the "power of the street." The State is an actor that influences power relations and has the capacity to change and modify established political balances. Not understanding the importance of a presidential election leads to underestimating the political moment of the class struggle, in favor of a predominantly "social" approach, which during the electoral period can be accompanied by abstract political agitation that does not confront the real dilemmas that the conjuncture presents.

What to do?

A peculiarity of the next presidential election is that we are not simply facing one, but two far-right formations, which could lead to a nightmare scenario in which both reach the second round. We are also witnessing another peculiarity: the division of the electoral panorama into three large blocks could lead to Milei being elected in the first round, if he manages to obtain 40% of the votes and a 10-point advantage over the next candidate, as allowed by the Argentine electoral system. These circumstances precipitate tactical decisions for the radical left that are normally reserved for the second turn.

The threat to democratic rights that this situation represents forces us to play a role without hesitation in the field of combat against the extreme right. However, today we face an additional difficulty. The political cycle is changing, which means that many categories we thought about in recent years are becoming anachronistic. For years, a tactic of broad defensive unity against the right established a bridge that communicated with the majority sensitivity of the popular classes, identified mainly with Kirchnerism. But years of orthodox adjustment applied by Peronism has changed the landscape. Now it is no longer simply a matter of acting together with the popular classes against a traditional right that has its waterline in the anti-populist middle classes. Now, to a certain extent, it is the popular classes that are reacting, in an extremely problematic way, against the adjustment of Peronism.

If we want to combat the extreme right in the long term, we cannot subordinate ourselves to the "extreme centre" or progressive neoliberalism. They are the representatives of the status quo against which the reactionary revolt rises. If the left presents itself as the "far left" of the status quo, popular discontent will continue to move towards authoritarian solutions. In the same sense, we must prevent "everyone against the right" from becoming a disciplinary slogan that ends up justifying the orthodox policies carried out by traditional political forces. In other words, we must prevent progressive neoliberalism from finding in the extreme right the perfect antagonist that allows it to demobilise through the fear of an increasingly disturbing "greater evil."

Supporting progressive neoliberalism against the extreme right is equivalent to supporting the cause to try to avoid the effect. And yet, although it may seem paradoxical, there are critical moments that require specific actions "with cause versus effect" with the precious objective of gaining time to change the situation. In the next elections it is necessary to use the vote that can have the practical effect of blocking the way for the extreme right (in this case, the presidential body of Peronism), but this is not the same as accepting the slippery slope of the logic of the "lesser evil." Trotsky's classic writings against fascism continue to offer useful lessons in this regard. Trotsky emphasised that in critical circumstances one can still agree "with the devil and his grandmother" but "with the only condition of not tying one's hands." That is, he defended unitary tactics that do not imply political subordination or lasting agreements. In his "Letter to a Communist Worker", in which he makes an urgent call to constitute a workers' united front (communist-social democratic) to defeat fascism, he writes:

"We, as Marxists, consider both Brüning and Hitler and Braun as representatives of one and the same system. The problem of knowing which of them is a "lesser evil" is meaningless, because their system, against which we fight, needs all its

elements. But today these elements are in conflict, and the party of the proletariat must absolutely use this conflict in the interests of the revolution."

And he continues: "For those who do not understand, let's take one more example. If one of my enemies poisons me every day with small doses of poison, and another wants to shoot me from behind, I will first tear the revolver from the hands of the second, which will give me the possibility of finishing off the first. But this does not mean that poison is a lesser evil compared to the revolver." And he added a final comment, which we could convey to the leaders of Argentine Trotskyism: "To tell the truth, one feels a little embarrassed explaining such an elementary thing!"

Although there are conditions to promote a democratic mobilisation against the extreme right, we face a very serious problem. Although it may seem surprising, the two main political agents who could promote it are not interested, at least for the moment. On the one hand, the FIT-U is committed to carrying out its own electoral campaign, which is in competition with any social movement that prioritises the fight against the extreme right, since the latter could

have the effect of diverting electoral support from the left towards the official candidacy. On the other hand, the sector most directly linked to Cristina Kirchner seems to be absent from any action against the extreme right, even in the most basic electoral campaign. Apparently, the strategy of this sector, similar to the one used in 2015, focuses exclusively on retaining the strategic governance of the Province of Buenos Aires. It is possible that they are following the logic that a victory for the right at the national level would be preferable, since this would allow it to maintain leadership in Peronism, while at the same time embellishing by contrast the legacy of Kirchnerism and laying the foundations for a possible return to power in the future. The irresponsibility of this calculation is extreme.

A large social movement against the extreme right could play a fundamental role in changing the course of the elections. This is not a leftist commonplace, which one routinely repeats in every situation. In this case it acquires a special meaning and importance. A polarisation between a democratic mass movement and the extreme right is key to modifying the electoral result, because no one is more unauthorised than the

government itself to raise an alarm "against fascism" or against "the attack on rights." In this aspect, the situation is less like Lula's second round against Bolsonaro, and more like Macron against Le Pen. If the fight against Milei remains exclusively in the hands of Massa and the ruling party, defeat becomes more likely. An alarm must be given about the social and democratic danger that the extreme right represents, but for it to be effective, as Ezequiel Ipar rightly pointed out, a displacement of the speaker of this warning must be moved: a democratic social movement that polarises the political situation.

Even if the extreme right comes to power, it is essential that it does so within a framework of broad democratic mobilisation that is the support point for the social and political battles that are to come. Nothing is more important right now.

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Translated by David Fagan from **Jacobin Latin America**.

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