



IV590 - March 2024

The Contradictions in the Democratic Party on View

31 March 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Some 5,000 people attended the event in person where the cheapest tickets sold for \$250 and access to the intimate receptions cost between \$250,000 and \$500,000. A photo with the three presidents cost \$100,000. So far, the Biden campaign and the Democratic National Committee have raised \$128.7 million, while Trump and the Republican Party have raised \$96.1 million.

Trump must raise money not only for his election campaign but also for legal expenses for the several criminal trials he faces and for penalties in the civil suits he has lost, all of which amount to hundreds of millions of dollars. Last week his Truth Social, Trump's social media company, was for the first time listed on the Nasdaq stock exchange at a value of \$50 per share and valued overall at \$6.8 billion. Suddenly Trump's net worth is estimated at \$7.5 billion. However, many believe the stock's value will collapse, since Truth Social is a small social media presence and has been losing subscribers and money. So, rich as he is at the moment, Trump is not financially secure. Nevertheless, he won the Republican nomination,

absolutely dominates the party, and has a fanatically loyal base.

Biden's strong financial position does not solve the problem of the eroding support he is receiving from some Democrats because of his failure to call for an immediate ceasefire and end U.S. support for Israel's genocidal war on the Palestinians in Gaza where 32,000 have been killed, 13,000 of them children, thousands of others no doubt dead beneath the rubble, over 75,000 injured, and 1.7 displaced and hundreds of thousands starving. In the West Bank, Israel has killed hundreds of Palestinians, has carried out mass arrests, and set up new illegal settler roads and outposts, as uniformed Israeli settlers engage in violent attacks upon Palestinians.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has repeatedly called upon Israel to protect Palestinian civilians and to make humanitarian aid available. The United States abstained on the recent vote in the Security Council for an immediate but temporary ceasefire for the remainder of the Ramadan holiday and for Hamas's release of the

remaining hostages of the October 7 attack. Yet while Biden's administration opposes Israel's plan for an attack on Rafah and has apparently broken with Netanyahu's government, Biden has not ended his support for the Israeli government, continuing to authorize more jet planes and bombs.

Pro-Palestinian demonstrations continue across the United States demanding a ceasefire and an end to U.S. support for Israel. Americans as a whole oppose Israel's actions, Democrats by larger margins. The far left is divided. Some protests are led by Jewish Voice for Peace and the Democratic Socialist of America, while others are organized by Stalinist or campist groups such as the Party for Socialism and Liberation, with Palestinian groups found in all of them. In any case, according to the Gallup Poll, young adults 18-34 show the biggest decline in their view of Israel, dropping from 64% favorable in 2023 to 38% today. That's Biden's problem, no matter how much money he raises.

31 March 2024

The Women's Strike Continues

30 March 2024, by **Magda Malinowska**

How did the idea of the film emerge? Why did you decide to intersect the topics of labour struggle and the struggle for women's rights?

I've been a labour union member for many years, and the struggle for workers and women's rights is the same for us. At one time, many of our union committees were completely feminized, for example, the committee at the Greenkett factory. In 2011, during the crisis, when most people were afraid of losing their jobs, the women workers of this factory organized a spontaneous strike. At the same time, together with the Feminist Analytical Center, we started supporting women occupying empty buildings in Wałbrzych. Wałbrzych is a mining town that has fallen into decay and depopulation after the transformation. The government privatized everything, e.g., mines, plants, and factories; consequently, unemployment was omnipotent.

Hundreds of families occupied the vacant buildings with the authorities' tacit approval. Many of them were single mothers, and when threatened with eviction, the women organized demonstrations and hunger strikes. Some of them managed to stay in their homes, but the media portrayed them as a social problem, with specific comments calling for sterilization. My colleague Gosia and I made a documentary about their living and working conditions. The work issue arose because there were only two state-run kindergartens in the city, and they were impossible to get into. When these women went to work in neighbouring economic zones, their children were left alone.

Eventually, one of the workers' children fell out of a window when she fell asleep at home after a night shift. The women wanted to organize a grassroots free nursery where they would take turns caring for the children. They worked in factories and

warehouses with temporary employment agencies hiring them, so they had jobs one day and not the next, and sometimes they couldn't go to work because of their children. The free nursery initiative would have significantly improved their situation in the labour market. Still, the city prohibited them from implementing it, which would require the designation of one out of a thousand vacant buildings for childcare purposes.

In Wałbrzych, interdependence was lucidly visible: unstable, low-paid work alternating with periods of unemployment, housing problems, and childcare crises. For women, it was a crisis in every sphere. In the same year, the government changed regulations regarding nursery care, extending the working hours for those employed in nurseries. At that time, the nursery workers joined us, demanding funding for childcare, constructing new nurseries, abandoning the institution's privatization plans, reducing parents' fees, and increasing wages. Initially, we expressed our support informally by participating in meetings at the mayor's office or organizing joint events, such as blocking tram tracks in the city centre. As we mention in the film, the city officials and council ignored the nursery workers, so the girls decided to act as a union.

Nursery workers were and still are incredibly active. Initiatives were focused not only on temporary wage increases but on changing the budget policy of the local government in general. And the girls had the support of parents and other groups of residents. At the time, Poland was facing a real crisis in the childcare sector. During the transformation, more than 70% of kindergartens were closed. This infrastructure was not rebuilt for many years but somewhat further deteriorated, shifting the burden of these decisions onto women. It had to end with an outburst

of anger and protests. Because the girls had an incredible amount of energy, they also connected general problems related to the care crisis with their working situation. I tried to film actions organized by them or their participation in meetings at the city hall.

In 2017, the struggle was still ongoing; the new president [Poznań] promised to increase the budget for care but did not fulfil this promise, refusing to raise employee salaries. In addition, the Polish Women's Congress, which considers itself the voice of all women in Poland, awarded him, the one who cheated his workers, the prize for the most gender-equal president in Poland. Feeling the need for a platform to restore the discussion, we decided to create a movie that shows the situation in the city and highlights the conflict. Even before the completion of the installation, protests from parents of children with disabilities began, and subsequently, protests against increased abortion restrictions.

It is all naturally interconnected. For me, it was the culmination of everything. Further cuts in the care sector, exhausting work for pennies, meagre support for people with disabilities and their families, rising rents, and a constant struggle for survival and making ends meet. And at the same time, forcing women to give birth even to very sick children despite the threat to their own lives.

At the largest protest in Poznań in 2016, nursery workers, including those you saw in the film, gave speeches, stood with banners, shouted through megaphones, and later rescued gas-exposed and fainting female protesters. Wonderful women.

In the movie, we portrayed the strike of women's struggle for decent pay for reproductive labour through the rally against the abortion ban bill: black

and white footage of the Black Protests frame the movie at the beginning and the end, highlighting the relationship of one to the other. How did the success of the trade union struggle influence the Black Protests?

The nursery workers threatened Poznań councillors with a strike, which is not a metaphor and indeed happened, although strikes in nurseries are not usual. Strikes in Poland, in general, are rare due to regulations that effectively limit them. Moreover, they were the first in our union to demand a reduction in working hours to 25 hours per week. It is now easier to talk about the need to reduce working hours, but it was a radical demand back then. Combining the threads of labour struggles in the care sector and the Black Protests, under the slogan "The Women's Strike Continues," I wanted to show that women are currently forced to fight constantly at work and at home. Ultimately, they rallied for access to medical care because abortion is de facto a medical procedure. Well, first, they do all the reproductive work that keeps us functioning, then they work for wages, and they also take to the streets.

This female energy is so palpable that all political parties participating in this year's elections, except for the far right, addressed their messages to women. It was significant that at the most prominent opposition rally, male politicians spoke to women, encouraging them to vote, but they didn't allow their female colleagues to speak for themselves. Instead, they wore red shirts symbolizing love, equality, freedom, life, etc. So, women's energy is palpable, but unfortunately, it is heavily instrumentalized.

What has changed regarding women workers' rights in Poland since the film's release?

In terms of specific rights, there haven't been any revolutionary changes specifically for women; however, it would be a lie to say that nothing has changed. The Worker's Initiative (Inicjatywa Pracownicza) union, to which I belong, continues to grow with new workers joining, and

we are now around 6,000 members.

This year, we organized the Social Congress of Women again, with over a hundred women from different workplaces and unions. We had precious discussions at a symbolic level and in developing tactics and plans for future actions. It turned out, for example, that it's not just us — female factory workers or warehouse workers — who demand research into the severity of our work. The caregivers demanded the same from another trade union in nursing homes. One of their colleagues injured her spine at work while lifting a heavy patient.

Furthermore, thanks in part to our efforts, the number of children covered by public nursery care has increased in recent years. There has been an alteration in thinking about care as a cost that one should lay on the shoulders of the household budget. For a few years, there has been a change in the rhetoric regarding social support for families with children. When the right-wing government lowered the retirement age and introduced the 500+ program (a child benefit program), liberals swore that it would ruin the country and that the benefits should be immediately abolished. Currently, few would question this benefit. This time, before the elections, parties argued about who would increase its value faster. Unfortunately, after years of protests, abortion rights were further restricted. This has a massive impact on women's access to healthcare when they become pregnant.

My colleague from the union once heard from a gynaecologist that now, in Poland, women have to give birth to everything, so there's no need to worry about them: you can have prenatal tests done, but no matter what the results are, you still have to give birth. If the fetus dies, you must continue the pregnancy, regardless of the risk of sepsis and death. Doctors shouldn't take on complicated pregnancies because if something goes wrong, they won't be able to terminate it to save the woman's life. Ultimately, it's better not to get pregnant and not give birth, even if you want to, because if something goes wrong, you're on your own.

I know several women who wanted to have children but had to terminate their pregnancies abroad due to complications because if something happened, they wouldn't get help here. Women with non-viable pregnancies also travel abroad. For them, it's a double tragedy — not only does the desired pregnancy end, but they also have to seek help abroad because they risk sepsis in Poland.

Sylvia Federici's voice as an American woman has authority and sets the framework for events in Poland. The American as universal and the Polish as local come together in this film. We also know you had a long and successful legal battle with Amazon after being illegally fired. Protests and strikes against Amazon are usually also related to working conditions, wages, and workplace safety. How important is international solidarity for you, and what is the big difference between Poland and America?

The interview with Federici was conducted long before the idea for the film was born. We did it with my friend Krzysztof, who translated the Caliban and the Witch. We did this to expand the discussion on the role of unpaid labour in capital accumulation. Silvia, who co-founded the Wages for Housework movement, is a skilled theorist and a practitioner with experiences that we lack, making her an essential voice in this discussion.

Of course, solidarity across borders is more than just an exchange of experiences. Indeed, after being fired from Amazon, I received immense international support. My union put in a lot of effort to publicize this issue. It was important because Amazon tried to discredit me as socially harmful, violating social norms and the so-called "all moral principles," endangering other employees. In October, a first-instance court ruling reinstated me to work. However, I expect an appeal.

At Amazon, we distinctly experience how cross-border action is needed. We have similar working conditions and Amazon's policies regarding workers and trade unions everywhere across the network. We know that Amazon uses national borders to divide, weaken, and squeeze as much as

possible out of us.

When German workers go on strike, Amazon shifts orders to Poland, where they announce additional working hours. In 2015, workers at the Poznań warehouse rebelled, and during the strike in Germany, they slowed down work. But generally, our wages are so low that a significant group is happy to work overtime. Therefore, it is in the interest of German workers that we earn more and do not agree to overtime; they need our support for their wage demands, and we need their support when they strike for higher wages in Germany.

We have created the Amazon Workers International, where workers from Poland, Germany, France, Italy, the USA, Spain, Slovakia, and many other countries are active. We are not interested in union bureaucracy; we unionize the rank-and-file workers on the shop floor. Perhaps we do not work together every day. Still, during the pandemic, we realized that in crises, years of building bonds, meetings, and information exchange enable quick and efficient joint action, thanks to which we can exert intense pressure and achieve our demands.

Almost everywhere in the world, women from working-class families (let's simplify and call ourselves just women) bear the yoke of unpaid work. In some countries, there is less, and in others, much more, but it is a common, global problem. Women bear the consequences of crises, social cuts, and privatization to a large extent. In a capitalist economic system, especially, it is exceptionally oppressive towards women, destroying our lives. That's why women are a group that has great potential to change this system. We need social and communal, not free-market social relations to function normally, not to toil like oxen at home and work.

This feminine energy burst out in Poland recently. Nowadays, it is global and certainly provides a field for building solidarity — including with Ukraine. As a union, we try to act within the aid convoy for trade unionists from Ukraine. We're on the same wagon. Of course, living conditions in Ukraine are much more

complex, and Poland has no war. However, our countries are a reservoir of cheap labour for Western and Asian corporations. Both countries' social, political, and economic situation strongly influences each other. Sometimes, it is very tangible; for example, iron ore from Kryvyi Rih goes to Polish steelworks. We must cooperate closely with anti-authoritarian social movements, trade unions, and organizations.

I believe that currently, there is no such thing as a united international working class that can ignore the local context and act only for global equality against global capital, so we should always act in the interest of the worldwide working class, even if it is not in the interest of local workers. It sounds beautiful, but it doesn't exist in reality. In everyday life, we function in a local context. That's why, as Poles, we are not fighting against the EU, which some comrades in France or Germany don't understand. In Germany, the issue of Palestine and Israel is more complicated, and in Ukraine, the left adopted a strategy of supporting the front. We know that many left-wing circles criticize this. As for me, I don't feel entitled to tell others what to do in extreme situations without living in their local context.

The discussion about Ukraine is a bit stuck in muddy opinions about whether to demand peace at any cost, surrender, or support the front. I understand that the left has almost no influence on this, so this dispute is ultimately unproductive. At the same time, it escapes notice that in Ukraine, military and economic forces clash. The outcome of these clashes can profoundly impact the shape of labour and social relations in Europe, especially Eastern and Central Europe. That's why we should stick together in this battle and support it.

The question is whether Ukraine will undergo another accelerated shock therapy or whether it will be able to use the wartime turmoil and sense of community to challenge individualistic, free-market relationships in favour of a society based on self-governance and the equal distribution of goods.

In 2022, the idea for a film came up on how war affects the world of work and about its transformations, problems, needs, how it organizes itself, and how it will all end. Or maybe how it will begin.

You are an activist. Sometimes, a filmmaker is alienated from his subject matter, but undoubtedly, you are not. How does it affect your films?

That is an excellent question. A few days ago, I read a critical article about documentary cinema in Poland by Slovakian film researcher Jadwiga Kutkova. In her text, she raises the question of why Polish documentaries are far from Polish reality and why many Polish directors address exotic topics in their documentaries, such as the fate of poor children in Africa, while ignoring their local reality. Her criticism was that people travel abroad for material and that filmmakers avoid deep exploration of social and political issues in documentary cinema. When a filmmaker is an activist, they automatically label them as not being a filmmaker in the first place, and their films may not be objective. However, we know that films are never accurate. Even in film school, they teach that the idea of objectivity in cinema doesn't exist.

But still, there's this concept that you must keep your distance. But if you have distance between your characters and the topic in the movie, then the problem is how deep you can get inside. When I was in Wajda School, I heard so many times from different people that I had to stop; I had to cancel my activism and start to be a filmmaker.

There is a Polish director, Eliza Kubarska. She has made some outstanding films, one about alpinism because she is one. Her work tackles some social issues from the shared perspective, but in her interviews, she often mentions that she tries to keep her distance. Therefore, she chooses to make films abroad to ensure this distance and mentions that she is not an activist, just a filmmaker. For her, film is a tool, and she refrains from activism, which stems from a deep conviction that you cannot simultaneously be an activist and a

filmmaker.

And somehow, I agree with this. I mean, when you watch films made by activists, it's usually just a report from a protest, a collage of information. We can talk to people from our union, for example, or our group. People often ask me: "Oh, you've done some interviews, so now you can make a movie." But it takes more work. Even if I have interviews, it takes years to make a movie out of them, get inside the problem, and make the necessary impression and impact on the viewer.

Otherwise, we get ideological and dogmatic movies or merely portray protests. It's also vital to archive protests, people's demands and problems from our perspective and record what people around us want to say. But there's a difference between those archive materials or videos that we sometimes have to make very quickly to inform society about something and movies. I am convinced that we cannot distance ourselves. So, we have to accept it and dive deeper and look at some issues from a broader perspective. Only when we are part of something can we go genuinely deep.

For example, I would have made the film *The Women's Strike Continues* differently if I would do it now. At the time, the goal was to show these people's problems and highlight how local authorities ignore these problems. And to point out why we must change our thinking about the care sector. I usually filmed the film's protagonists during the day - at home, at work, and at events. To record inside kindergartens, the workers agreed with the directors to let me in for a few minutes. Of course, I could only do this when the children were asleep. That's why, sometimes, it seems that their work is not that hard. When I edited the movie, they asked: "Magda, why didn't you film us at work?". For them, it was essential to exhibit their workplace. For me, it was not so apparent at the time. So now I would shoot them mainly in the workplace.

When I started working at Amazon, I realized it was important to show the workplace from the inside. Of course, this is only sometimes possible

because it would be a huge problem for employers to show the reality of people in the workplace. At least, it is worth starting a discussion about how to show it. When we film ourselves, our work, and our community of employees, we actually break the idea that the workplace is just private property.

We spend many hours at the workplace, losing our health and building community relationships. An employee is not only a part of the employer's private property but he or she is also a social being in the workplace. And we should see workplaces as part of public life, not just private property.

Nowadays, the world of documentary cinema is also affected by individualistic thinking. We can see this in documentaries focusing on one or two people and delving into their psychology and mentality. Sometimes, it's like auto-therapy for the director or for who is like the hero. That's why there are so many personal documentaries. Many laws also protect personal privacy, our individual rights, and our right to be the author of a film. However, no right enables the portrayal of the worker at her workplace to show her body, work, and relationships with colleagues because that would break the idea of privacy.

We perceive the documentary world from a capitalist perspective where an individual's work is not that important. However, the question of what is a workplace doesn't exist in this domain of documentary because it doesn't escape the enterprise. We don't build communities. We don't exist as communities. These are also good examples that show the connection between society and how it is organized, as well as between documentary and culture. As much as the culture of a society has a great impact, perhaps the society and the organization of our society have an even greater effect on documentary filmmaking. Documentary filmmakers don't realize properly why they make films on these or those exact topics. Sometimes, it is not a personal choice but has a much bigger context. This context has to do not only with the fact that we have this kind of

education and that directors usually come from middle-class backgrounds. But also, because we live in a capitalist society organized by a free market, private property is the most important thing, more important than workers' health, subjectivity, and dignity.

What advice would you give to an activist who wants to make movies?

We have to provoke thinking about many different things, such as the law about private property, and we can do it in various ways. Sometimes, it's good to make even a very simple, short movie, but try to break some standards and push the discussion about some structures you challenge.

We have to trust people who watch those movies and trust our society's ability to reflect independently. Our role is to provoke their thinking while changing some norms and standards.

My advice is to question the whole structure of the film world: the norms and the rules by which you make films. We shouldn't stay marginal. So then there's another question: How do we go mainstream? We can go to mainstream challenging mainstream, keeping the movie lucid for the people.

We have to provoke the film industry and culture, its mainstream, to start changing the rules of this world. The organisation of the film world, what we can show and cannot, symbolises how our society is structured.

The film ends with shouts, "This strike is precautionary; now it's time for a general strike". What political hopes do you have for the struggle for women workers' rights worldwide?

I have great hopes for the workers' struggle, although I know that change takes time. My mom recently told me that she didn't join the union at her workplace because she no longer has the motivation to act. She fought during martial law and gave a lot to that fight, and now, every day when she goes to work, she feels that their struggle failed. It was supposed to be beautiful, prosperity, freedom, and justice, but it's completely different: exploitation, inequality, hustle, and

lack of stability. If we give up, we will lose if we let ourselves be fooled and deceived like Polish workers in the 1980s. As a movement, we must always be in this process. Its stages are different; sometimes, we are weaker, sometimes stronger, but we cannot give up. Giving up means that instead of moving forward, we move backwards, and when we are already moving backwards because we have moments of weakness, we take five steps back instead of two.

Sometimes, I miss more discussions about what we want and how we imagine it. How do we imagine

Ukraine after the war? What would it be like for workers to live well there? How do we imagine organizing work in the plant where we work so that we go there more enthusiastically? How do we imagine municipal budgets, public space, support for agriculture, a healthy environment, the organization of our common courtyard and changes in work or job positions? Most often, we share problems, though, after that, we sit in front of the TV and watch movies or series in which the protagonists are often Western middle-class individuals. Are we able to imagine life without

capitalism, without private property? I want our documentary films not only to show the miserable and challenging lives of workers or workers' protests in reaction to something. I would like them to provoke a change in thinking about the world, to break something and bring us closer to a world without exploitation. I know that a film alone will not change anything. However, it is a tool that affects collective thinking. Popular culture shapes specific views, norms, and customs. Thanks to the film, we can introduce some ferment into it.

[Commons](#)

“The working classes have dropped out”

29 March 2024, by **Franck Gaudichaud**

At mid-term, what is the balance sheet of the man who promised to “reopen the main avenues” of socialist President Salvador Allende?

Gabriel Boric came to power embodying the hope of a post-neoliberal turn, in a very particular context since it followed the social explosion of 2019. He was driven by very strong demands, particularly social ones, and was at the head of a coalition including parties much further to the left than he was (such as the Chilean Communist Party) and fundamentally critical of the twenty years of government in the post-dictatorship period, the Concertation (between 1990 and 2010), marked by compromises, even neoliberal management of power by left-wing governments during this period.

Boric thus arrived with promises of profound reforms in a country where the private sector represented the structuring base of society, with a stranglehold on broad and largely deregulated sectors (education, health, pensions and so on). In general, then, there was the hope of a “new Chile” in which the public would succeed in regaining the upper hand over market forces that Boric had

hinted at. On all these aspects, the results are extremely disappointing.

Due to the lack of a majority in Congress?

Yes, but that's not all. The government is not in a position of strength within the institutions, so it has to negotiate constantly and has ended up governing from the “extreme centre,” including the reintegration of central figures of the Socialist Party into power. The president was not able to take advantage of the honeymoon of the first six months of his term: he staked everything on the approval of the first draft of the constitution to consolidate a political dynamic with a progressive orientation. Its rejection (by 62%, in September 2022 – editor's note) was a cold shower. This defeat hurt the left as a whole and the social movements, which are now struggling after a long and rather chaotic electoral cycle that led to a second constituent process, dominated by the far right. In the end, this second draft of the constitution was also rejected – by more than 55% of the voters. The government appeared to be neutralized, unable to regain the political initiative.

In addition, the lack of capacity to

mobilize social bases and social movements means that the government does not count on a broad and structured support that will allow it to compete with opposition forces. Even less to challenge the Chilean oligarchy, which can count on the most conservative and traditional parties to represent its interests.

Still, progress has been made, and polls give the president an approval rating of between 26 and 30 percent?

Absolutely, which is more than its predecessors. After two years, he can still count on a base, and it is undeniable that he has a certain foothold among the progressive middle classes with university degrees. But the working classes have dropped out.

There has been progress in the social field (reduction of the working week to forty hours, but with new flexibilizations of work, increase in minimum wages, easier access to free primary healthcare and so on) but the major structural reforms (especially fiscal reforms) have not been able to see the light of day, and the dominant framework remains totally capitalist and dominated by the same oligarchy.

The disappointment is very great and strengthens the far right.

A rise also favoured by an unfavourable security context, with an increase in crime?

It is true that, in about six years, Chile has seen a doubling of its rate of the most violent crimes, with a clear increase in the activity of groups linked to drug cartels (such as the Venezuelan cartel called "El tren de Aragua"). This violence, sometimes sadly spectacular, has a great impact on the working and middle classes. However, the figures show a slight improvement in recent months, and we are faced with another problem that is difficult to overcome, sharpened by the ability of the mainstream media to impose security issues in the public debate, from an angle unfavourable to the left.

However, Boric's response to the problem of cartel violence has also disappointed many of his own people. The reform of the Carabinieri Corps, which has been responsible for serious human rights violations, particularly in 2019, has never taken place. Boric had always refused to militarize the issue of law and order, but this has now

been done, in the context of the fight against crime, but also in the conflict with the Mapuche people in the south of the country. There is a real public policy problem here regarding an issue that is much easier to manage for the far right, which obviously advocates a militarization at all costs, supported by a xenophobic and racist discourse.

Are we a long way from the "radical left" president that the right likes to portray?

President Boric has always shown himself to be willing to engage in dialogue, even to seek to create a certain national unity, as was seen during the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1973 coup d'état. This strategy does not pay off when we are dealing with a right that does not want it, that continues to claim - at least in part - the legacy of the dictatorship, that systematically opposes any compromise and seeks, on the contrary, to permanently "hysterise" any political debate, for example by pointing the finger at the left wing of the government in a country where virulent anti-communism remains present. The

recent accidental death of ex-president Sebastian Piñera, one of those responsible for the repression of the 2019 revolt, and the way in which Boric has nevertheless put forward his "republican" profile, has also surprised or even shocked part of his activist base.

In fact, Boric has made many symbolic gestures that have shown an evolution of his ideological positioning, to the point of recently claiming the legacy of the Christian Democrat President Patricio Aylwin (1990-1994), a major figure of the transition era in the 1990s.

Boric had, however, constructed himself politically in opposition to this historical period. To date, we can say that his mandate is more in line with what the transition period and its "consensus" represented. Fifty years after the coup, if we have to make a comparison, it is with Michelle Bachelet and her administration rather than that of the Popular Unity government of the 1970s.

19 March 2024

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

In the face of war, solidarity is being organized in Sudan

28 March 2024, by Paul Martial

For almost a year now, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Hemedti, have been waging war against each other, dragging Sudan into the abyss, after fomenting a coup d'état together.

Humanitarian crisis

The victims are still the civilian population. Many have fled the

combat zones, as in the two towns next to the capital Khartoum, where the Sudanese Armed Forces have managed to recapture Omdurman and are trying to reach the RSF-occupied Bahri.

Those who have been unable to escape are being bombed and beaten by soldiers from both sides. The United Nations estimates that more than eight million people are displaced and 20 million lack food, a situation that could rapidly lead to "the worst food crisis in the world". All the more so as

the belligerents are rejecting any idea of a truce or the setting up of a humanitarian corridor to allow the delivery of food and medicines. Al-Burhan stubbornly refuses to allow aid to enter via Chad for the people of Darfur.

Emergency rooms

As the linchpins of the Sudanese revolution, the activists on the resistance committees are continuing their work through solidarity actions.

As a result, emergency rooms have been set up across the country, acting as temporary accommodation, a treatment room and a canteen. Funding for these facilities is provided by donors within the country and by the diaspora via mobile banking applications such as Bankak. The internet outage has had serious consequences, preventing supplies from being delivered. The RSFs in Khartoum cut the network to force technicians to restore it in Darfur, one of their strongholds. Volunteers from these grassroots groups, often young people, are targeted by both the army and the RSFs. They are accused of

helping the opposing camp and, above all, are known for having been activists against the dictatorship.

The persistence of the revolution

Through their networks, these grassroots groups are able to respond to the needs of the population, such as organising the exfiltration of families in areas where fighting is raging, finding an electrician for a faulty installation, fuel for ambulances or

generators to supply health centres. They are only just beginning to receive funding from the major humanitarian organisations. These structures are a response to the failure of the state. This was already true of the resistance committees when Burhan and Hemedti were running the country, and it is even more true today. These self-managed structures symbolise the permanence of the Sudanese revolution and appear to be a credible alternative to the violent and corrupt Sudanese elite.

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

Issues and challenges in the municipal elections in Turkey

27 March 2024, by **Uraz Aydin**

For the Islamo-nationalist ruling bloc, the main aim of these municipal elections is to win back the main cities, including Istanbul and Ankara.

Winning back Istanbul

President Erdogan had gone so far as to cancel and re-run the Istanbul ballot in the previous 2019 municipal elections because of the risk of losing the administration of this megalopolis of 16 million inhabitants. The Istanbul municipality that Erdogan won in the 1994 elections had been important not only for his own rise but also for that of the Islamist movement in Turkey, particularly in terms of the development of Islamic capital thanks to the municipality's enormous financial resources. So after losing Istanbul and Ankara to opposition candidates in 2019, it is crucial for Erdogan and his bloc to reclaim these mayoralties. For the moment, the current mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem Imamoğlu, looks set to win against Erdogan's foal, Murat Kurum, a former environment minister.

A new Islamist party

However, a new player, the New Prosperity Party (YRP), is emerging in the political spectrum of the Islamo-conservative right. While Erdogan remains the undisputed leader for half of society, his party, the AKP, which has become a hotbed of upstarts, has suffered a loss of legitimacy. This weakening of the party has benefited more radical formations such as the YRP. But unlike other parties that remain meekly in Erdogan's political orbit, the YRP, which obtained 2.6% in the 2023 legislative elections and five MPs (thanks to its alliance with Erdogan's bloc), is now daring to challenge Reis.

For these municipal elections, the YRP has refused to join this alliance and is thus competing with the AKP in dozens of towns, with a more Islamic, more social discourse and more intransigent support for Palestine. By integrating AKP diehards into local government, the YRP risks not only winning AKP-led mayoralties but also

costing Erdogan's bloc Istanbul by not calling for a vote for Mr Kurum and fielding its own candidate. "We are not a party that exists solely to help the AKP win", the YRP vice-president recently declared.

The Kurds and the opposition

As for the Kurdish movement, under its new name, the DEM Party, it will very probably win the vast majority of mayoralties in the Kurdish region in the south-east of the country, as has always been the case. But for several years now, almost all the mayors of the Kurdish movement have been removed from office (and many imprisoned) on charges of being linked to terrorism. In their place, pro-Erdogan administrators have been appointed.

As far as the western towns are concerned, the DEM Party has long sought to forge an alliance with the CHP (the main opposition party) which would be officially recognised and declared, and under which it would

obtain concrete gains (district mayorships, municipal councillors, etc.), unlike in previous elections where the Kurds received virtually nothing in return for their support, which was very often decisive. Under pressure from its base to adopt a more autonomous policy vis-à-vis the opposition, the DEM Party, in the

absence of a satisfactory agreement, put forward its own candidates in almost all the towns and districts of the west, without, however, conducting an active campaign. In this way, it has maintained its visibility in the electoral game, but without actively competing with opposition candidates, so as not to help the AKP

win.

However, the radical left is once again very divided in this campaign, and the variable-geometry alliances between the various formations can change from district to district.

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

Another Left Is Possible

26 March 2024, by **Brian Ashley, Gilbert Achcar**

Climate change, wars, genocides, economic turbulence: the world in which we presently live is worrying and the future looks quite bleak indeed, far from the hopes that existed at the turn of the century. This sorry state of the world is in large part the result of decisions made in the last decade of the past century. It is indeed in the 1990s that the present global conditions were determined – during the “unipolar moment” that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the United States was very much aware of its ability to shape the international environment.

During those years, Washington opted for the perpetuation of its global dominance at the cost of world peace. This was to be achieved by maintaining the United States’ permanent readiness for war and renewing the allegiance of its Cold War allies in Europe and East Asia (whom Zbigniew Brzezinski famously called its “vassals”) by stoking again past tensions with Russia and China. Washington treated these two countries as potential enemies although neither of them represented any longer a systemic challenge to global capitalism, which they had both integrated into. This fundamental policy adopted by Washington in the 1990s led to what I have described since then as the New Cold War.

The economic corollary of this policy was unbridled neoliberalism, including the toughening of the neoliberal diktats of international financial

institutions, the culmination of the imperialism of free trade with the foundation of the World Trade Organization, and the “shock therapy” fostered by Washington and its allies in post-Soviet Russia. This went along with a benign neglect of the dangers of climate change – not out of ignorance (Al Gore was Bill Clinton’s vice-president during those fateful years) but rather deliberately, by ranking it low among the priorities involved in running the unipolar imperium. U.S. imperial hubris reached its peak with the presidency of George W. Bush and the wars that his administration launched in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Unbridled neoliberalism produced the most important crisis of global capitalism since the Great Depression of the interwar years of the twentieth century. The Great Recession of the late 2000s led to massive state intervention using public funds to bail out the banking system. Unlike what many believed then, this crisis did not usher in the end of neoliberalism; on the contrary, it led to a renewed neoliberal onslaught. The same is true of the next gigantic economic crisis, the 2020 Great Lockdown provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic. That is because paradigm shifts in applied economics are not manifestations of an intellectual process but primarily the reflection of shifts in the balance of social forces.

This balance has remained until now largely in favour of global capitalism

at the expense of global labour. It was worsened by the two successive economic crises, along with the rise of unemployment and/or the expansion of working poverty, both of which further weakened working class resistance and unionization. France, “the land where, more than anywhere else, historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decision” (Friedrich Engels, 1885), recently illustrated this adverse shift in the balance of social forces. The pensions reform, which has been a key objective pursued by French capitalism for a few decades, was defeated in 1995 by the most important surge in class struggle that France has seen since 1968. The reform was finally enforced in 2023 in spite of stubborn resistance by the French labour movement.

The social consequences of the economic crisis of the late 2000s fed a sociopolitical radicalization in two opposite directions. It catalysed, on the one hand, a rise of progressive resistance struggles during the following decade. The global wave of revolts spectacularly inaugurated by the Arab Spring in 2011 was followed by subsequent mobilizations in countries such as Spain, Greece and even the United States itself. A second global wave of revolts in 2019 included a Second Arab Spring and struggle upsurges from East Asia to Latin America before getting eventually choked off by Covid-19. This progressive radicalization found a political translation in the rise of

mass-based anti-neoliberal currents in various countries, such as Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain and, most unexpectedly, Jeremy Corbyn's accession to the leadership of the British Labour Party in 2015-2020 and Bernie Sander's amazing presidential campaign in 2016, as well as the electoral surge in France of the movement led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon in 2017-2022 and a new wave of progressive governmental changes in Latin America - in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Brazil.

This progressive wave was, however, counterbalanced by a trend of reactionary radicalization whose initial rise was observed since the onset of the neoliberal onslaught. While the political "centre" has kept shifting rightward ever since, the far right surged globally with the onset of neofascistic governments in several countries, including major powers such as India under Narendra Modi, Russia under Vladimir Putin, Brazil under Jair Bolsonaro, and in the United States itself under Donald Trump. These developments confirmed what Samuel Huntington had identified as a "reverse wave" in the global process of political democratization. The reversal included the increasingly authoritarian course on which China set under Xi Jinping, who became the country's "paramount leader" in 2012.

The overall global balance has clearly tilted in favour of the reactionary radicalization. This is not a product of objective conditions alone, but also, and very much so, a product of the left's own shortcomings and failure. Indeed, the new left-wing surge of recent years has reproduced many of the problems that marred the twentieth century's left. These problems include well-known flaws such as electoralism along with self-limitation when in government or when it becomes within reach, bureaucratism, caudillismo and machismo, and neo-campism, which - unlike the old campism that consisted in a systematic alignment behind the so-called "socialist camp" - consists in knee-jerk support for, or lack of critique of, whoever is antagonized by Washington and its Western allies, in conformity with the dictum according to which "the enemy of my enemy is

my friend".

The leftwing radicalization has thus been marred by serious limitations. Fundamentally, the left has not managed to reinvent itself, with few exceptions consisting in new forms of struggle invented by mass movements springing into action among the new generation, such as Black Lives Matter in the United States and the Resistance Committees in Sudan. On the other hand, most of the far right did reinvent itself in the guise of neofascism: it learned the lessons of the failure of twentieth-century fascism and adapted to what it takes to be accepted by the present-day capitalist order and approved by big business. For that purpose, it has ardently espoused neoliberalism and proclaimed its adherence to procedural democracy while gradually emptying it of content once in power by way of authoritarian curtailment of political freedoms and suppression of basic conditions of political competition. This reinvented far right has been rising globally at the expense of both the neoliberal mainstream and the left, building up on the social resentment created by neoliberalism and channelling it above all into scapegoating migrants.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, launched by a Putin regime that has been ever more drifting to the far right, provided a major boost to the Western imperialist alliance under U.S. hegemony. It renewed the original rationale for this alliance, portrayed as one of "democracies" against authoritarianism, with the hypocrisy and multiple standards that were already familiar during the Cold War. It also allowed a major expansion of NATO to happen with the adhesion of Finland and Sweden to the alliance, and it triggered a massive increase of military expenditure globally to the great benefit of arms producers.

Whereas Biden thus managed to reverse the deleterious effect of the Trump presidency on transatlantic relations, he basically continued his predecessor's foreign policy in two major respects: Firstly, Biden continued Trump's provocative stance on China, with the difference that he tried to disguise the mercantilist

animus of U.S. imperialism against the rise of China's economic power by pretending here again to uphold "democracy" against China's autocratic drift under Xi. Secondly, Biden carried forward Trump's blatantly pro-Israel stance despite the lack of affinities between his administration and Israel's far-right's government. He thus focused on expanding the "normalization" of relations between Gulf oil monarchies and Israel by deploying intensive efforts to get the Saudi kingdom to join the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in establishing an open relationship with the Zionist state. On the other hand, the Biden administration did not revert any of Trump's pro-Israel moves, nor did it try to hold back the Israeli far right from further expanding its settler-colonial encroachment on the Palestinian West Bank.

This policy laid the ground for the Biden administration's uninhibited endorsement of the genocidal war waged by Israel in Gaza since 7 October 2023, a war that has become indeed the first U.S.-Israeli joint war. By supporting the stated goal of "eradicating Hamas", a mass organization that has been ruling the Gaza Strip since 2007, the Biden administration and most of its Western allies have de facto greenlighted the ongoing crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Israeli armed forces: the massacre of a huge number of civilians, including a very high proportion of children, the displacement of the vast majority of the population in what amounts to a massive instance of "ethnic cleansing", the destruction of the vast majority of dwellings so as to make it impossible for the population to return to the areas it was displaced from.

This first open condonation by Western governments of an openly genocidal war waged by a far-right government since the Second World War has hugely discredited Western liberalism and exposed its racist worldview. It has allowed a qualitative shift in the banalization of the European far right, not least through a joint condemnation of a purported "new antisemitism" that has become a thin veil for the joint Islamophobic manifestation of traditional

antisemites and neocolonial white supremacists. As a matter of fact, the Western governments' reaction to the Israeli onslaught on Gaza has given a major impetus to the global rightward drift.

At the same time, the growing worldwide indignation towards the genocidal massacre of Palestinians, including growing protest within the United States itself, is a further indication of the persistence of a significant potential, especially among the youth, in support of progressive causes, such as opposition to imperialist and colonial wars, to

racism in all its forms, to gender oppression, to the continuous neoliberal dismantlement of all social gains achieved in the previous century, to capitalism itself, which is increasingly deprived by neoliberalism of the elements of social justice that softened it for a few decades, and, last but not least, to the ever more criminal benign neglect of governments in the face of climate change and its dreadful consequences.

Capturing this potential and channelling it into organized forms that could tremendously enhance its effectiveness and confer a new credibility and hopefulness on the

fight to change the world require a reinvention of socialist anticapitalism, fully absorbing the lessons of the defeats of the twentieth century's Left and liquidating the unsettled accounts of its huge historical bankruptcy. In sum, in order to be able to convince at large that "another world is possible" – the central slogan of the global justice movement since the turn of the century – it is imperative to first show in deeds, and not only in words, that another Left is possible. It is therefore highly urgent for the Left to reinvent itself.

13 December 2023

Terrorist Attack in Moscow: When the government's response is more frightening than the terrorist attack itself

25 March 2024, by Posle

Despite numerous speculations about the involvement of Islamic fundamentalists, we still do not know for sure who the perpetrators were, nor who was behind the attack. However, some conclusions can already be drawn. First, the terrorist attack clearly took the Russian authorities by surprise. Only recently, Vladimir Putin called the warnings of Western intelligence agencies about possible terrorist attacks in Russian cities a "provocation." With direct contact between the intelligence services of Russia and Western countries broken, and public warnings ignored by the Russian authorities for clearly political reasons (information about impending terrorist attacks was published shortly before the presidential election), the danger of further tragedies is growing. The Russian authorities expect their own citizens to pay the price for the government's conspiratorial view of the world and mistrust of any foreign intelligence.

Second, the capacity of the Russian

state is again in question. It was first severely challenged six months ago during [Prigozhin's mutiny](#). It turned out that the most powerful special services in a city packed with video cameras were not only unable to prevent this heinous crime, but were barely able to catch its perpetrators. Symptomatically, the day before the attack, the Russian financial watchdog Rosfinmonitoring [added](#) the non-existent "international LGBT public movement" to its list of "terrorists and extremists." When the fight against imaginary enemies takes precedence, it is all too easy to overlook the real threat.

Third, the Russian state, as always, will try to profit from this situation, and this is why the state's reaction can be more frightening than the terrorist attack itself. State Duma deputies, pro-war Z-bloggers, and the former president of Russia Dmitri Medvedev are already demanding to lift the moratorium on the death penalty for terrorists (whom, it should be recalled, the Russian state also

calls peaceful opponents of the regime, including [Boris Kagarlitsky](#)). Vladimir Putin is in no hurry to recognize the involvement of Islamicists in the terrorist attack, but he has already detected a "Ukrainian trace." There is no doubt that the terrorist attack will be used to justify further crackdowns, the adoption of new repressive laws, the escalation of violence in Ukraine and, possibly, a new wave of mobilization.

This terrorist attack is not the first of its kind: we can recall the apartment bombings of 1999 or the Beslan school siege in 2004. Yet there is an important difference: the unprecedented degree of violence into which Russian society has been plunged with the war in Ukraine. The media have already reported that the alleged perpetrator of the terrorist attack had his [ear cut off](#) by Russian security forces and was forced to eat it. Right-wingers of all stripes have already started using anti-migrant and Islamophobic rhetoric in the context of the terrorist attack. Can the Russian

regime, which opened a Pandora's box of unprecedented violence when it launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, keep it under control? Given

the inability of the security services to prevent the terrorist attack, there is great reason to doubt it.

23 March 2024

Source: [Posle.media](#).

The U.S. Right also Wants to Get Rid of Birth Control

24 March 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Claiming to be defending women who might be harmed by hormonal contraception, and arguing that they are also protecting women's dignity and the family, rightwing social media has begun a campaign to end recreational sex. Getting rid of the birth control pill they suggest is a feminist issue, good for women's bodies and their souls.

The right's ideological arguments against the pill, like their arguments against abortion, are couched in terms of defending the family and women themselves. The conservative Heritage Foundation states that "...conservatives have to lead the way in restoring sex to its true purpose, and ending recreational sex and senseless use of birth control pills."

Rightwing activist Charles Rufo claims that, "The pill causes health problems for many women. 'Recreational sex' is a large part of the reason we have so many single-mother households, which drives poverty, crime, and dysfunction. The point of sex is to create children—this is natural, normal, and good."

One rightwing woman commentator, speaking on X, suggests the birth

control pill has often caused women serious psychological problems and led to recreational sex that was often "loveless and degrading." She says that there should be "a feminist movement for rewilding sex and returning the danger, the intimacy, and the consequentiality to sex." In this way, she says, women can "reconnect with the fullness of our embodied nature." Republican politicians have taken up these arguments and some propose to restrict or ban the pill.

Most women are highly unlikely to buy this argument. The birth control pill has been widely used since 1960 by tens of millions of women over the last 70 years, and though the pill may not be the best form of contraception for all women, and while a relatively small percentage of women suffer adverse effects, the pill has allowed women to take control of their own lives.

The pill is often talked about in terms of the "sexual revolution" but it has been part and parcel of the movement for women's liberation. The pill, widely used by both single and married women, made it possible for women to plan their careers and their families and, yes, to have sex for

pleasure when they wanted to. Working class, and poor women no longer had to have children that they couldn't afford and support or so many children that they would be overwhelmed with domestic labor and emotionally exhausted. Most teenage girls have their first sexual intercourse at 16 or 17 years of age, but some earlier, and so many parents often try to protect them from unwanted pregnancies by arranging with a doctor for them to take birth control pills.

A recent national poll by Americans for Contraception, as reported in The New York Times, found that 80 percent of voters stated that protecting access to contraception was "deeply important" to them, and even among Republicans 72 percent view birth control favorably. Still, Republican politicians will likely try to restrict birth control pills. Just this month in the state of Arizona, Democrats put forward a bill to protect access to all forms of birth control, but the Republicans there voted it down. Women and their allies will have to be on guard against another attack on their freedom.

24 March 2024

Milei government at a crossroads

23 March 2024, by **Martin N.**

On 1 March, with his speech at the opening of the Assembly's ordinary sessions, Milei seems to have put things right, at least as far as his relationship with the centre wing is concerned, i.e. with the sector known as the "friendly opposition". This is because, even while maintaining an aggressive and even violent discourse, he has proposed a new negotiation: a pact, to be signed at the end of May, between the national state and the provinces. This pact, although based entirely on his ultra-liberal political line, would also involve a fiscal agreement to help the provinces that are on the verge of bankruptcy after the government cut off funds. For this reason, the governors are open to the idea and even in favour of it, even though Milei has made approval of the omnibus bill a condition.

Provincial funding vs "omnibus" legislation

Only time will tell whether this is a strategic change - more in the way of dialogue and negotiation with circumstantial allies, as part of the presidential entourage seems to be calling for - or a purely tactical change to regain the political initiative and buy time. We shall see how the negotiations evolve, as they do not appear to be easy to bring to a conclusion. On the one hand, some governors and centrist political figures

do not seem prepared to accept the bill if it remains on the same terms that led them to oppose it. Likewise, accepting the May Pact in its current terms could cause them to lose all political initiative and the position of strength built up after the withdrawal of the law. It remains to be seen whether Milei will accept counter-proposals which, while less radical than his own, will benefit the Argentine bourgeoisie just as much. A central element in the negotiations will be the real impact of the government's blackmail on the funds intended for the provinces. The rejection of its megadecree by the Senate on Thursday 14 March (it is now the deputies who must decide whether to reject or definitively adopt the decree) does not seem to change the situation. Negotiations remain open-ended and the rhetoric relatively moderate.

The social base of the centrists reluctant to accept Milei

A possible political agreement does not necessarily mean that the government will be able to move forward smoothly. Firstly, because a section of the middle classes is increasingly shocked by the President's "style": his many verbal attacks and his Trump-style use of

Twitter (by tweeting or retweeting discriminatory messages and insults) are shocking, and even right-wing journalists are taking exception. Similarly, during his speeches, when he questioned the number of people who disappeared during the last dictatorship, when he spoke of "murderers in green headscarves" (in reference to the headscarves worn by feminists defending the right to abortion) or even when, on 8 March, at a time when tens of thousands of women were demonstrating in the streets of the country, he decided to rename the "Women's Lounge" in the government palace the "Heroes of the Nation Lounge" with male portraits. This sector of the middle class is part of the social base of the centrists and can push for reconfigurations in the event of an agreement too favourable to the government.

But the central element will be the possibility of a social explosion. Faced with constant attacks on purchasing power, rising poverty, lay-offs and temporary closures of some major companies, the patience of a large sector of workers may be coming to an end. The Argentine economy is in such deep crisis that the government, even if it buys time to stabilise the accounts, will only have increased the misery of workers and pensioners, and therefore of part of its electoral base.

21 March 2024

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

A shift to the right but an uncertain future after elections in Portugal

22 March 2024, by **Adriano Campos**

The Partido Socialista (Socialist Party - PS), the outgoing government party and until now holder of an absolute parliamentary majority, fell from 41.6% (2022) to 28.6%, following its overthrow as a result of questionable prosecution action against prime

minister Antonio Costa, who resigned on 7 November 2023. Its government experienced an accelerated erosion, mired as it was in cases of alleged patronage and unable to respond to the housing crisis, wage erosion due to inflation and the weakening of

public services. This paved the way for the right's biggest victory in decades. On its left, the Partido Comunista Português (Portuguese Communist Party -PCP) went from six to four seats, after the loss of its last elected representative in the Alentejo, and the

loss of one of its two elected representatives in Setúbal, despite the fact that these are its traditional strongholds. Its score dropped to 3.3%. On the other hand, the Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc - BE) managed to increase its votes slightly, maintaining a parliamentary group with 5 MPs (4.5%). On the centre-left, the LIVRE party (PVE - European Green Party) went from 1 to 4 MEPs (3.2%), forming a parliamentary group, while the animal rights party PAN retained its only MP.

Far-right win more than 1 million votes

Since the fall of the Socialist Party's government with an absolute majority, announced on 7 November 2023, polls have continued to highlight the rise of the far right. Until 2019, Portugal was an exception in a Europe where the far right was gaining ground in national parliaments. Elected as a single MP in 2019, former PSD leader André Ventura has brought the method of global Trumpism to the Portuguese context. Relying on an image of fighting corruption and launching a repressive, misogynistic, xenophobic and authoritarian agenda, Ventura has managed to drain the traditional right, combining hitherto suppressed themes such as praise of the colonial past in political articulation with sectors such as the police force. By reaching 7% in the 2022 elections, CHEGA had erased the CDS-PP, a Christian Democratic party that was the most right-wing party in the system for decades, from the benches of parliament.

Financed by the rentier sectors of the bourgeoisie and with marginalized members of the Portuguese right as its cadres, CHEGA has equipped itself with a powerful system for disseminating content on social networks, capturing the votes of thousands of abstentionists and, more worryingly, young voters. By coming out on top in the Algarve, a region that suffers from the neglect and abandonment of successive governments in terms of access to housing and public services, CHEGA

has proven its ability to capture the frustration and resentment of part of the population. This is based on hate speech that blames immigrants for the housing problem and the lack of places in public services.

Throughout the campaign, Ventura, supported by Santiago Abascal himself and praised by Bolsonaro and Viktor Orbán, made a distinction between "legal" immigrants (from the former territories colonized by Portugal) and growing "uncontrolled" immigration, in his own words, from the Indian subcontinent. To be a true Trumpian avatar, ticking all the boxes, Ventura also questioned the reliability of the electoral process. Now with 48 MPs, he claims a place in the sun in the new balance within Parliament and thanks to the influence he can have on the government. In recent years, Ventura has tried to conquer a place on the streets through demonstrations, which have proved unsuccessful, and he will now do everything he can to ensure that his electoral strength translates into a socially integrated organization, under the aegis of the "fight against corruption" and an authoritarian program. What has so far been a virtual and electoral phenomenon could take on the dangerous contours of a hate organization present in the streets.

A right victory fraught with problems

The AD (PSD+CDS) won the elections with barely more votes than in its 2022 electoral defeat, even losing votes in several districts of the country. In addition to CHEGA, it is also being squeezed to the right by the IL, whose agenda is to cut taxes, impose privatizations and slash employment laws. The AD ran a disastrous campaign, with successive appearances of former rulers from the Troika and austerity era. [1] Many of its leaders evidently still envisage restricting abortion rights, denying the climate crisis, and attacking immigrants. For the time being, we can expect a reduction in taxes for businesses, a strengthening of the private sector in the health care sector

and increased protection for property owners.

After years of hesitation and while in the last election maintaining ambiguities on CHEGA's participation in a right-wing government had contributed to strengthening the absolute majority of the PS, the PSD this time adopted a "cordon sanitaire" electoral slogan promising not to govern with CHEGA, while seeking to integrate only IL. However, there is no guarantee that this solution will be stable. Now in opposition, Pedro Nuno Santos, secretary general of the PS, said on election night that this government could not count on its votes to approve the state budget in October, so the AD will depend on the votes of CHEGA. It is not yet clear whether Montenegro will anticipate the crisis before the 2025 state budget (which will be voted on in October this year), either by presenting an amending budget, or by showing himself ready for new elections or by taking the risky gamble of negotiating with CHEGA. The right will therefore govern by a thread.

PS pays the bill for the "absolute majority"

In 2019, after rejecting negotiations with parties to its left, the PS put in place a strategy aimed at winning its "absolute majority". Using the "Macronist" tactic of presenting himself as the barrier against the far right, António Costa won this absolute majority, but he stopped dead in their tracks the gains made in previous years on issues such as the national health service, the housing crisis and the valorization of wages eroded by the effect of inflation. For two years, the PS operated at a slower pace while suspicions of mismanagement and even corruption multiplied within the government.

The new leadership of the PS, under Pedro Nuno Santos, initially presented as a representative of the "left wing" of the party, turned out to be a hoax, embodying the defence of the legacy of the "absolute majority." During the campaign, he proposed a reciprocal

agreement to the AD so as not to prevent the other from governing if it did not have an absolute majority in parliament.

This orientation proved unable to attract the votes of young people and abstentionists. The PS has thus discredited the hypothesis of a new parliamentary majority, defended by all parties to the left of the PS, to confront the right and respond to the failures of recent years. And the PS campaign facilitated a right-wing victory, the most significant in the history of Portuguese democracy.

Now in opposition, the PS promises not to vote for motions of censure in the Assembly, which allows the AD to form a government. And at the same time, it is betting on the rapprochement of the AD with CHEGA and says that it will not vote on the state budgets. Without an alternative program on the issues that led to the discrediting of the “absolute majority,” this opposition will be meaningless, and there will be no shortage of voices within the PS calling for salvaging the budgets presented by the right.

Left must put forward clear programme and unitary policy

The electoral erosion of the PCP is the result of political mistakes and permanent sectarianism. By rejecting three-way negotiations (PS, BE and PCP) during the years of the *geringonça* (the “thing,” as the PS government formed in 2015 with the support of the BE and the PCP) was called, the PCP left the PS with the

role of the left’ political centre. In parliament and in the social and trade union movements, the PCP hindered unitary initiatives on issues where the PS was a blocking force. Two years ago, its campist stance on the invasion of Ukraine led the PCP to a strong isolation, even in sectors of the population where it still had some influence. During the campaign, the oscillation between claims of political autonomy and unclear calls for a left-wing majority led to its worst result since 1975.

One of the protagonists of the evening was LIVRE (“free” in Portuguese). Initially founded as “the party of one man” (Rui Tavares, a former MEP who broke with the BE in 2011), LIVRE has followed a trajectory of political realignment and organic growth, gaining membership in the European Green Party and basing its entire programme on fervent praise of the European Union. Analysed in this way, it is to the right of the PS, which puts forward a muted and cynical criticism of the European establishment. Banking on an environmentalist agenda and innovative rhetoric, Tavares embodies a subordinate annex of the PS. During the campaign, he supported a three-camp theory, according to which the exclusion of CHEGA (the first camp) from any governmental solution or parliamentary majority should allow the second camp, made up of the PS, BE, PCP, LIVRE and the pro-animal PAN party to govern with more MPs than the AD and IL (the third camp). This thesis has fizzled out: in the elections, we witnessed an unprecedented growth of the far right, due to the decline in abstention, and any government resulting from an agreement between the PS, the BE, the PCP, LIVRE and the PAN would fail in the face of a joint rejection of

AD, CHEGA and IL.

In this unfavourable context, the BE was able to maintain its parliamentary representation and even win 35,000 additional votes. As stated in the resolution of the Bloc’s National Office, “the Bloc’s resilience is due to its clarity on three essential aspects: 1) clarity of the content of governance of public services, social rights, labour and income; 2) confrontation with the economic power, by denouncing the right-wing tax counter-reform and by confronting the rentiers, real estate and all the beneficiaries of inflation (banks, hypermarkets, energy), who have moreover shown their hostility to the Bloc; and finally, 3) confrontation with the far right, creating for it the only serious difficulty it has faced in the entire campaign: explaining the millions at the origin of its financing”.

Faced with the rise of the far right and the announcement of a radicalized right-wing government, the left has a dual mission: to organise the struggle against the new government and to present a credible alternative. Popular mobilization against the conservative agenda must take place in the streets, relying on the strength of the LGBTQI+, feminist and anti-racist movements and by contestation of the dominant ideology, on social networks and in schools, currently under the strong influence of the far right and ultra-neoliberals. Spaces for meeting and convergence will be essential to build a unitary policy that offers the country hope for an alternative government, on key issues such as wages, housing and public services. This struggle has already begun and will be an essential step in the gigantic popular mobilization expected on 25 April 2024 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution.

Reflecting on the Rejected Referendums in Ireland

21 March 2024, by Diana O'Dwyer

Polling data shows that the Family Referendum was rejected by a significantly higher margin in rural areas, ranging from 80% in Donegal to 61% across Dublin. There was less of a clear urban-rural pattern with the Care Referendum but in Dublin, No votes were higher in working class than middle class constituencies for both referendums. An exit poll found that the majority of Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin and (mostly right wing) Independent voters voted no to both referendums; Fine Gael, Green Party and Labour voters voted Yes-Yes and most People Before Profit and Social Democrat voters voted Yes to the Family referendum but No to the Care referendum. The 6% difference between the No votes in the two referendums suggests that around 6% of voters voted Yes to the Family Referendum and No to the Care Referendum. This compares to 68% of voters who voted No-No and 26% who voted Yes-Yes.

No new rights on offer

The government's failure to give people any real, material reasons to vote yes was undoubtedly a major factor in the rejection of the referendums. Recognition of families not based on marriage would have had a mainly symbolic effect as unmarried families largely already have similar rights to married families and the impact on any remaining differences was uncertain. Unlike with the successful 2015 referendum on marriage equality for LGBTQ+ couples, there were no tangible new rights or entitlements that the government could point to as being granted by the new wording.

Despite this, People Before Profit and representative organisations of lone and unmarried parents like Treoir, One Family and SPARK advocated for a Yes vote. Irrespective of its likely minimal direct or material impact, we believed it was correct to vote yes to

remove archaic Catholic language put into the Constitution in 1937 that had helped to legitimise decades of discrimination and mistreatment against unmarried mothers and their children.

For the Care Referendum, the best argument the government could come up with for voting yes was that people could use the amendment to sue the government for failing to provide them with services. The obvious response - why not just provide the services? - was difficult for the government to answer without admitting that they had no intention of providing women, carers or people with disabilities with the services they need and that this referendum was a purely symbolic gesture with no real world impact. This was also clear from the Attorney-General's advice, leaked and published at the last minute on the Ditch news website, which revealed that an unusual Irish language translation of the word "strive", meaning "aspire", had been chosen to try to ensure that the amendment would not give people additional rights. The Irish language version of the Constitution trumps the English version and so is likely to have been relied on by the courts.

Another nail in the coffin came in an interview with the then Taoiseach [the Irish Prime Minister], Leo Varadkar, in the final week of the campaign where he said that looking after family members was the responsibility of families, not the state. This drove home to many people how little real change the government intended with these amendments. It reinforced the arguments being made by an inspiring grassroots Yes-No movement of people with disabilities and carers. Focusing on the wording of the amendment on care, they argued that it would constitutionally enshrine care as confined to the family, and that the wording was insulting to people with disabilities because it implicitly portrayed them as merely the objects of care, rather than as equal bearers of human rights. Varadkar has since

resigned as Taoiseach. The referendum result was likely more an illustration of his already obvious unpopularity with voters, rather than the reason for his resignation, however, especially as voters for his own party endorsed the changes.

Distrust of a Hated Government, Uncertainty and a 'Culture War'

Both the Taoiseach's interview and the Attorney General's leaked advice reinforced the deep rooted sense of distrust that ordinary people rightly feel towards this government. Without any strong reasons to vote yes, a huge sense of uncertainty emerged around both referendums and fuelled a feeling of "If you don't know, vote no", reinforced by a deep anti-government sentiment. A sense that people were being played for fools by the government became widespread. The far right and conservative No-No side capitalised on this distrust and spread a vast array of lies and bullshit on social media, including that people would lose their child benefit/carers' allowance if there was a yes vote, that women were being erased from the Constitution, that Mother's Day (which fell two days after the vote) would be "cancelled"; that the Family referendum would allow for family reunification for polygamous immigrants and for your husband's mistress to inherit the family home, or, worse yet, the family farm.

It's hard to say definitively what relative weight distrust of the government, uncertainty, and anti-government sentiment had, compared to racist, transphobic and sexist arguments, or the progressive arguments of the Yes-No campaign. However, the fact that 68% of voters voted No-No compared to 6% who voted Yes-No and that No-No was dominant among Fianna Fáil and (mostly right wing) Independent

voters suggests that reactionary arguments had a bigger impact on the overall result. It seems that the “culture wars” have finally taken root in Ireland, after many unsuccessful attempts to implant them in the past. Along with the rise of anti-immigration sentiment, this is likely to be an increasing obstacle to socialist attempts to unite the working class. When an opportunistic weathervane like former Fianna Fáil Minister, Willie O’Dea, responds to the result by saying it’s time “to stop playing to the woke gallery”, you know something has shifted. Ten years ago, O’Dea was standing beside socialist feminist banners on abortion rights protests and complaining that the Gender Recognition Act, which allows trans people over 18 to self-declare their gender, didn’t go far enough, now he’s recycling far right talking points.

Attempts to change the referendum wordings

The role of the far right and the Catholic Church in pushing for a No-No vote was one factor in People Before Profit’s decision to adopt an “unenthusiastic Yes-Yes” position after our amendments to the referendum wordings were rejected by the Government. When the government’s legislation for the referendums came before the Dáil [Irish Parliament] last December, People Before Profit proposed amendments that would have gone further than the recommendations of both the Citizens’ Assembly on Gender Equality and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality. Both bodies had been set up by the government to advise it in this area and both of them had recommended that the state should take “reasonable measures” to support care within the home and wider community.

People Before Profit advocated that this wording be strengthened so as to oblige the State to “provide the necessary resources to support care”. We also proposed an additional referendum to reform Article 40.1 of

the Constitution as had also been recommended by the Citizens’ Assembly on Gender Equality but ignored by the Government. The current wording of that article states that “All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law. This shall not be held to mean that the State shall not in its enactments have due regard to differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function.” We proposed that the second archaic and offensive sentence be deleted and replaced with: “The State shall in its enactments have due regard to the principles of equality and non-discrimination.” This was intended to combat all forms of discrimination, including sexism, racism, LGBTQI+-phobia and ableism and to strengthen the rights of all oppressed groups, including people with disabilities, women, ethnic minorities and the LGBTQI+ community.

Once our amendments were rejected by the Government and they pushed ahead with their own wording, People Before Profit stated that we marginally favoured a Yes vote in the Care referendum but we did not “campaign” for a yes. Unlike other opposition parties, we did not put up posters, leaflet or canvass. We chose instead to devote our limited resources to raising demands for increased resources for care and services, for the government to enact the Optional Protocol on the Rights of People with Disabilities and to continue to fight on all the other issues on which we are active on a daily basis, including the genocide in Gaza and the housing and homelessness crisis.

The main reason that we marginally favoured a Yes vote on the Care referendum was that we did not believe it would have a negative impact on people with disabilities or carers and we thought the new wording was slightly better than the archaic and sexist “women in the home” clause it was replacing. Our analysis was that the substantive effect of both clauses was the same but that the care amendment was at least gender neutral and didn’t contain sexist language. Both confine care to the home and contain vague aspirations by the state to support

care in the home - but one had sexist language and the other didn’t. People with disabilities are invisible in both clauses. We certainly would never have even unenthusiastically supported a Yes vote in the Care referendum if we thought it would have a negative impact on people with disabilities or carers.

Our track record - and indeed our reason for existing - has been to fight for the rights of everyone who is marginalised or exploited by this oppressive capitalist system. Our People Before Profit candidate in Dublin Bay North, Bernard Mulvany, is a full time carer and well known disability rights campaigner with the Access for All group. Bernard and a host of other PBP reps have organised countless local meetings and campaigns to demand better public health and education services for people with disabilities, carers, and parents and for the government to ratify the optional protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This is not something we only started doing during or since the referendum campaign. We have been doing it for years, alongside carers and people with disabilities. In the past year, People Before Profit has been to the forefront in the Dáil in opposing the Government’s proposed Green Paper on Disability Reform. Last September, Paul Murphy TD, likened it to the British Tories’ so-called “welfare reforms” depicted so horrifically in the film, I, Daniel Blake. The Taoiseach’s tone deaf response was that people should also watch Benefits Street because “the truth lies somewhere in between”.

What we got right and what we got wrong

An additional factor in People Before Profit’s position was that we did not believe that a No vote would lead to a further referendum and the opportunity to put better language on care and rights for people with disabilities into the Constitution. We have been proven right on that at

least, as both the Government and Sinn Féin have now said that they will not hold another referendum.

All voting no would do, we thought, was keep the woman in the home clause in the Constitution and copperfasten the status quo where neither mothers, carers or people with disabilities are supported. Worse, it would make it seem as though the woman in the home clause had widespread popular support because people would be voting to keep it in the Constitution in 2024. We were worried about the impact this would have in boosting the far right and Catholic conservatives who campaigned for a No-No vote from the very beginning and were by far the most visible and high profile campaigners for a No vote in the Care referendum at the start of the campaign.

Where People Before Profit got it wrong, in my opinion, was that we did not take enough time to debate what position we should adopt, and not enough space was created to hear people with disabilities and carers, before adopting our position on the

Care referendum. That includes some of our own members who argued for us to adopt a Yes-No at a National Council when we faced significant time pressure. That is a mistake we should not repeat.

I think we were wrong in not anticipating the huge impact that a grassroots campaign of carers' and disability rights activists demanding a no vote in the Care referendum would have on the whole debate. They succeeded in shifting the narrative towards the real, lived experience of carers and people with disabilities and how they are systematically mistreated and betrayed by a State that sees them as liabilities to be minimised and managed. They had an impact within our own party with countless members and election candidates stating publicly that they would be voting Yes-No. When this emerged, despite the tight timeframe, we should have reconvened a National Council to allow members to decide.

What next?

The impact of the progressive Yes-No campaign has been recognised in the

media coverage of the result and has made it impossible for the far right and conservative forces to claim the rejection of the referendums as their own. That in itself is an important political victory. An even bigger positive and by far the most important development as a result of these referendums is that the experience of fighting for a Yes-No has empowered carers' and disability rights campaigners and forced their concerns into the mainstream of Irish politics in a way that has rarely, if ever, been achieved before. Campaigners here have staked their place as part of a growing worldwide disability rights movement that is having an ever-increasing impact.

People Before Profit must champion the rights of people with disabilities and of carers at every possible opportunity into the future. Most importantly, we promise to listen and learn from them about what demands we should put forward. That way, we hope we can work together into the future to fight against ableism and for equality and liberation for all.

21 March 2024

New attempt at a unity government in Libya

20 March 2024, by Paul Martial

Meeting in Tunis, 120 members of the two parliaments, one in Tripoli, controlled by Prime Minister Dbeibah, and the other in the east, led by Marshal Haftar, agreed to move towards elections to end the Libyan crisis.

Cairo conference

A few days later, under the aegis of the Arab League, the representatives of the three state bodies, the Presidential Council, the High Council of State and the House of Representatives, signed an agreement. The agreement provides for the appointment of a tightly-knit

government of technocrats, whose main task would be to organise the elections.

By refusing this process, Prime Minister Dbeibah is only reinforcing his isolation. He has lost most of his supporters, including Al-Seddik Omar al-Kabir, the governor of the Central Bank. He is also strongly opposed on the streets. The economic crisis is deepening: the Libyan dinar is losing value, exacerbating inflation as almost all food and goods are imported. For the anniversary of the Libyan Revolution on 17 February, the Prime Minister embarked on a lavish spending spree. The people present protested loudly against this waste of money, at a time when most civil

servants are experiencing salary arrears. Dbeibah has spent more time placing members of his extended family in the state apparatus than trying to resolve the political and economic crisis.

Profitable chaos

This umpteenth attempt at a political settlement is likely to fail because of two obstacles. The first is the interference of foreign powers. The government in Tripoli enjoys the support of Turkey, which is taking advantage of the situation to get its hands on oil in the Libyan Sea. Haftar, for his part, is supported by Egypt and

the United Arab Emirates, as well as by Russia via Wagner's troops.

France is not to be outdone. While it is officially supporting the efforts of United Nations envoy Abdoulaye Bathily, it is also providing covert military support for Haftar's troops, alongside Wagner. The discovery of weapons from French stocks, such as Javelin missiles, and the death of three

soldiers in a helicopter crash in Benghazi confirm this commitment.

The second obstacle is that the situation of confusion allows most of the militia-backed leaders to enrich themselves by plundering oil resources and engaging in all kinds of highly lucrative illegal trades. These range from fuel trafficking to drug smuggling and, most sordid of all, the

trafficking of sub-Saharan migrants for ransom or forced labour.

While this is not an ideal situation for European countries, they are perfectly happy with it as long as the militias act as police and prevent migrants from embarking for Europe.

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

"There are no longer any trade union organizations, no longer any autonomous social movement. We need solidarity".

19 March 2024, by Mariana Sanchez, Mónica Baltodano

What was the purpose of your trip?

We are in Europe to denounce the dictatorial and absolutist regime of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo, who have controlled the government and all its institutions for 17 years. Their objective is not to build a transformation project or to get out of the poverty in which the majority of Nicaraguans live, but to increase their personal wealth, because they have become capitalists. Since their return to government in 2007, they have introduced a neoliberal regime with the most brutal features of extractivism, particularly in gold and silver mining. This has led to deep inequalities in the country. More than 700,000 Nicaraguans have had to leave. In a way, they are the mainstay of Nicaragua's economy, because the dollars they send home to their families are more important than the country's exports as a whole.

We would point out that repression in Nicaragua is increasing. There is no freedom of the press or of information. No one is allowed to think differently from the regime, because people risk imprisonment or exile, and the confiscation of all their property.

More than 4,000 organisations have been banned. Associations that worked for women's rights, for the rights of nature, for the rights of indigenous people...

There are no longer any trade union organisations, no longer any autonomous social movement. That's why we need solidarity. Not just condemnation, not just communiqués from the international community, but solidarity.

We came to talk to people who had worked in solidarity in the 1980s. Some of them had even been there and taken part in the fight against Somoza, sharing our dream of a fairer society and political, economic and social democracy. Nicaragua has the potential to return to this direction. To do that, we need to get out of the dictatorship. So we are seeking to weaken it on the international stage.

We are in Europe to propose peasant projects, training projects and organisational projects. We needed to get organised, and I'm particularly committed to organising the left-wing sectors that came out of Sandinism. We need to do justice to those who were murdered or indicted, to all

those affected by the Ortega-Murillo dictatorship. These are the issues we discussed during our visit.

Some on the left in Europe, even if they know what is happening in Nicaragua, still think that Ortega is a Sandinista, that he is the revolutionary of the 1980s...

We have seen a major advance on the left in terms of understanding and information about what is really happening in Nicaragua. From our discussions, we can conclude that the majority are aware that Nicaragua is not a left-wing regime, that it is a criminal regime that has committed clear human rights violations.

But there is still a sector on the left that insists that it was the continuation of this fine revolution that had excited it. This is a Left that turns a blind eye to reality. Some say it's because Ortega is anti-imperialist. I want to tell them that Ortega is not anti-imperialist. He uses this rhetoric in order to keep a certain sector of his social base. But in order to deceive this part of the left, he is trying to adopt a new West-East logic. That's why it supports Russia or aligns itself with Iran or North Korea.

In reality, the majority of the left has made progress, not only in Europe but also in Latin America. There are strong voices like that of Gabriel Boric in Chile, President Gustavo Petro in Colombia and Andres López Obrador in Mexico, who have condemned the loss of nationality of more than 300 Nicaraguans. Very important voices are being heard, such as those of Pepe Mujica in Uruguay and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in Mexico. We've made progress, but it's very important that the lefts of the world speak out forcefully against Ortega.

This also helps us in our work with young people. Ortega says in his speeches that what he is doing is socialism. Even though we have had the most neo-liberal society since 1990, the young people of Nicaragua believe that Ortega is a socialist.

What remains of the social and trade union movement after the government's repression?

The entire autonomous social movement has been crushed and repressed through arrests and exile, with more than 350 people murdered in the 2018 crackdown.

We are committed to rebuilding these networks. From exile but also internally, with silent working methods, throughout the country. We advocate a peaceful, civic struggle. We have suffered too many wars in Nicaragua. We are trying to take the democratic, civic and peaceful route.

But that doesn't mean we shouldn't organize clandestinely, because the repression is brutal. In Nicaragua, you cannot publish any opposing opinion in the press or in the online media. Journalists are in prison, simply for

posting on their profile a demonstration or religious procession that has been banned. Faced with this reality, we need to rebuild the whole social fabric that the regime has destroyed. But we're sure we'll get there, and there have already been advances in that direction.

We are optimistic; we believe that sooner or later this regime will fall. Thousands of Sandinistas, state workers, soldiers and policemen are no longer with the regime, even if they remain in their jobs because they can't make a living from anything else. Thousands of people in all the institutions no longer support this regime, which is why we are convinced that its end is near, closer than the people in the street think.

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

War or peace? A false dilemma in the controversy

18 March 2024, by [Daria Saburova](#)

I would like to take advantage of this invitation [2] to provide clarifications concerning the controversies of which Ukraine has been the subject for several weeks. The first controversy was sparked off by the European farmers' movement, over Ukraine's entry into the European Union. The second was triggered by Macron evoking the possibility of sending troops to Ukraine. In both cases, the Ukrainian question is used cynically by all political forces in a game of electoral rivalry. It is deployed using arguments disconnected from local reality, and has no other consequence than to undermine public support for the Ukrainian resistance. I will focus on the second controversy, because military support remains at the centre of the demands that Ukrainians address to Europeans.

Criticized by other European leaders

and by the Secretary General of NATO, Macron's remarks were also immediately disavowed by the Ukrainian government, pointing out that in fact, Ukraine never requested the troops. It asks for weapons, and especially ammunition. On this level, whatever anyone says, France's contribution has so far remained relatively modest: according to French government figures, it amounts to 3.8 billion euros in 2 years, in a military budget whose expenditure exceeds 40 billion euros per year, or approximately 4 per cent of its total military expenditure. In reality, as a [recent survey by Mediapart shows](#), these figures are greatly inflated, with the real value of the aid being several times lower.

With his bluster about sending troops to Ukraine, Macron has not only failed to achieve his own goal in the

competition for European leadership. These remarks gave fodder to all the political forces which have, in a more or less open manner, when the political situation has allowed it, opposed military support for Ukraine from the start: the National Rally, of course, but also the parties of the institutional left, such as the Communist Party and France Insoumise. It is clear that it is hand in hand that they are launching a new anti-Ukrainian campaign, concerning both Ukraine's entry into the European Union and the [bilateral security agreement](#) signed between France and Ukraine on 16 February. Worse, as we learned on Tuesday, while the far-right opted for abstention, the Communist Party and France Insoumise decided to vote against this security agreement. Let us look briefly at its content and on what France Insoumise offers instead.

What bothers France Insoumise are the assertions of principle that this document contains: "France reaffirms the objective of Ukraine's accession to the European Union" and "confirms that Ukraine's future accession to NATO would be a useful contribution to peace and stability in Europe." But if we look at this text concretely in detail, not only is there nothing about sending ground troops in the current phase of the war, but nothing of the sort is planned in a situation where Ukraine would be invaded again after a ceasefire or the signing of a peace agreement. Concretely, I quote: "In the event of future Russian armed aggression against Ukraine, [...] the French Participant will provide Ukraine with rapid and sustained assistance in terms of security, modern military equipment in all areas, according to needs, and economic assistance." The rest of the document details the content of this assistance, which includes training, cyber defence, weaponry, etc. Concretely, instead of proposing amendments, it is these minimum security guarantees, which do not differ in substance from those from which Ukraine currently benefits, that France Insoumise opposes. What does it suggest instead? In a [video published on 7 March](#), Mélenchon offers his vision of what he calls "the Ukraine-Russia conflict". According to him, "the only strategy that makes sense" is to put forward a "peace plan". To do this, it is said to be necessary to understand the nature of this "Ukraine-Russia conflict". I quote Mélenchon: "The question of the war between Russians and Ukrainians involves two things: one, the borders [...] and two, mutual security. Ukrainians no longer want to live in fear of being invaded by the Russians. And the Russians no longer want to live in conditions where, according to what they say, they no longer want to be under the threat of NATO military intervention firstly, and secondly to see populations who have asked to be assimilated into the Russian federation, to be threatened." To reach an agreement, it is necessary to organize a "conference on borders" where, I quote, we "ask the populations concerned what and to whom they want to be attached. The voice of the people is the solution, not

the problem. [...] If these issues are settled by a referendum, then we have all the elements of peace."

I will not dwell on this argument. I will simply remind you that this is not a Ukraine-Russia conflict over borders and mutual security, but a brutal, absolutely unjustified invasion and occupation of Ukrainian territories by the Russian army. That the threat from NATO and the alleged demand of Russian-speaking populations for military intervention to protect them from the Ukrainian government is pure Russian propaganda. That talking about referendums on the occupied territories is a despicable proposition, since Mr. Mélenchon knows very well that to organize them democratically is impossible. Russia has already organized a semblance of referendums on the occupied territories which gave more than 90 per cent of votes for annexation to Russia. How would we go about imposing on Russia the safe return of refugees so that they can vote, the departure of Russian settlers so that they cannot vote, and the supervision of these referendums by independent international bodies? It is completely irresponsible to make us believe that this is possible under current conditions.

Let us look at the situation realistically. Given the situation Ukraine currently finds itself in, it is reasonable to believe that a front-line ceasefire is the least bad option. Ukrainian troops are demoralized by the large number of those killed and wounded, the lack of ammunition and adequate equipment, etc. Ukrainian civilians, in turn, show little desire to replace those already at the front: after the failure of the summer counter-offensive, the demarcation line no longer moves in favour of Ukraine, and it is not retreating enough for those behind to once again feel an existential threat that would motivate them to volunteer, as was the case at the beginning. The tensions within Ukrainian society are very real. Everyone wants the war to end.

It is still necessary for the conditions for such a ceasefire be met, and first of all, that Putin has an interest in stopping the war and respecting the commitment of future non-aggression. However, this is precisely not the case

: the Russian army has regained the initiative. The war allows the regime to strengthen itself inside the country, which has gone into "war economy" mode. The recent assassination of the oppositionist Alexey Navalny marks a new stage in political repression. The whole world was rightly moved to see thousands of anti-war Russians march and lay flowers in front of the his grave in Moscow. Unfortunately, despite the emotion and hope that this gesture gives rise to, there is nothing to immediately predict a popular uprising capable of changing something from within. The Putin regime now feeds on war, both internally and internationally, where its open objective is to use aggression against Ukraine to reshuffle the geopolitical balance of power. At the moment, it is difficult to imagine that anything less than a Ukrainian capitulation will satisfy it

For their part, the Ukrainians, in their overwhelming majority, are not ready to accept capitulation. We can talk as much as we want about an immediate ceasefire as the alternative to military support, but we must be aware that these are only empty words intended for the French public in the context of the electoral campaign. Certainly, the fighting will have to stop one day, and there will be a ceasefire in one form or another. The question is under what conditions for Ukraine this will happen: will it be on the offensive? Will it be sufficiently armed and supported to be in the most advantageous situation? What security guarantees are we prepared to grant in the highly probable event of a new invasion? We are in a moment of great uncertainty as to the evolution of the situation, which will depend on many factors. And in the face of uncertainty, the most reasonable and fair thing is to continue to support military aid to Ukraine.

I am aware that it is difficult as a feminist to assume such a position. This touches on the question of the identity of the movement, its antimilitarism and opposition to the state. The Ukrainian resistance has become the thorn in the side of all anti-capitalist, feminist and anti-imperialist organizations. Some have preferred to preserve the purity of their principles to the detriment of an

analysis of the situation and concrete solidarity. However, I think, and this is what the [Ukrainian feminist manifesto](#) already affirmed in 2022, that feminist thought and practice are best able to place themselves systematically on the side of experience, according to the immediate interests of women victims of oppression, but also of women who resist, wherever they are. In Ukraine, tens of thousands of women resist the invasion with weapons; hundreds of thousands work in crucial public services, millions are involved in

voluntary work. As feminists, we must be able to understand that our action is adjusted to the point of view from which we campaign.

Regarding support for Palestine, we are active within the camp that supports the aggressor. The most effective thing is therefore for us to fight against sending arms and for the unconditional cessation of fighting by Israel. This is the same type of action that Russian and Belarusian feminists are trying to take, to the best of their strength, towards their governments.

But regarding Ukraine, we find ourselves in a country that is providing support to the country that is the victim of aggression. As long as there are no other realistic options, solidarity demands that we assume support for sending weapons to Ukraine. And that, against the campists of all sides, we proclaim: ["From Ukraine to Palestine, occupation is a crime!"](#).

This text was first published as a blog post in [Médiapart](#) on 15 March 2024

Left activism in Turkey

17 March 2024, by [Dave Kellaway](#), [Uraz Aydin](#)

Why does Erdogan keep winning? There have been problems with the economy, the earthquake exposed corruption both in the construction quality of houses and in the aid distribution and the restrictions on freedom of expression must surely be fuelling opposition to the regime?

Erdogan has been able to build his power base by exploiting the intense polarization in Turkish society. On the one hand we have a cultural and religious polarization and on the other a social, class polarization. After the foundation of the republic (Kemal Ataturk, 1923) which had a strong secular aspect, religious people were excluded from positions of power for a long time. Even though the conservative religious political currents survived, the dominant ideology in society was secular and urban and it excluded those forces. Outside the towns, in rural society and among poorer layers the story is different. That is why whenever there were elections the conservative, religious parties had a base among the peasantry and in rural areas. In the towns you had the intellectuals, the

working class, the urban petty bourgeois and bourgeois classes.

These conservative religious parties were always there challenging the Kemalist republican party. That is also why there were military coup d'états so that this republican/bourgeois/military elite could maintain its power. However in 1994 in the local elections, including Istanbul, Erdogan's Islamist party emerged very strongly. Its profile was not just religious but also had a social programme. But the Islamist parties, even where they won votes and could get into government, were repressed by the military.

At a certain point, just after 2000, Erdogan understood that another sort of party was needed that would avoid immediately provoking the military to take action against it. He put forward proposals for Turkey to become a member of the European Union and he entered into dialogue with other political parties. Neo-liberalism was embraced and it tried to project itself as a modern Islamist party. So in 2002 he won power after centre parties had failed to deal with the economic crisis. He has been in power ever since - 22 years.

His first ten years was less authoritarian, and he tried to avoid

any confrontation with the military. Remember this was also a period of economic growth internationally which ended in the 2008 crash. The crash came later in Turkey. There was a lot of money around that the bourgeoisie was happy with and he was able to take certain measures to help working people and the poor. However Erdogan did not establish a real welfare state or social security system - it was more a system of hand-outs. After 2010 he had more difficulties with the military. So Erdogan constructed an electoral base on one side of the historic polarization among the religious minded, the poor and especially in rural areas. His party won many local councils and he used that as a transmission belt to hand out money and resources like charcoal to deprived layers of society. Also the party could use the distribution of local authority jobs to cement its support - people voting would know their jobs and hand-outs relied on re-electing Erdogan's party. Non-government organizations that were fronts for the government were also set up to distribute support.

Twenty years of this regime has meant other changes. Islam is no longer excluded from the public institutions - before it was forbidden for women students to wear scarves (hijabs) but

now they are allowed and encouraged. Today there is increased poverty and deprivation but that in itself does not mean the masses will switch allegiance away from Erdogan.

So religious ideology can cancel or balance out other concerns. We thought with the earthquake and the opinion polls that Erdogan was in trouble last year with the elections. But it did not turn out as predicted.

We all thought the same. When we were arrested after protests after the earthquake, we even were told by the police agents that they thought Erdogan was a goner. Erdogan has become much more nationalist, more far right. Previously he had started an exchange with the Kurds about dealing with their demands. That process did not work and he made a turn to ultra-nationalism. He made an alliance with the "traditional" fascist party of Turkey, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

Is there a possibility that in coming elections an even more extreme right wing current could replace Erdogan?

This is a possible trend. Erdogan's party is more of a movement than a party. There is no real internal debate - it is the court of Erdogan. Of course there are a lot of arrivistes or careerists who have flocked into the party of power. They have to submit to the Erdogan's will if they want to get on. It is a bit like the Stalinist system. The most sycophantic rise the highest. Corruption is key too - with Erdogan you have the green light for all sorts of speculation in property or other business. In return Erdogan gets a contribution from your profits. He has built up a section of the bourgeoisie that is dependent on him. There are no longer really any rules or regulations. Every decision is based on the current interests of Erdogan. This applies to foreign policy too. He flirts with Putin but he can speak in favour of NATO too. Erdogan puts himself forward as an intermediary between Ukraine and Russia. The transition to a multipolar imperialism and the relative decline of the USA in the Middle East increased the capacity of medium-sized powers such as Turkey to act more autonomously.

Erdogan is using this new advantageous international situation to the fullest and is pursuing a more aggressive foreign policy.

The bourgeois opposition to Erdogan is very divided. Is there a possibility of a military coup down the road if there is a stalemate or vacuum of bourgeois leadership?

Nothing is certain but the military too have subordinated itself to Erdogan. We did have an attempted coup in 2016 orchestrated by another Islamist group that were his former allies. This group had worked at infiltrating itself into some positions within the state. It was a real coup - not something manipulated all along by Erdogan. But it is possible that he allowed it to develop a bit without intervening in order to gain more out of its failure.

Could we talk a bit about your party, the Turkish Workers Party (TIP) because even with the success of Erdogan in the 2023 election you managed to win 1.7% of the vote and to hold on to 4 MPs. If you looked at these results in the context of the performance of other radical left parties in Europe - for example there are no longer any left MPs in the Italian parliament - this is not so bad for a party that calls itself Marxist.

One of the MPs on our list, Can Atalay, is still in prison. We already had 4 MPs in the previous parliament and we had worked in coalition with the Kurdish parties which have a significant electoral and social base. The TIP has a very combative approach unlike the official left of centre opposition and attracted support from people who wanted to fight against Erdogan's AKP party. The party has grown very fast, when I joined two years ago it had 6000 members, today it has 43,000, in January 2023 we had 10,000, so we quadrupled our membership in a few months. There were three steps.

First, one of our MPs made a YouTube video where he was asked various questions by a hostile audience about the right, the left, the Kurds, on Marxism and he responded very effectively - that helped us win thousands of new members. We could

hardly handle all this rush of applications to join.

Second, we had the earthquake and our comrades responded very quickly, the whole organization turned to the task of mobilizing citizens to support the people suffering in that region. TIP was able to mobilize a very effective mutual aid and solidarity organization in the face of the earthquake disaster. Hundreds of lorries were organized. People saw they could trust us as we helped organize vital supplies to the area. We were not seen as corrupt. Even some bourgeois organizations sent stuff through us.

Third, the mobilization around our election campaign drew even more people around us. However with the victory of Erdogan there was a general demoralization of the whole opposition and it has affected us too. We may still have 40,000 but realistically we have ten thousand or so activists at the moment. People have not necessarily left the party but they have become inactive and could be re-mobilized. What was interesting in our vote was that we did not only win votes where we expected among the urban, secular, educated parts of the population but we also have begun to win votes where the AKP is strong. We are talking about a few percent but this is something new for us. We are beginning to cut through with a line focused on working class interests rather than making a dividing line on a religious or cultural basis. The presidential elections were held at the same time as the parliamentary ones and we saw people splitting their votes between ourselves in the parliamentary elections and Erdogan for the president. So these people still saw Erdogan as the great father figure, the "Reis", but saw that we could be useful in defending their interests. This is new. On the left we have to overcome the rigidity of the polarization between secular, nationalist and religious identities. The current political polarization in Turkey is not class-based. As I mentioned before, it is a polarization that has developed mainly on a cultural basis. TIP aims to transform this polarization with a new and essentially class-based political polarization.

Does the TIP see itself like the left populist currents such as Podemos or Syriza building mass left parties?

Not exactly since TIP came out of a split inside the Turkish Communist Party which was rather Stalinist and nationalist. The split was in part over the attitude to the Kurdish question. The people who split are also more open on feminism and LGBT+ issues too. Its guiding ideology is Marxist. Its publication is called *Communist*. But it was involved in the uprising around the Gezi park in 2013 when people stopped speculators taking over this public green space despite brutal state repression. The new party was impregnated by the diverse strands of the people involved in this campaign, particularly the youth.

Today it is however difficult to organize youth - it is very repressive in the secondary schools and university students cannot organize unions, they live at home because rents are so high and usually have to work to finance their studies. Student life as we knew it does not exist so much now. So it is rather people in their 30s that we are attracting.

Do you have an Iglesias (Podemos) type problem in the party where the main leader(s) with a big media profile can dominate and bypass the internal democracy of the party?

It is not really the same. Our MPs are very known because of their radical interventions at the parliament, and of course the leader (the "president") of TIP, Erkan Baş is an important political figure. But we cannot say there is a domination of the leader, it is more a collective political leadership. We should not forget that unlike Podemos, TIP comes from a revolutionary tradition, from the Bolshevik tradition. So the structure of the party is based on committees (central, regional, local...). By the way the internal democracy, even in the Leninist-Trotskyist tradition was far from perfect. The internal democracy is a mechanism that you have to conquer, with internal debate of course, but also with concrete experiences.

I think it is important to build this party as it is currently the best instrument to carry forward the struggle for a socialist alternative in Turkey. Inside the party people know I come from a different political tradition to them but I have been able to take on some leadership roles - for example I am the secretary of the party in an important area of Istanbul and there is a range of views on the central committee.

One positive approach adopted by the TIP is not to only try and win new members and support from the secular, non-religious sectors, the educated youth and intellectuals but also to reach out to the base of the more religious orientated working class and poor through work around working class demands.

These divisions between different sectors of the working class -between graduates and non graduates, between the big cities and the smaller towns or more rural areas - also exist in European countries. In Britain we saw this with Brexit, in France with the Yellow Vests movement. So how you overcome this division is very important strategically.

Yes I agree. Even in Istanbul there are big differences between some of the suburban areas that are very working class but more conservative and religious and the more central areas where there are bigger numbers of young people, intellectuals and progressives.

What about Palestine solidarity here. We saw the brilliant multimedia exhibition in Taksim square with digitalized art work from Palestinian children that is financed by the government.

Here we had eighty or so resignations from the party in my branch when we supported the right to resist the Israeli occupation. For activists who have been battling against AKP Islamism they see Hamas as a similar problem. We did not identify with Hamas's political line of course but it was controversial for us. Here of course it is the first time that the Erdogan government has supported mass demonstrations. We can take

advantage to organise our solidarity demonstrations or contingents.

Although Erdogan's government claims that it is on the side of the Palestinian people, this is not the reality. While Israel's colonial aggression continue at full speed, Turkey's commercial relations with Israel continue to develop. Apart from some verbal statements, the Turkish government has not shown any concrete solidarity towards the Palestinian people. This situation causes objections among Erdoğan's base. I believe that socialists should listen to these objections and take the leadership of the solidarity movement with the Palestinian people.

The left here can win votes but it is difficult to mobilize many thousands on the streets - the repression over the years has made this difficult. Just to give an example, eighty of our activists (and I'm one of these) were on trial the other week because they had protested about the corruption connected to the distribution of tents to the earthquake area. The Red Crescent had been selling tents to the non-government organizations. The police had attacked our protest, which is the norm these days.

Can you tell us a little about Can Atalay (for more details about him and campaign click on his name) the MP who has still not been released from prison?

I have known Can for many years. He is a lawyer and was one of the spokespeople for the Gezi park campaign. He also defended people over labour laws and safety issues. He was condemned to 18 years in prison for his role in the Gezi park campaign. We put him on the TIP electoral slate as an independent. Once he was elected the state has taken action to remove his parliamentary immunity.

Different courts at different levels have given different verdicts. The constitutional court said he must be released but a lower court then said the opposite. But he remains in prison. We are calling it a constitutional coup because the lower court contradicted the higher court. So now we can talk about a state crisis around the legitimacy of the constitution.

"This revolution we are leading is a women's revolution"

16 March 2024, by **Berivan Firat, Olivier Besancenot**

Can you tell us about the CDK-F, its scope and its activities?

The CDK-F brings together 27 associations in France and carries out activities here on a social and political level to help the Kurdish community integrate, but also and above all to publicize the Kurdish question and violations of the law in the four corners of Kurdistan but also in Europe, particularly in France. It's not easy every day to be part of the CDK-F, but as in all the Kurdish people's struggles, at every level, we resist.

Paris seems destined to be the capital of political assassinations: Ben Barka in 1965, Palestinian activists from the PLO or the FLP in the 1970s, ANC activist Dulcie September in 1988, and then the three Kurdish comrades shot in the head on 9 January 2013. Where does justice stand with this triple murder?

Unfortunately, little progress has been made. Sakine Cansiz was a co-founder of the PKK, an activist and one of the most important figures in the Kurdish movement, who was behind the Women's Army project, the self-defence army. She was one of Öcalan's strong comrades. At the time of her death, Öcalan said, "To kill Sakine is to kill myself, to kill the Kurdish people". She was an extremely important symbol. She was killed in broad daylight, 50 metres from the Gare du Nord, by a man who turned out to be an agent of the Turkish secret service, MIT. Later, the memos ordering the assassination came out, as well as audio recordings shared on Youtube.

At the time, there was a conflict

between Gülen and Erdogan, which allowed these documents to be disseminated. Although the murderer is known (he died in prison in 2016), as are the instigators, justice remains at ground zero, as the case is classified as a "defence secret". The notes and information in the hands of the French secret services are not passed on to the court, and the court cannot do its work. For once, France had every opportunity to bring justice to this triple political assassination, but State interests have once again won the day. Justice is independent, but for it to do its job, politics must stop restricting it. A new investigation has been underway since 2019 against those who ordered the killing, but it has stalled because France refuses to lift its defence secrecy.

This triple murder is eminently political: three generations of activists have been killed...

Three generations, yes, but above all Kurdish women. This revolution that we are leading, that the whole world is applauding in Rojava, in the north and east of Syria - with these women who have fought against the vermin of darkness - we are used to saying that it is a women's revolution. By targeting three generations of women, it is first and foremost women leaders, commanders, like Sakine Cansiz, it is also diplomacy in the person of Fidan Dogan, and it is Kurdish youth and the future of Kurdistan through Leyla Söylemez who are being targeted.

This triple murder was no accident. These are not collateral victims. Men from the Turkish secret services had gone to northern Iraq to try to carry out targeted attacks against PKK leaders, and they were caught and

held for two and a half years until Turkey silenced them by bombing them.

Nevertheless, they gave the names of the signatories of the mission orders for the assassination of the three activists, specifying that these orders could not be given without Erdogan's agreement. This was a political assassination committed by a foreign state in France, a country that claims to be sovereign!

The field of war seemed to extend to the whole of Europe. In Belgium in 2017, an attack on the Kurdistan National Congress was foiled. The Belgian justice system discovered sleeper cells, a kind of death squad, linked to the Turkish state apparatus. In 2020, in Austria, members of parliament were targeted... All this shows the duplicity of European states in the face of a planned policy.

In Austria, they wanted to assassinate a member of parliament of Kurdish origin. They wanted to silence her because she was denouncing the expansionist policy of the Turkish state, the occupation of northern Syria, the violation of the rights of Kurds and other minorities, democrats, socialists and communists in Turkey, and so on. In Belgium, at the time of the attack, the name of one of the individuals arrested by the police was mentioned in the murder of Sakine, Fidan and Leyla. These individuals had links with the Turkish ambassador to France, who was due to be heard by members of parliament but was recalled to Ankara because he was the second in command of the Turkish secret service.

Turkey is extremely dangerous not only for the Kurds but also for the Armenians. Erdogan wants to redraw the lost territories of the Ottoman Empire. True, a republic was founded in 1923 at the expense of the Kurdish, Syrian and Armenian peoples, but there is no republican mentality.

Unfulfilled promises, such as that made by the Western powers in the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, which was supposed to grant the Kurds an autonomous region, a promise that was defeated in Lausanne in 1923 by Kemal, who wanted to de-Kurdify Kurdistan. Revolts broke out in the face of discrimination for several decades. At the end of the 1970s, there was a rebound with the birth of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This party, listed as a terrorist organization by the European Union, provided the fighters in Kobane against the Islamic State, who were hailed by Europeans.

The PKK lost 450 cadres in the fighting in Kobane, its most important cadres trained over ten, twenty, thirty years. They were not only capable of fighting, but also of debating, analysing and looking at the economy, ecology and women's issues. Daesh and al-Nosra were declared enemy number 1 by the West. The Kurds fought the world's number 1 enemy on their own doorstep, but for everyone. Yet once they returned to Europe, these fighters became terrorists once again. Like Emine Kara, murdered on 23 December 2022, who had sought asylum in France [...].

Erdogan continues his policy. But Woman, Life, Freedom, the slogan launched after the death of Jina Mahsa Amini in Tehran in 2022, comes from the struggle of Kurdish women...

In the popular training academies, cassettes were recorded. Around

1991, you can see Öcalan talking to Sakine Cansiz and telling her that if women are not free, they cannot live and therefore cannot make the revolution. In 2003, Kurdish women close to the PKK came up with this slogan: if women are not free, society is not free. Women mean life, victory and freedom. Since 2013, we have been using it in all our actions. We find it very difficult to get men to say it. This slogan is inscribed on the tomb of Mahsa Amini (or Jîna Emînî). It's more than a slogan for us, it's a philosophy. You can't talk about the freedom of a society without the freedom of women. It's the freedom of the woman first, then the freedom of society. That's why women are the meaning of life, women are the meaning of resistance. Women are the culmination of victory. [...]

6 March 2023

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

Russian leftists are planning to disrupt Putin's fake presidential election this weekend

15 March 2024, by **Federico Fuentes, Mikhail Lobanov**

You have helped launch the Just World/Just Peace initiative, which argues that to "make our voice heard, we need to vote against all of them". Why? What is the campaign calling on voters to do?

The event that will take place between March 15-17 in Russia can be called an "election" in name only. It is purely a spectacle, one in which the winner and his final vote tally are already known, and where the other three candidates are all completely loyal to the Kremlin. The result authorities desire will be obtained through coercion and falsifications.

In 2006, authorities removed the "against all" option from the ballot paper, fearing an upsurge in political activity. But we are convinced that given the disastrous conditions Russia finds itself in, that we must not vote for any of the toy candidates.

Instead, we are agitating for our fellow citizens to use these elections to express their discontent and involve themselves in collective action in order to learn how to refuse to play the Kremlin's game or follow its rules.

We have proposed two options for such actions. The first is a protest turnout at polling stations, in which we are asking everyone to turn up at

the same time, namely 12pm on March 17. The second is to vote "against all" and invalidate one's ballot paper by crossing out the boxes for all the candidates.

Such ballots will be counted separately in each polling station, in each region and across the whole country and will be included in official statistics.

At the last presidential "election" in 2018, the "spoilt ballot paper" candidate received almost 800 thousand votes (just over 1%), thereby defeating four of the candidates. That was when nobody was campaigning for this course of action. It therefore

was an expression of individual actions taken by many out of sheer desperation.

We are sure that at this “election”, several million will cast a protest vote.

A manifesto has been issued as part of the campaign. What are its key focuses?

First, we want and demand that this unjust war [in Ukraine] be ended immediately and that the men sent to the front return home.

Second, we believe the causes that led to this war — namely, the glaring economic and political inequalities tearing Russia apart — must be addressed.

The concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few made it possible for this bunch of usurpers to drag a huge country into an unjust war without asking anyone. Meanwhile, because of the right-wing neoliberal labour policies of the past decades, most people have been left in an extremely vulnerable position and deprived of any possibility of resistance.

In our short text, we have propose a series of urgent measures that could address both the causes and consequences of this situation. We have also outlined some new principles for international politics that should replace struggles for spheres of influence and markets.

A new peaceful Russia should call for the broadest possible coalition to tackle environmental and climate problems and to support capital controls and common fair principles on global tax policy aimed at combating tax avoidance by the super-rich and corporations and ensuring living standards are the same across the different regions of the world.

The manifesto calls for “a world without annexations”. Does this include the withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine?

Yes, absolutely. The withdrawal of troops from Ukraine follows directly from our text. However, Russia now has harsh repressive laws that punish those who voice such words. And since many of our participants are in Russia, we have sought to use words in our general statements that will minimise the risks for them.

It appears that the Putin regime has initiated a cleanup operation of any dissenting voices prior to the elections, with the banning of anti-war candidate Boris Nadezhdin, the death of opposition leader Alexei Navalny in prison and the jailing of socialist Boris Kagarlitsky. The manifesto itself makes reference to “a civil war unleashed by the authorities against political opponents”? Why has the regime felt the need to launch such an attack?

The invasion of Ukraine should be viewed not only through the prism of Putin’s imperial ambitions, but also as a preventive response by the regime to the politicisation of a significant part of society inside Russia. In this view, the main purpose of this war at home is to maintain domination within the country and to strike at Russian society, which has been taking steps towards resistance.

Which forces are currently involved in the Just World/Just Peace initiative? Is their hope this campaign could lead to something more after the elections?

Several dozen left-wing groups, bloggers and media projects are participating in our initiative. Some of

them have an audience of a few thousand people and some of them have an audience of hundreds of thousands. These are very heterogeneous and diverse projects, but it is very important that we are running a common campaign and in the process discussing and getting to know each other.

I see this as a step towards the formation of a strong left-democratic movement; one that is oriented towards active participation for changes inside Russia and greater interaction with like-minded people outside the country via those politicians and activists who have been forced to leave Russia due to repression and the threat of being forcibly sent to the front.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

For the past fifteen years, there has been a growing leftist milieu in Russia and a growing demand from the whole of society for political participation.

The only way out of the current war and towards a transition to real peace lies through a revolution in Russia. This will only be possible by further strengthening the left wing of the Russian opposition, for which all the prerequisites exist.

That is why I call on left groups, parties and trade unions in different countries to realise this and lend a helping hand to Russian socialists who are now regrouping and preparing for the future struggle.

A revolution in Russia is possible and, should it happen, will give new impetus to the global climate movement and the struggle for greater equality.

15 March 2024

Source: [Green Left](#).

Politics at the Oscars

14 March 2024, by **Dan La Botz**



Well, of course, it's primarily about money. American films dominate the world movie market and the Oscars, the awards presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences represent the pinnacle of both financial and artistic success in the industry. "Barbie" alone made almost 1.5 billion dollars, in an industry that makes hundreds of billions. And then too it's about fashion as women show off their fabulous gowns on the red carpet as men parade by like penguins in their identical tuxedos. But this year, more than others, the ceremony was not only a marvelous spectacle, but also an especially political event.

The best films nominees themselves were in many cases particularly political. In their very different ways, both "Barbie" and "Poor Things" were feminist films, the first contradictorily ridiculing and reinforcing feminine stereotypes and the second—a wonderfully weird combination of Frankenstein and Pygmalion (My Fair Lady)—portraying the struggle for and advocating women's right to independence from the control of men. "Oppenheimer" led us once again to

focus on the threat of the atomic bomb [with which we have lived](#) for over three quarters of a century. "Maestro," the film about Leonard Bernstein, dealt with the difficulty—even for the rich and famous—of being gay in the mid-twentieth century (as did "Rustin" the movie about Bayar Rustin, the civil rights organizer, which was not nominated for best film). And "American Fiction," explored racism in literature and life from a Black point of view. And "Killers of the Flower Moon" portrayed white settlers' violent murders in order to fraudulently acquire Indian land in Oklahoma in the 1920s.

But let's turn to the Oscar event itself. As the ceremony opened, Jimmy Kimmel, the host of the "Jimmy Kimmel Live" show, also hosted of the Oscars for is fourth time, and used the last several minutes of his [introductory comic monologue](#) to talk about the 148-day actors' and writers' strike and its issues. "At its heart," he said, Hollywood "is a union town."

In the in-memoriam section of the Oscars, the Academy honored Russian opposition leader Aleksei Navalny, who had been portrayed in the 2022 film "Navalny," which won an academy award for best documenary in 2023. This year's best documentary winner was "20 Days in Mariupol," the account of the Russian attack on that Ukrainian City. Accepting his Oscar, [Mstyslav Chernov, the director said](#), "Probably I will be the first director on this stage who will say, I wish I had never made this film." He went on to say he wished Russia had never attacked Ukraine and occupied its cities and he called upon the Russian

government to release the military and civilian prisoners in their jails.

Director Jonathan Glazer, whose German-language film 'Zone of Interest' won best international feature film, a movie about a Nazi commandant and his wife living in a "zone of interest" to the Auschwitz concentration camp where over one million Jews died, took advantage of his time to [talk about Palestine](#).

Our film shows where dehumanization leads at its worst. Right now, we stand here as men who refute their Jewishness and the Holocaust being hijacked by an occupation, which has led to conflict for so many people Whether the victims of October the seventh in Israel or the ongoing attack on Gaza, all the victims of this dehumanization, how do we resist?

He dedicated his film to the girl in it who resisted. A good number of those at the ceremony wore "Artists for Ceasefire" pins.

Hollywood, known for its progressive politics, produces many fine political films and some Americans apparently have an appetite for such critical views of our country, though it's also true that Hollywood produces and Americans consume a lot of cine-crap.

Well, that's all. I'm off to the movies.

13 March 2024

Source: [New Politics](#).

Family-friendly France?

13 March 2024, by **Penelope Duggan**

What brought on this warlike pronouncement on the question of population? In 2023, only 678,000 babies were born in France, a drop of 6.6% compared with 2022.

France has long been a country reputed for its pro-natalist policies and its high birth rate - the highest in the European Union. At the same time, it is a perpetual subject of concern. In 1990 *Le Monde* wrote "Nowhere else in the world would the subject make the front page of a popular daily newspaper than in France (or China, in a very different political and social context). Yet in most Western European countries, fertility rates are lower than in France." In 2006 the *Washington Post* reported "This summer, the government - concerned that French women still were not producing enough children to guarantee a full replacement generation - very publicly urged French women to have even more babies."

"Family-friendly France"

Before and following the Second World War different concerns - the lack of young men ready to fight, and better conditions for workers - combined to introduce pro-family policies in a "Family Code". This code and its subsequent modifications cover:

- Generous maternity grants and maternity leave, increasing for the third child.
- Provision of subsidized creches, day nurseries, childminders, school from two-and-a-half.
- Nursing mothers are encouraged to work part-time or take a weekly day off work.
- Benefits for family with three or more children in family allowances, subsidised transport, the allocation of housing.
- Full tax benefits to parents until the youngest child reaches 18.
- Subsidising holidays through

municipal holiday camps for children, "holiday cheques" for waged workers.

There is one significant difference. The original family code banned the sale of contraception - this was repealed in 1967 - and introduced harsher laws against abortion - finally legalized in 1975. Today the introduction of abortion into the constitution is being discussed, promoted even by Macron, although as a "guaranteed freedom" rather than the fundamental right that the feminist movement campaigns for. [3]

The pro-natalist policies of that time were not driven, as we would argue is the case today, by a racist anti-migrant stance, they reflected the rightwing notion that a country has to be strong and produce children so that it can defend itself, thus giving women as the producers of children a special role. Pétain, the French collaborator president of France under Nazi occupation, stepped up the importance of Mother's Day. This had been officialised in France in 1926, aiming to repopulate a country decimated by the First World War by promoting the birth rate, which had been relatively low in France since the end of the 19th century. The Vichy regime brought children into it, asking schools to prepare Mother's Day with their pupils with posters, speeches, mobilisation of the press.

Militarization

There is today in France a new air of militarization with the introduction of "Universal National Service", even if it is not in the military, and the proposal to introduce uniforms in schools.

Isabelle Cambourakis, editorial director of the feminist "Sorcières" collection told *Reporterre*:

Women's bodies are not weapons of war. Associating this martial terminology with natalist policy makes my blood run cold. It gives

the impression that the government wants to produce cannon fodder. It's not just a pro-natalist rhetoric like so many others in history. Added to this is the unbearable connotation of war, at a time when conflicts are multiplying around the world. One wonders what the government is actually aiming for. What kind of policy will demographic rearmament lead to?

[This militaristic rhetoric come from] authoritarian and conservative countries. It's exactly the same rhetoric as that of Orbán's government in Hungary. It's a fascist fantasy that defends the family, the homeland and the heteropatriarchal model. The worst thing is that this rhetoric isn't even effective. It has no influence on procreation practices. It's not because Macron calls for demographic rearmament that people will suddenly decide to have children! These speeches have no effect, they're simply an address to the conservatives.

Which French families?

At the same time Macron is playing on another rightwing theme - on which he has recently made an open alliance with the far right in the French parliament to get a new restrictive law on immigration passed: distrust and rejection of migrants who would both boost the young working age population in France and probably increase the birth rate.

If the real concern was the birth rate the government should be relying on migration and integrating lesbians, gay couples, trans people and others outside the heterosexual model into the "effort", allowing medically-assisted procreation and adoption for them all. The government is in fact primarily defending an identity-based

approach. Its plan is for white women to have children.

This resonates with the fears provoked by the “Great Replacement” theory - that ethnic French and white European populations are being demographically and culturally replaced by non-white peoples—especially from Muslim-majority countries—through mass migration, demographic growth and a drop in the birth rate of white Europeans. This rearmament is thus against the internal enemy, the immigrants, young people from working-class neighbourhoods, Muslims. But where will it end - what about those who refuse to take the fertility tests at age 25 (to boost the birth rate, a proposal to make gynaecological examinations for women and spermograms for men compulsory!) or who refuse to have children?

At the same time in Mayotte - an “overseas department” of France in the Indian Ocean with the highest birth rate in France, the government is planning to propose sterilisation to all young mothers, and to eliminate the automatic right to French nationality to children born on that portion of French soil. An idea rapidly taken up by the right and the extreme right for the rest of France - for those born of “non-French” parents of course.

A feminist response

Refusal to be conscripted into a militarized mindset is longstanding in the feminist movement. Its history runs from the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom born in the throes of the First World War through movements of mothers for peace, joint initiatives of women from the two sides in a conflict - including today in Palestine-Israel, women’s peace camps against nuclear weapons of the 1980s. The denunciation of the porous relationship of the military-industrial complex and the male political world was summed up in the famous slogan “take the toys from the boys”.

That women’s ability to have children should be abused in this way, making it a tool at the service of “nation”, and in such militaristic terms may make our blood run cold - but it should also fire us up with anger.

Smash the family?

The women’s movement of the 1970s - at least in countries where they were not still fighting for basic rights such as divorce or married women’s right to own property - did put forward the slogan “smash the family”. Among other things we in the socialist feminist current had read Trotsky’s

The Revolution Betrayed and its chapter “Thermidor in the Family” and recognised to what extent the family was a training ground for the authoritarian, patriarchal, capitalist society children were born into. We also learnt as feminists dealing with the difficult questions of sexual violence that the family is the main site of violence for women and children.

At the same time, we were and are in solidarity with migrants and displaced workers fighting for the right to a family life, for the right to state support and services so that mothers and parents can bring up their children with a decent standard of living.

We could adapt Marx’s words on religion “the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions” to what the family represents for many today, despite its capitalist patriarchal, heterosexist character.

The challenge for the new world socialists strive to build is to how ensure that everybody the social, intergenerational, emotional, sexual, relationships they wish for to be happy and emancipated without restricting anybody else’s right to enjoy the same.

18 February 2024

First published in the March 2024 edition of [Rupture](#).

In Figui, women fight for a common good - water

12 March 2024, by [Luiza Toscani](#)

The prefect then summoned the president of the municipality and then the members of the council, who changed their minds on 1 November and decided to entrust the management of these tasks to Oriental Distribution, which was experienced by the local population as a double

appropriation, that of water through privatization, and that of their sovereignty, through the about-turn by their elected representatives. [4]

Mobilization and repression

Since then, the demonstrations have continued unabated. Twice a week, people have taken to the streets in different ways: on bicycles, in vans,

rallying neighbouring villages, sit-ins, general strikes, women's demonstrations occupying public space non-stop.

The authorities let it happen, but after three months tried to ban a demonstration. Then there were two arrests, that of a woman raped by the pasha, who was convicted of... assault, and that of a movement activist, who was also convicted.

This repression only strengthened the movement, which took shape and gained the support of civil society. A support committee was set up at national level, and the demonstrators travelled to take their struggle to Rabat and then Oujda.

Mobilization against water

privatization in 2023

This movement follows on from and is being conducted in parallel with the initiatives of an ad hoc inter-union group that mobilized through rallies and strike days throughout 2023 against the privatization of water and was at the root of a bill to create regional multi-service companies. The law has now been passed, and for the first time is being rejected by the local population. The population of Figuig intends to defend its ancestral management of water, seen as a common good, managed and distributed in such a way as to sustain the oasis in an arid zone.

The Figuig water management system was recognized as an "ingenious world

agricultural heritage system" by the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) in November 2022. This fight is part of the struggles waged by the people of this Eastern region against their marginalization, unemployment and the absence of public services, particularly public health.

The involvement of women in the movement, who held a resounding demonstration on 8 March, has had the effect of shaking up the political class. Several parties, which are not opposed to the privatization of water, have declared their "support for the women of Figuig" and called for solutions to be found.

12 March 2024

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

Portugal election - far right surges

11 March 2024, by **Dave Kellaway**

On the other hand, due mostly to the rise of Chega, the mainstream right of centre alliance, the AD (Democratic Alliance), which had been the main parliamentary opposition, only edged up by barely two points, with just two more seats. Even this small advantage could be altered once the overseas votes are counted. The pro-business, neo-liberal IL (Liberal Initiative) held on to its 8 seats.

To the left of the PS Livre (Free) a pro-European Greenish party nearly tripled its vote and went from one to four seats. The radical left Bloco Esquerda held on to exactly its last score and keeps its 5 MPs. However the PCP (Communist) lost a percentage point and two seats.

Government

Soon after the first projections, when the AD advantage was bigger, the PS representative accepted that the AD

should form the government and they would go into opposition. The margin is wafer-thin although the previous governing party has clearly lost the most support. It is likely that the President will ask the AD to try and form a government.

Luis Montenegro has ruled out a government coalition with Chega even though the numbers are there. He has said that "no means no", and has dubbed Ventura's views as "xenophobic, racist, populist and excessively demagogic." Probably the neo-liberal IL would join an AD government but their seats do not take the AD past 116 required. A lot depends on the PS sticking to its early position, already signposted in the campaign, that it would allow a minority AD government to be established. In that eventuality PS abstentions would mean AD would not require Chega votes to form a government. Given the final figures the PS could demand some political

concessions or red lines from an AD government and perhaps anticipate new elections at some point. Certainly if the PS were not to be accommodating then the AD could change its position on an alliance with Chega.

The Right

Chega, with a fifth of the seats, now has a substantial political and material basis for further growth. Ventura has consistently says he wants to form a government with the AD. Unlike in Italy there was no pre-election coalition between his party and the AD. Ventura repeatedly declares he is not neo-fascist or far right. He originally was an activist in the PSD, the main party of the AD. His main campaign slogan was to "Clean up Portugal." He railed against the two party caste that has ruled Portugal for 50 years since the end of the dictatorship.

The Costa government fell because of corruption in his leadership group. It has been prevalent for many years. I remember going on a tennis holiday in the Algarve and discovered that the huge hotel and golf complex development there had involved bribes and kickbacks for politicians. So a campaign centred on kicking out the corrupt caste has proved effective.

Ventura outlined a whole raft of new laws and actions to weed out corruption – seizing assets, defining a new crime of illicit enrichment. AD failed to capitalise on the PS government failure to deal with low wages, declining health services and soaring housing costs because it was seen as a co-manager of a corrupt system. The previous right-led government had carried out hard austerity policies. Chega appears to have taken votes from both the AD and the PS.

The other part of Ventura's clean-up is his racist offensive against immigrants and the Roma community. He proposes restricting immigration and creating a new crime of illegal residence. Over recent decades Portugal has gone from a country of net emigration to net immigration. Around 13% of the population come from migrant backgrounds. 70% of the population identify as White.

Chega also defends what it calls the traditional family and attacks women and LGBTQ+ rights.

If you combine this reality with the problems of inequality and austerity and the inadequate response of any governments to deal with these issues then you can see how Chega is able to blame migrants for the cost of living crisis or lack of housing. Chega's big advance has taken place under the second PS government which has not continued some of the progressive policies it enacted during his first government when the radical left parties, the Bloco and the PCP had enabled its formation on condition it carried out such a programme.

Today being excluded from government could provide the

conditions for Chega to further grow. An AD government permitted to govern by the PS would provide further confirmation of its claim that the two party system is a stitch up against the people. If there were to be a more formal programmatic agreement that could create an even greater opening. The AD might still want Chega votes to pass legislation if the PS opposes specific laws. Ventura has said he has contacts with PSD people and one tactic will be to step up pressure on their MPs to be more open to an agreement with Chega. We are seeing this scenario of far right parties pulling mainstream right parties to more extreme positions or working to create internal splits elsewhere in Europe.

Chega has important financial supporters. During the campaign the Civic Front exposed how it relied more on unnamed private backers than the official state funds for political parties. The Chega surge is part of the general rise of the far right or neo fascists in Europe and globally. This "creeping fascism" is pulling the mainstream right-of-centre parties to more extreme policies too. Already, leaders of Vox, the Spanish state neo-fascists and other far right leaders in Europe are sending in their congratulations to Ventura.

Bloco

The Bloco campaign focussed on putting forward radical measures on wages, health and housing as well as defending migrants, women and LGBTQ+ rights and calling on solidarity with Palestine. Unlike the PCP it has managed to maintain its electoral support and five seats. It also campaigned to stop the rise of Chega and a right wing government by proposing a new left wing agreement similar to the first Costa government, where it would give limited external support without taking ministerial posts. Clearly the failure to increase its support and the PS defeat meant this option is off the table. In this respect, the left as a whole has been pushed back in these elections.

In her first reaction to the results,

Bloco leader Joana Mortágua, who was re-elected in Setúbal, said that they "confirm a shift to the right", as a result of a "negative assessment, which we share, of how a PS government with an absolute majority delivered." As for the Bloco's result, by keeping the parliamentary group and increasing the vote compared to 2022, "it's a sign that there's confidence in the Bloco for whatever the political situation: whether it's to form a majority or to be a determined and fierce opposition to the right."

Livre (Free) a pro-European party with green credentials was the winner among the left-of-centre parties, tripling its vote and going from one to four MPs. Perhaps it is one reason why the Bloco did not succeed in significantly increasing its vote. It wins votes in the big urban areas and among similar demographics as the Bloco.

Austerity

Portugal remains one of the poorest and unequal countries in Europe, it is 24th in the Social Justice index in the EU. It has the world's fourth highest number of citizens over 65 years, 21.8% of the population. Recent governments have not protected the living standards of senior citizens. Rental costs have soared for ordinary people. One factor is the uncontrolled promotion of tourism means an explosion of Airbnb lets in cities like Lisbon and Porto which increases rental values. The gains of a national health service set up after the revolution 50 years ago have been very much eroded.

Now that even the social liberal left are out of power, defending social gains and the living standards of working people will need increased mobilisations in the workplaces and communities. Increased polarisation and instability could increase rather than decrease with these election result.

11 March 2024

Source: *Anti*Capitalist Resistance*.

Biden's State of the Union Launches His Campaign Amid Protests

10 March 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Biden, who has faced skepticism from voters because of his age—he is 81—delivered the one-hour address with energy and enthusiasm, putting himself forward as a strong leader and criticizing former President Donald Trump who he referred to only as “my predecessor.” His speech, full of exaggerations about his own successes, presented what was largely a progressive domestic agenda that would defend women’s abortion rights, and improve health and education—though the progressives in his party criticized his positions on immigration and especially on support for Israel’s war.

Biden in his prepared speech and impromptu remarks challenged Republicans to pass the bipartisan immigration bill before Congress, which—following Trump’s leadership they have refused to do. Trump doesn’t want it passed because he wants to be able to attack Biden over border and immigration issue. But the bill is criticized by progressives because it would militarize the border and deny asylum seekers entry into the United States in violation of U.S. and International law.

With hundreds of thousands of Democrats having refused to vote for Biden and instead voting uncommitted

in state primaries because of their disappointment with Biden’s unconditional support for Israel and failure to call for a ceasefire, the president had to make some gestures recognizing the horrendous situation of the Palestinians in Gaza. In his address he called for “an immediate cease-fire that would last six weeks” in order to get the Israeli hostages released with hope that it might lead to a longer ceasefire. He also announced that the United States will begin delivering aid to Gaza by sea. Biden’s speech while generally well-received by his party did not appear to have moved the public much, according to polls. At the moment, Trump, who has been campaigning for four years, is leading in the polls in the battleground states, but Biden and the Democrats are far ahead in fund-raising and on-the-ground organization.

Trump’s principal campaign message delivered over and over in speeches at his mass rallies is that “millions” of immigrants from “jails, prisons, and mental institutions” continue to “invade” the United States. He has said that Biden’s border policies are tantamount to “a conspiracy to overthrow the United States of America.” He makes preposterous claims to his believing followers, such

as his statement that because of the surge of immigrants, in New York City “there’s no more Little Leagues. There’s no more sports. There’s no more life in New York and so many of these cities.” And he has stood by his Hitlerian statement that “immigrants are poisoning the blood of the country.”

Many Palestinians and other Arab and Muslim voters as well as Blacks and younger voters may sit out the election. With Biden and Trump neck and neck, third parties could determine the election. The No Labels Party, whose slogan is “not left, not right, but forward,” has proposed to run a Republican for president with a Democrats for vice-president, but so far has no candidates. The Green Party’s Jill Stein could win enough votes from Democrats and independents in Michigan and other states to ensure that Trump wins the election. The radical Black theologian Cornel West could have a similar impact. The left is divided between those who will vote for Biden to stop Trump, those who will vote for progressives Stein or West, and those who will not vote this election. We will be debating all of this until November 5.

10 March 2024

Women's Activism in Romania-An Overview

9 March 2024, by **Maria Bucur**

The Pre-

Communist Period

Women in what is today Romania began organizing through a variety of interest groups at least since the 19th century, initially around religious denominations and eventually into educational and political groupings.

An overview of this complex and shifting landscape is beyond the scope of this brief narrative, which will focus on the attempts of groups to represent the interests and needs of various categories of women after 1864, when Romania became a state.

From the start, women's movements were split along class, religious and ethnic/racial lines. Women from elite families who wanted to encourage their daughters to engage in educational activities beyond traditional ideas of wifehood and motherhood led the way in organizations that advocated for better educational opportunities for girls.

While the state mandated education for all children, officials consistently failed to enforce it and to budget sufficient resources to bring girls into the classroom. Women's literacy rate, especially in rural areas, continued to lag until the Communist shift in state investment in and enforcement of literacy policy.

Roma women suffered further debilitating indignities over the 550 years of enslavement that ended officially in 1864. Ioana Rudareasa (mid-19th century), who sued her owners successfully for the liberation of herself and her children, is a prominent example of their struggle for personhood and dignity.

Feminist organizations focused on better access to teacher training for women, although along ethnic and religious lines. Ethnic Romanians who were Christian Orthodox were favored over all other ethno-racial and religious groups.

Two prominent examples are those of Alexandrina Cantacuzino (1876-1944) and Elena Meissner (1867-1940).

Both women, one in Bucharest and the other in Iasi (Romania's second

largest city and its capital between 1916 and 1918), led non-governmental organizations that trained young women to become future teachers.

The National Orthodox Society of Romanian Women, headed by Cantacuzino, provided support specifically for ethnically Romanian and Christian Orthodox women, who were then placed into both private and eventually state educational institutions.

Women with an interest in social justice and gender equality gravitated towards the socialist movement, with Sofia Nadejde (1856-1946) as the most prominent example. Nadejde was a writer and activist in the Socialist Democratic party and a staunch suffragist. She was consistently marginalized by other feminists, like Cantacuzino and Meissner.

Sofia Nadejde (1856-1946)

Yet Nadejde was the one feminist who took on the challenge to criticize one of the most prominent public intellectuals and politicians of the time, Titu Maiorescu (1840-1917), on the question of women's purported inferior intellectual potentialities in relation to their brain size.

Nadejde provided tremendous publicity and excellent intellectual support for the feminist cause, but those who might have been allies refused to support her personally and individually, or patronizingly praised her while excluding her from conferences, organizations, and feminist alliances.

One telling example comes from Izabela Sadoveanu (1870-1941), an interwar feminist with eugenicist leanings, who described Nadejde as "always simple like a child, full of common sense like a peasant healthy in body and mind, personal, passionate, and excessive like a true feminine type in all its manifestations."

The quote says more about Sadoveanu's understanding of what it meant to be female and peasant — a

perspective indebted as much to the biopolitics of Romanian eugenics as to her feminist ideals.

Women from minoritized groups, such as the Roma, never found an open door. After 1918, when Romania doubled in size but the proportion of ethnic Romanians who were Orthodox Christians declined from 90%+ to around 70%, Cantacuzino made it very clear to German, Serbian, Hungarian and Jewish women's groups that they had the duty to "fall in line" in terms of what the Romanian state was willing to do for minorities.

While she claimed to represent all women's interests through her feminist organization and in transnational spaces, like the Little Entente of Women, Cantacuzino never invited non-Orthodox women in her organization as anything but followers. She never opened a space for minoritized women to make a case for specific ideas regarding education, employment, healthcare, or any other public policy that affected women.

Cantacuzino was not unusual for her time; but she was also someone who presented her work as progressive and inclusive, misrepresenting both her own ideas and the problems women experienced in Romania.

Transylvanians voted to join Romania on December 1st, 1918. Full legal equality for men and women was a condition for that union. When the state reneged, Cantacuzino and other feminists called this out and continued to work for reforming the Civil Code, only succeeding in 1932. But they did so hitching their wagon to exclusionary ethno-racial nationalism.

The Communist Period

This legacy of division continued after 1945, although it remained largely invisible until 1989. The state socialist regime proclaimed its commitment to gender equality in the constitution, Family Code and other legislation. As an atheist state, communist Romania permitted some religious organizations and communities to continue to function, while

criminalizing others, such as the Greek Orthodox denomination.

In the first generation, the communist regime succeeded in eliminating illiteracy and growing paid employment opportunities for women to an unprecedented level.

By the late 1960s the state socialist regime became more concerned with controlling the productive and reproductive forces that it had sought to mobilize in the previous two decades. While women's organizations continued to exist, their ability to speak critically about crucial issues, such as reproductive choice, was curtailed.

The Communist Party, even knowing that it had a huge gender deficit in terms of support (fewer than 25% of the membership was female), passed a brutal anti-abortion law in 1967 that led to more than 10,000 dying from backstreet abortions and thousands of children being abandoned in state institutions with inhumane conditions. A large number of those children later died of malnutrition and other forms of physical and psychological abuse while in the custody of the state.

The decriminalization of abortion and access to safe forms of contraception became a unifying force for Romanian women, as well as many men. The legalization of abortion was the second law passed in January 1990, after the bloody end of the communist regime in December 1989.

From Communism to EU Membership

Access to abortion continues to have near universal support across all other divisions in Romanian society, even as women's movements have become more diverse and divided since 1990. Many women have sought to become involved in the multi-party system, though few have been embraced and promoted by their own parties. Legislation around gender mainstreaming, imposed with pressure from the European Union, has led to more women candidates appearing on electoral lists, but more often than not as "throw away" candidates that

would enable the party to comply with legislation.

The proportion of women elected in parliament is 17%, with some growth since 1990, but nowhere near gender parity. Other post-communist countries have seen less growth (e.g. Czechia, Hungary), while others resemble the Romanian trend more closely (e.g. Bulgaria). Even as women elected have occasionally come together to publicly criticize gross misogyny among their colleagues, no women's caucus or alliances across party lines have emerged to raise issues such as protection against domestic violence.

A few issues have fragmented women's movements. LGBTQI+ rights in Romania remain poorly addressed and few politicians or thinkers (of any gender) have spoken publicly and consistently in support of full equality for all people and opposition to gender-based discrimination and outright violence.

A constitutional amendment to define marriage to be exclusively between a man and a woman was defeated in 2018. But same sex couples gained equal rights only after the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of a gay Romanian couple.

The treatment of trans persons in Romania has not been an issue of much interest for most women's movements. With the exception of informal anarchist groups and a few other small feminist groups, women's organizations have either been quiet, transphobic in their statements, or at most stating their support for trans rights without much effort to publicly align themselves with these issues.

The wedge between the trans communities in Romania and cis-women's groups has been only growing since the EU has tied continued funding for some projects to addressing trans-exclusionary policies. These policies include having a third gender on official identification and granting the right of trans persons to change their legal name and gender on documents.

Romani women have also remained rather isolated from many women's

groups, often marginalized on the basis of racist presumptions. Some affirmative action programs focusing on education and economic empowerment have helped advance the presence and ideas of Romani feminists. But at this point many are finding themselves still marginalized on the basis of either race (in relation to Romanian women) or gender (in relation to Romani men), not unlike U.S. Black feminists until the early 1990s.

Roma women continue to have a significantly lower rate of literacy than ethnic Romanian ones (72% vs. 100%), below that of Roma women's counterparts in all other post-communist countries in Europe. This difference correlates strongly with lower rates of participation in paid employment: 28% for Roma women, in contrast to 52% of ethnic Romanian women. These differentials translate into economic and social vulnerability that is far greater for Roma women.

Intersectional alliances across these lines are starting to emerge only now. Organizations such as E-Romnja are working to establish alliances through a queer of color critique.

By the same token, radical right-wing movements are making women some of their most prominent spokespersons. This may be a strategic response to similar trends in the United States and in Western Europe, but it is also a legacy of Romanian women's movements from the interwar period, when eugenics found enthusiastic supporters among educated ethnic Romanian women.

In the past two decades some activism brought women together. The defeat of the 2018 referendum on the definition of the family happened in part because of women's grassroots mobilization.

Environmental activism, especially around deforestation and mining, grew to a significant extent because of women's activism and feminist networks that took to the streets.

Filia, a feminist NGO established in 2000, has helped draw attention to domestic violence and other forms of gender discrimination, working as an

ally with other NGOs that focus their attention on eliminating discrimination against vulnerable populations. Among others, they have worked with ACCEPT, the largest and most active LGBTQIA advocacy NGO in Romania.

Alongside these efforts, anarcho-feminism became an active underground movement in Timisoara starting in 1991. Their radical critique of liberal feminism has helped shape a more diverse language around questions of gender norms and has opened up spaces for alternative expressions of gender.

Sexual violence and especially domestic violence have seen growing

attention in the media and policy makers. Pressure from below by women's groups succeeded in Romania ratifying the Istanbul Convention in 2016.

Women's groups have been essential since then for the implementation and critiques of government (in)action. The rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl four years ago led to repeated protests and further pressure to address sexual violence with greater seriousness. However no long-term institutions or networks have developed to leverage these different voices.

What these various strands of women's activism will bring into the

future remains unclear. Compared to the huge losses suffered by U.S. women after the SCOTUS Dobbs decision in June 2022, one might view Romania's situation as better than in the United States.

Huge disparities among women in Romania continue to exist across religious, sexual, class, and racial lines. However, this also means that there are also great opportunities for addressing gender violence and discrimination. Listening carefully, understanding common interests, and using one's privilege to address these systemic problems is the challenge for the future.

[Against the Current](#)

Solidarity with women in struggle around the world

8 March 2024, by **Feminist Commission NPA**

In Palestine, Sudan, Ukraine, Rojava, Iran and Chiapas, women are on the front line in defending people's right to self-determination and fighting imperialist aggression. But they are also the first victims of armed conflicts, and their living conditions can become dramatic.

Women and war

In wars against civilian populations, women "are no longer occasional victims, whose aggression represents a sort of by-product of war, they have become designated adversaries".

Generally speaking, armed conflicts increase violence against women and LGBTI people. The use of rape as a war weapon goes hand in hand with an increase in sexual violence and very high exposure of women to the risk of poverty.

This is particularly the case in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the context of a conflict between

different military militias. In Ukraine, according to Amnesty International, the war provoked by the Russian invasion is having a harmful effect on women's mental, physical and reproductive health.

The context of war is leading everywhere to an increase in actions aimed at controlling women's bodies, either in the sense of an attack on the production of life, or in the sense of an injunction to produce cannon fodder. Macron's project of "demographic rearmament" is part of this logic of biopower, that is to say, of a patriarchal and capitalist power that subjects life to the rules of competition, optimization and market rivalry.

Imperialist wars then appear for what they are, the supreme stage of capitalism, the way found by the world powers to try to overcome the crises of supply and accumulation of capital.

In Palestine, women give birth in inhuman conditions and endure

countless sufferings because of the lack of anaesthetic and access to healthcare. This attack on life and childbirth is part of a more global drive to destroy the Palestinian people. The demolition of Gaza's main infrastructure, forced displacement, disease and lack of access to basic necessities of life are leading to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

In the face of brutal attacks by the army, and in preserving their children and social and family ties in a situation of permanent mourning, Palestinian women have distinguished themselves by their courage and determination in resisting more than 75 years of colonial occupation by the State of Israel.

**Feminist strike
against
imperialism and**

patriarchy

On 8 March, we are calling for an international feminist strike to denounce the barbarity of imperialist wars that exacerbate gender oppression and inequality. We are building actions of unity and solidarity with women and gender minorities

facing the deprivations and abuses of war, in Palestine, Ukraine, Sudan, Congo and around the world.

Women refuse to be reduced to the role of collateral victims of war or designated targets. We demand a place for women in decision-making in global conflicts. We reaffirm the

importance of an international and autonomous women's movement that opposes the capitalist, imperialist and patriarchal social order.

8 March 2024

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

As the left fragments, an urgent reorientation is needed in Greece

7 March 2024, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

To help understand this landscape, we will examine the electoral results of the parliamentary elections for the right wing New Democracy party, Pasok (a social democratic party of neoliberal social orientation, for thirty years at the heart of the bourgeois two-party system, sometimes running in alliance with small centrist groups) and the parties and groups of the left. The few revolutionary groups determined to believe themselves to be the nucleus of the party and delighted to win a few hundred votes at the national level in the elections have been excluded from this picture!

- The KKE: Greek Communist Party, founded in 1918.

- Antarsya: a coalition of a large part of the anti-capitalist left, founded in 2009 as an extension of various pre-existing coalitions.

- LAE (Popular Unity): a group formed in August 2015 after the referendum result was rejected and Tsipras accepted the troika's demands. Coming from the Left Platform led by Panagiotis Lafazanis, it had a parliamentary group until the September 2015 elections, with 25 MPs leaving Syriza.

- Mera (Day, or European Front for Realist Disobedience): a group formed in 2018 by Yannis Varoufakis, finance minister under the first Syriza

government (January-July 2015), which he left after his disagreement with Tsipras.

- Plevsi Eleftherias (Freedom Cruise), created by Zoé Konstantopoulou, President of the Parliament from February to August 2015, and as such co-founder in April 2015 of the Truth Commission on the Greek debt. Konstantopoulou joined LAE in August 2015 and founded Plevsi in 2016 with some former Syriza activists. We will see that if we could classify this group on the left in 2016, its trajectory makes such a classification almost impossible today.

Lately, there has been a lot of talk about Syriza, which in October 2023 appointed an unusual new president to succeed Alexis Tsipras. The findings are damning for the past four years, little has been said about what used to be the main party of the left. And this for a simple reason: while Greece has seen constant mobilizations, even during the Covid period, Syriza had very little presence there, and if activists participated it was more on their own initiative than through decisions of party collectives. Parliamentary activity has certainly remained strong, with often brilliant interventions by Tsipras, but without being able to make up for a decisive shortcoming: at no time has Syriza been able or willing to take advantage of the result of the September 2019

elections. Of course, Syriza was defeated by the right, but without the "people of the left" making it pay dearly for its denials and its acceptance of the memorandums, as if it had been granted a small discharge for having tried fighting and bowing to the strength of its opponents.

As early as September 2015, we could see this trend towards relatively maintained confidence: despite the rejection of the extraordinary popular mandate of July (61.3% "no" to obedience to the dictates of the troika, with 62.15% participation in the referendum), Syriza won the new parliamentary elections, losing only 300,000 votes, while its left-wing current, LAE, having left Syriza in August with 25 MPs, only got about half of those votes and no seats. Despite the defeat, the scenario was almost the same in July 2019: LAE collapsed completely while some of the left-wing votes lost by Syriza but also LAE were captured by Plevsi and more by MERA, which just passed the 3% mark to obtain deputies (nine, including Varoufakis).

None of the other left-wing groups benefited electorally from Syriza's setback either in September 2015 or July 2019. On the other hand, it is with Pasok to some extent and much more with abstention that those disappointed with Syriza take refuge, even if this abstention is less a

political choice than the consequence of profound social upheavals resulting in individualist withdrawals.

It can be said that in July 2019, workers and young people certainly lost their hopes or illusions with regard to the promises of radical change that Syriza was making before January 2015, but kept their confidence in it to lead a minimum of left-wing opposition to a right wing that claimed to want to “definitively close the parenthesis”, and this within the framework of a new two-party system (denounced by PASOK) which would henceforth see alternation between ND and Syriza. But we have not had the opportunity to know whether a classically reformist left-wing opposition was possible in Greece in the years 2019-2023, because Syriza has in no way met this expectation!

In order to respond positively to this question, Syriza would have had to take stock of the entire past period in 2019, with a necessary return to its 2015 electoral programme, which, although less radical than that of Pasok in 1981, had been nibbled away from the outset only to be totally betrayed with the acceptance of the third memorandum.

Such a record, made even more necessary by the position of main opponent to ND determined by the July 2019 vote, would have allowed Syriza on the one hand to give a voice to activists, on the other hand to try - if possible - to propose an openly reformist program without becoming social-liberal like Pasok. This lack of debate on the balance sheet has led to a growing neutralization of party functioning. Syriza has functioned all these years around its leadership and its parliamentary group, as if it were still the small Eurocommunist party (KKEs) of the 1970s. And at no time has it been able to build a real trade union activity.

It has also become a very small minority among the politically organised youth: in the 2023 university elections, it obtained around 2.5%, far behind the current of the KKE (PKS: about 35%) and that of the radical and revolutionary left (the EAAK, about 17%), with the ND

current obtaining 26%. In the spring 2023 parliamentary elections, while some polls gave the youth vote largely in favour of Syriza, it was the right that won in this sector.

Presidentialism a fixture in party functioning

In 2022, despite the opposition of left-wing cadres, the election of Syriza's president was decided by the activists, with the possibility of joining on the same day as the vote. And so it was that in May 2022, Tsipras was re-elected president with about 150,000 votes out of 152,000, paving the way with this Bonapartist election for a suicidal course in terms of the democratic functioning of the party.

But of course, the most serious thing has been the affirmation of an increasingly social-democratic, and therefore in reality social-liberal line, simply claiming to be part of the “forces of progress.” Between 2005 and 2010, Tsipras toured Europe-an anti-capitalist revolutionary organizations to launch Syriza as an anti-capitalist force of rupture, but in recent years he has been invited to meetings of the Socialist International. This orientation of pseudo-realism has also been visible in parliamentary activity with Syriza voting for 45% of right-wing proposals (unlike Mera - 15% - and KKE - 4% - figures given on the vouliwatch website).

His search for alliances with the “forces of progress” would have been positive if it had been a question of unity of action with the forces of the left (KKE, Antarsya and so on) and an electoral alliance with some of these forces, such as the KKE and Mera. The Syriza leadership claimed that it had tried this approach but that, since these forces rejected any form of unitary action, nothing was possible on this side. However, given the overwhelming electoral balance of forces in Syriza's favour, the latter had the space to systematize this policy of alliances on the left, and the failure of these could then have been put down to the sectarianism of others, which would certainly have led

to a different electoral result and balance of forces in the spring of 2023. Instead, by abandoning this move to the left without a fight, Syriza formalised, in view of the 2023 elections, the search for an agreement at all costs with Pasok, presented as a “force for progress”. This allowed the latter to regain its strength at the expense of Syriza by pretending to be more concerned with the interests of the people. This strength is all relative for PASOK, if we compare 2023 to the legislative elections of October 2009 (with a turnout of 70.95% and a victory for PASOK with 43.92% of the vote) followed just after, by the solemn announcement by Giorgos Papandreou of Greece's terrible deficit, leading into the era of memoranda and the electoral decline of PASOK.

In 2023, what appeared increasingly like a bad farce led to much more disorientation of many of the “people of the left”: despite polls that suggested almost to the end a small possibility of a victory for Syriza, the results in May and June, with record abstention in the latter month, were not surprising. But above all, they were a terrible defeat for Syriza, which may not recover.

Towards the demise of Syriza?

Acknowledging the disastrous election results in the spring of 2023, Tsipras resigned as Syriza's president in June of that year. Instead of convening an extraordinary congress, the Syriza leadership launched the procedure for the election of the post of president, in the same form as the previous year, with no one officially questioning an even more problematic procedure in these circumstances. On the contrary, it was given very wide publicity - after the electoral shock, it was a question of proving that Syriza still has a wide echo in society, even if it meant getting anyone to register to vote (for two euros), including right-wing cadres (as has been seen).

Several candidates put themselves forward, including three members of the party leadership and a former PASOK cadre. The fifth candidate was

an unknown, Stéfanos Kasselákis, a recent member, who had been a parliamentary candidate on behalf of overseas Greeks. However, at the end of an American-style campaign led by this US-based citizen, and after the "contract" had been fulfilled (again about 150,000 voters, including almost 40,000 new members), it was Kasselákis who won by a wide margin (56%) in the second round against the favourite, former employment minister Effie Achtsioglou.

The surprise was immense and general, and even today we debate the reasons for this success. The opening of the poll to anyone who wanted to register obviously played a role, but not to the point of "sabotaging" the election. The three former leaders in the running paid for their entrenchment in increasingly bureaucratic functioning and were cut off from Syriza's struggles between 2019 and 2023. Even if the current of former Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos claims to be on the left, it has supported like the others Syriza's course towards a non-existent centre-left. Kasselakis, a darling of the media and certainly of ND, was able to win thanks to at least three elements. The first is that he presented himself as a "new man," not having dabbled in the politics of the memorandums. The second is that he is openly gay, which is a political criterion in a Greece where Mitsotakis does everything to prevent gay marriage, denounced as diabolical by the Orthodox Church and the extreme right of ND. And the third factor in this victory is quite simply that part of the Syriza apparatus very quickly played the Kasselakis card, whether the technocrat Nikos Pappás or the populist Pávlos Polákis, perhaps with hopes on their part of being able to manipulate the new president.

In any case, Syriza suddenly finds itself with a new president that bears no relation to its brief history (and the long history of the former KKEs), and we will see that more than two months after this election, the result was a crisis that may be fatal for the party. Indeed, Kasselakis is really a "new man": an executive of a major bank in the United States, he was not long ago publishing praise for Mitsotakis, and it is clear that he knows nothing about the left, his criteria being those of the

company (he even admired Trump's methods as a boss) and the market. And so he thinks he can act in Syriza like the boss of a company to be turned around, with declarations denying the functioning of the party: he wants to "reward" the cadres who will work for the coherence of the "common objectives", he has already tried to have sanctions voted by referendum against members in open opposition, with the declared desire to "dialogue" with the rank and file by going over the party instances.

If he makes many grand declarations, they are of a distressing banality ("we must make policies by placing the human being at the centre") but also of a disturbing megalomania (only he can beat Mitsotakis on this ground), and they do not hide the problem that is now flagrant for many: Kasselákis has no knowledge of what the left is. Rushing for interviews that delight the right-wing media or conferences (including employers' conferences), he notably clarified his dream: "I think what I bring back is a return to the Greece of yesteryear as a well-kept house. A Greece where the owner kept the house clean, observed the rules and laws, had interest and empathy for his neighbour." These words bring him dangerously close to those who are nostalgic for the police or dictatorial regimes of Greece in the past. Moreover, he keeps contradicting himself, saying that he is not bothered by the existence of different points of view in the party, but that tendencies (which are guaranteed by the statutes) must be banned. Or first approving Mitsotakis who was angry with the British Prime Minister about the Parthenon marbles taken at the beginning of the 19th century by the Scottish lord Elgin and then, after advice, criticizing him because Mitsotakis did not actually negotiate the definitive return of these marbles to the Acropolis Museum.

The result of this strange election and Kasselakis' first two months as president are dramatic: within Syriza, many voices criticize the authoritarian behaviour and political vacuum of this UFO, and even his entourage of "loyalists" often tries to reframe him, in an attempt to make people believe that the character is competent and left-wing. On the political line, it is

difficult to know where Syriza is going: beyond the proclamations about the objective of obtaining 17% in the European elections and of "once again becoming the leading party of the left and the progressive movement", it can be understood that the objective of the new president is increasingly that of a party of the "centre", modelled on the American Democratic Party. What is certain is that a Stalinist reorientation operation is underway, whether at the newspaper *Avgi* or Radio Kokkino, the media linked to Syriza, from which several journalists have left or been dismissed.

Splits in Syriza

But the most serious and most interesting consequence for the time being is the departure from Syriza of thousands of members, cadres and activists on the ground. Entire sectors (cities, youth and so on) are announcing their departure. And two currents have officially left a party that they consider irretrievable given its new functioning: the first is Ombrella, which brings together around Tsakalotos a large number of well-known historical cadres. Recently, the 6+6 current around Effie Achtsioglou did the same thing, with the two currents joining to form a new parliamentary group, Nea Aristera (New Left), of 11 deputies, which aims to organize some of the activists leaving Syriza.

Recent polls seem to condemn the Kasselakis operation: Syriza is given between 10% and 12% and comes third behind Pasok, the fifth poll giving it 14%, 2 points ahead of Pasok. So, what does the future hold for Syriza? We can imagine the worst: even if the leadership claims that the declared departures concern only 1% of the membership, this 1% represents an activist fabric, with a political experience that is not that of the very many remaining or newly registered members of Syriza. Above all, many members simply do not let it be known that they will no longer have anything to do with a Syriza that is now unrelated to their former party. Among the activists who remain, a good part disagrees with the "Kasselákis line" but remain there for

the moment out of “party patriotism,” waiting for a congress that is constantly postponed. Their continued membership of Syriza is a factor that allows the party’s survival for the time being. The prospect of a Syriza that is both radical and “realistic”, advocated by some cadres who want to mask Kasselakis’ “democratic party” course, illustrates both the malaise and - with the pitiful reminder of the radical accents of yesteryear - a vain attempt to combine two totally opposite political paths on the ground, the choice having long been made to move towards ever more “realism”, that is to say, of management subject to big capital.

The other major question is that of the possible reorganisation of the currents that have emerged from Syriza, in which, according to the polls, a good part of the former voters places their hopes. This reorganisation presupposes the definition of a clear political line that breaks with following the Tsipras version of the “progressive pole” project of past years. But even if Tsakalotos claims to be a Marxist, there is no reason to say that we are moving towards a more left-wing course. It is also the evolution of the rest of the left that will weigh on the future direction. For the time being, the group’s spokesperson, Alexis Haritsis, has set out to “give left-wing answers” to social emergencies such as “the high cost of living, the collapse of the institutions of the rule of law, the climate crisis, the rise in inequality.” These are themes that the group wishes to highlight by bringing together various forces, “political ecology, social movements and the defence of democratic institutions.” Is this a return to Syriza’s previous aims, after having participated in the long years of management and the turn towards social liberalism? This is highly doubtful, given the profile as managers of the eleven MEPs and their respect for “European rules.” But in any case, it would be a mistake not to take an interest in this approach, for the time being parliamentary, which could be changed if the arrival of the former Syriza activists - who the anti-capitalist left must know how to address - weighs in to reorient a little more to the left.

To conclude this overview of Syriza’s situation, we can say that its new line completes the bankruptcy of an organization in which a majority of young people and workers in Greece and a large part of the European anti-capitalist left had placed their hopes and illusions, which for our part we did not share. Not out of sectarianism, but out of clearheadedness about the ability of the unconditionally reformist majority to manoeuvre and the need to sustain an anti-capitalist left independent of Syriza. Let us add a final question, very often asked: what is the project of Tsipras who, not content with having taken on the management of capitalism and having himself chosen Kasselákis as his candidate in the parliamentary elections, did not intervene during the campaign to elect his successor while dirty tricks were being used against the candidate Achtsioglou, obviously coming from the populist wing promoting Kasselakis? His only recent intervention is to condemn the splits, covering up what is in fact a scuttling of Syriza.

What’s new on the left of Syriza?

If we look at the electoral results, the result is almost irrevocable: in eight years, the groups or parties to the left of Syriza have benefited in little or no way from Syriza’s betrayal and refocusing on social liberalism. And this is particularly evident for the years 2019-2023, a period when Syriza dug its own grave: this applies to groups that emerged from Syriza as well as to those of different origins (the KKE seems to be rising slightly in 2023). For all of them, the main reason for the failure is twofold: an erroneous analysis and a shopkeeper’s logic, the opposite of which could have avoided what is a disaster for the entire left. The erroneous analysis focuses on Syriza, which is placed by all these groups on the same level as ND or Pasok, whereas the 2019 vote showed that young people and workers made a strong difference. For the past four years, and especially in the election period, Syriza seemed to represent for these groups the enemy to be defeated, and this certainly helped to strengthen the right.

The failure to strengthen itself at the expense of Syriza also stems from the historical disease of most of the Greek left: its sectarianism. For not only has the left, from Mera to Antarsya to the KKE, focused its attacks on Syriza, but each group did so for its own benefit, where offering a common alternative could have been effective. And this appears in most demonstrations, where the gatherings of the diverse groups or blocs take place in various places and sometimes at different times. The result of all this is that at the end of the “Syriza period”, everything to its left represents about 550,000 votes, or 10.5% to 11% of the votes cast in June 2023. The gain in 2023, against the backdrop of Syriza’s collapse, was about 150,000 votes compared to January 2015, when neither Mera, nor LAE, nor Plevsi existed, which is exceptionally low if we remember the significance of the social struggles of recent years. At the same time, for the struggles and political recomposition that are bound to come, it is a potential that can be described as encouraging. Providing these left-wing forces reconsider their position and objectives as quickly as possible, which is unfortunately not a foregone conclusion.

As for the KKE, we certainly see an electoral gain, since it is up by around 100,000 votes since 2019. Its leadership presented this victory as a great success, proof of the correctness of its line which, despite very small openings in the electoral period, is above all made up of self-assertion and division (especially in the trade union movement, with its PAME faction) with an apparently left-wing discourse (“Only the people can save the people, with a powerful KKE”) but whose translation is electoral: to start changing things, we have to wait for the people to give the majority to the KKE. And there is only one thing to do: to build the KKE (its youth organization, the KNE, was largely rebuilt after its virtual disappearance in favour of NAR in 1989), by establishing a cordon sanitaire vis-à-vis the other forces of the left.

Does the 2023 score represent a success for this tactic? We can only doubt this if we look back at the 2009 legislative elections, where it did much better: 536,000 votes (8.48%);

similarly, in the large city of Patras, where the KKE mayor Kostas Peletidis is in his third term, we see in the municipal elections the erosion of the classic “municipal communism” of reformist management: elected in the second round in 2014 with 60,000 votes (63.5%) and in 2019 with 55,000 (70.8%), he has just been re-elected, but with only 41,000 votes (56.7%). What will be the position of the KKE in the face of Syriza’s crisis? Will it understand that there is an urgent need to propose a broad and unitary approach to the members and activists who criticize Kasselakis’ course? The initial answers seem to show that the KKE remains firm in its shopkeeper’s logic. Sofianos, one of their leaders, said: “All these people must be with us. It doesn’t matter if we don’t agree on everything, it doesn’t matter if we disagree on a lot of things.” It seems that the KKE, imperturbable in its conviction that it is right, on its own, does not want to take the measure of the crisis on the left in the face of the generalized offensive of the right.

Ex-Syriza organizations at an impasse

As far as the three forces that emerged from Syriza are concerned, their particular evolutions have been very different: LAE, after leaving Syriza in the summer of 2015 with the sole line of denouncing its treacherous leadership, very quickly retreated into a course demanding above exit from the European Union and the euro, which quite quickly led it to a nationalist position and a haemorrhage in terms of activists and audiences. Mera has seen some development thanks to the fame of former minister Yannis Varoufakis, whose refusal to follow Tsipras in his reneging on the 2015 referendum had brought him a certain prestige. While Mera activists can be found in some of the mobilizations, the technocratic aspect of its leader and the confused nature of its political project have not helped to clarify the left. As for Plevsi, after creating itself as an identified left-wing group and working in collaboration with the movement Den Plirono (“I don’t pay” tolls), it has truly

degenerated into a kind of cult around the former president of the parliament, Zoé Konstantopoulou, acting almost as an authoritarian guru and alternating nationalist declarations and words of love that have seduced a depoliticized and reactionary electorate since it surprisingly obtained eight deputies. Thus, it no longer has anything to do with debates on the left.

But what about the anti-capitalist left, represented for years by the Antarsya coalition, whose launch in 2009 had raised many hopes in Greece, since a good part of the radical and revolutionary left was thus trying to move up a gear, after various initial experiences confined to the electoral field alone? From its foundation, it was based, unlike for example the NPA in France, launched as a desire to broaden and go beyond the LCR alone, on two major forces of the revolutionary left: on the one hand NAR and its newspaper *Prin*, emerging in 1989 from the majority split of the communist youth KNE, and on the other SEK, a member of the International Socialist Tendency, each with several hundred activists. Alongside them, several groups were involved, including the Greek section of the Fourth International, which at the time was a single group.

Very quickly, the electoral results showed a distortion – which should have been perceived as problematic – between the results of the national and local elections: in the parliamentary elections, apart from a score of 75,500 votes (1.19%) in May 2012, Antarsya never reached 1%. In new parliamentary elections in June 2012, it fell to 20,500 votes (0.33%), while Syriza went from 1 million votes (16.79%) to 1.7 million (26.89%). And since then, as the table shows, Antarsya has stagnated at very low national scores. On the other hand, in the various municipal or regional elections, Antarsya often scored more than 2% and elected councillors in many regions. It can be argued that the main reason for this discrepancy is above all the central position of Antarsya, which instead of a critical position in relation to Syriza, presented it from the outset as a force at the service of the bourgeoisie, and immediately denounced the Tsipras

government, putting it in the same bag as ND and Pasok. Without understanding the relationship of the masses to what was not the first left-wing government in Greece (Andreas Papandreou’s Pasok was much more radical in 1981) but which nevertheless raised hopes, if not of a radical break with the bourgeois order, at least for social advances calling into question the deadly logic of the memorandums. On the other hand, at the local level, Antarsya activists are recognized for their permanent involvement in a number of struggles of anti-racists, students, workers and local collectives.

But the obvious failure at the national level accentuated a key original flaw: Antarsya defined itself as a coalition, so those who wanted to be activists without being members of an established group could not find a place in it. Over the years, these various difficulties have accentuated a fatal tendency: for NAR and for SEK in particular, Antarsya’s interest was to recruit for their respective groups, especially since there was no question of the coalition allowing them to “overtake” each of the groups. For several years, Antarsya has become a mere electoral grouping, and, in fact, it has broken up. Not only is it common to see in Athenian demonstrations two separate banners for Antarsya, one of SEK, the other of NAR, but in several local elections, such as the regional ones in the Athenian region, there were two lists claiming to be from Antarsya.

Under these conditions, in the Athens municipal elections this autumn, the successful campaign around the well-known anti-fascist lawyer Kostas Papadákis, an activist from Antarsya and candidate of a broad and unitary list that won 6.09%, is both an exception (in the regional elections in the same region, it took 3% to obtain a councillor but each of the two competing lists only got a little more than 2%) and shows the potential that still exists at the local level. As long as the anti-capitalist left also establishes its own balance sheet and revises its project from top to bottom.

For the moment, this is not what seems to be taking shape, NAR have been engaged for quite some time in a

vast debate on the future party of which it would be the nucleus, and SEK is active as always in various strict fronts that are emanations of its group.

So, in relation to the social and political emergencies, in relation to the need to defeat Mitsotakis, we can hope that from the current slump in the anti-capitalist left, which is reflected in splits and regroupments, there will perhaps be born a political perspective of patient but solid construction of what Antarsya could not be: a broad anti-capitalist regroupment, rejecting sectarianism, and endowed with a compass that the Greek left is sorely lacking, the need to propose united fronts to the entire left in parallel with the discussion of the political project of an anti-capitalist force.

The ability to

rebuild

It seems that today almost everyone has understood that, beyond the rout of Syriza in the spring of 2023, it is the entire left that has suffered a worrying defeat, and this opens up possibilities for discussions within the anti-capitalist left. This can be seen in particular with the example of the Anametrissi group, a large part of which comes from Syriza or NAR, and in which one of the two groups that now form the Greek section of the Fourth International, the Fourth International Programmatic Tendency, is active. For the latter, at the heart of the upcoming discussions on the project on the left, another compass must also be put forward: international solidarity against imperialism, whether in support of the Palestinian people (the anti-fascist and

anti-imperialist demonstrations of 17 November were a striking demonstration of this) but also of the Ukrainian people, whose resistance to Russian imperialism remains largely misunderstood by the majority of organizations of the reformist and revolutionary left, who remained on a campist position.

It goes without saying that such reactionary conceptions rule out the possibility of involving the KKE in the programmatic discussions that are opening or will open in view of the European elections, for which the presentation of a single and open list of the anti-capitalist left could be an important step. But the constitution and echo of such a list will be all the more possible if this left will systematically be able to initiate proposals for action to the entire left, against the policy of misery and repression of Mitsotakis and his party.

A capitulation to the zeitgeist and prevailing winds in Germany

6 March 2024, by Thies Gleiss

This meeting of founding members of the new party was carefully composed by a preparatory circle without democratic legitimacy: not everyone who wanted to become a member was allowed to do so, far from it – even long-standing members of the Bundestag, such as Diether Dehm, were turned away. [5] But most of those who were admitted had a common background within Die Linke. There have been a few exotic exceptions, presented as newcomers with a particular quality.

A right-wing and bureaucratic

evolution

In a laborious process of differentiation, largely embodied in struggles for positions or for motions and amendments defended individually at the various congresses of Die Linke, and most often taking the form of statements to the press, interviews and personal accusations, the group that led to the BSW project had de facto decided that it no longer wanted to be part of the left. This has not been supported by a coherent programmatic text, nor have there been any motions of principle or substantive counter-proposals presented to the conferences and bodies of Die Linke. The only thing that could be sensed was a gradual dissociation from the party. The lack of electoral success and the noxious

internal battles for seats within the party have regularly fuelled this frustration.

The great political issues of the time – the growing threats of war, the accelerating destruction of climatic conditions and the biosphere, the rise of right-wing, authoritarian and racist parties, the increase in migration and exodus on a global scale due to the living conditions that capitalism imposes everywhere, the phenomena of impoverishment even in high-wage countries – have of course played a certain role in the process of erosion of this party that had previously achieved success. But only in a very indirect way, because at the heart of this evolution were bureaucratic struggles developing among the people employed by Die Linke, its parliamentary groups and its

subsidiary structures.

Towards differentiation and rupture

There has been a power struggle between the apparatus of the parliamentary groups and that of the party, a phenomenon that has characterized the descent into hell of all the left-wing parties that preceded it. In these clashes, the groupings changed according to the political considerations of the day. For several years, the so-called "horseshoe" alliance between the moderate reformist governmental left - which since the time of the founding of Die Linke had not been satisfied with the Erfurt Programme (adopted at the 2011 congress) and would have liked to find in it a greater acceptance of capitalism and militarism - and the tradition of the Communist Platform, frozen in nostalgia for the former German Democratic Republic, together with the social democratic supporters of the theory of "state monopoly capitalism", marked the fate of the parliamentary group and left its mark on the election campaigns. At a faster pace than the parliamentary groups, the party's governing bodies have transformed themselves - a process consciously chosen and defended against all attempts at democratisation - but have always been weaker than the power of the parliamentary groups. The vast majority of Die Linke's 60,000 members have found themselves increasingly sidelined from all these developments. The party still has more than 50,000 members, but they are still excluded from the debates.

This process of erosion of Die Linke has now reached a breaking point. A self-proclaimed group of former officials gathered in Berlin for the founding meeting of a new party. Politically very different people are coming together, whereas they had almost nothing to say to each other in recent years and only met in the context of tactical alliances.

The big outsider: Sahra Wagenknecht

Sahra Wagenknecht is the only one of them who, throughout this journey, has made assertive choices and clear programmatic statements. She has decided, in the course of a long personal journey, that a left that claims to be part of the workers' movement, of Marxism, of the revolutionary processes of expropriation and reappropriation, is no longer adapted to our time. She loudly displays her "counter-programme" as a "left-wing conservative" force which defends the market economy, meritocracy, the withdrawal of politics into the nation, the regulation of immigration, opposes the "delirium on quotas and gender", the "exaggerated protection of the climate" and all that "bric-a-brac". Theoretically, she shamelessly plunders the bourgeois preachers of the "social market economy", the thinkers of right-wing social democracy and even the nationalist positions of the new right in her struggle for a "normal Germany".

Moreover, Wagenknecht has never put this "counter-programme" to her party. No party congress, no meeting of the executive committee, no general assembly of a local federation has had the opportunity to discuss it with her. There were not even factional meetings of the fringes of Die Linke that could endorse Wagenknecht's new theses.

A star for a rightist project

The only sounding board for Sahra Wagenknecht's political theses were the mainstream media, which have nothing to do with the left and are traditionally anti-socialist and anti-communist in Germany, both in the analogue and digital worlds. By the way she presented herself, her particular form of political closure, but also by her rhetorical talents, Sahra Wagenknecht had many assets to become a media star who is

nevertheless now almost worn out to the core.

This media star brilliantly plays all roles at once: a key witness against the old conventional left and the workers' movement, a left-wing endorsement of the terrible policy of deportation and lockdown against migrants, an opposition to social protests against climate destruction and for social justice on a global scale, and a priestess of a new "promotion of common sense", anchored in the fifties instead of the class struggle. Her "critique" of "bad" capitalism, greedy capitalism, is readily appreciated in managers' seminars and lobbyists' meetings.

As a media star Sahra Wagenknecht has hundreds of thousands of followers; the vast majority of them are "left-wing conservatives" like Wagenknecht herself, but more crudely. With her attitude and theories, she does not allow any evolution to the left, only a crystallization of political positions in the political space of the right. She covers a field that has been individualized and atomized by capitalist reality, which is imbued with social disappointments and for whom the vulgar style of the far right "Alternative für Deutschland" is unacceptable.

"We don't want to be left-wing anymore"

Few of the former leaders of Die Linke who met in Berlin for the founding of BSW find the indigestible mush of Sahra Wagenknecht's political theses convincing. But everyone appreciates the media glare that surrounds it.

It is very useful in their efforts, which are not left-wing conservatism but organizational conservatism, to pursue or revive a career as a functionary. It fuels dreams of seeing political success return without going to too much trouble. At the same time, the "theories" and public appearances of this media star are so ambivalent and opportunistic that they give a wide range of political options hope that,

sooner or later, things will go back in the desired direction: the eternal social democrats trained in the school of state monopoly capitalism, the former permanent members of the Communist Platform and the West German Communist Party loyal to the GDR, the Stalinists who have been members of the SED for decades, the former trade union leaders who still believe in the fads of social partnership.

At this meeting in Berlin, it was not a question of thinking or laying foundations, but only of applauding and confirming what had been agreed in previous discussions. The rest was just media staging. The last decision taken at these preliminary meetings was to no longer address each other as "comrade" but to call each other "friend". The scariest thing was not the new vocabulary, but the fact that this costume change went off without a hitch. No one made the slightest mistake, even those who, only the day before, were using the old names fluently.

A drift with no return

The other submissions of the founding congress were also written in advance. There were no alternative candidates for leadership positions or for the list for the European elections. No questions were asked of the candidates. With the exception of former Düsseldorf mayor Thomas Geisel (who received only 66 percent), who was clearly perceived as an unusual reactionary Social Democrat, all the votes were "won" by more than 90 percent. The programme for the European elections was approved without debate or a vote against.

An assembly of people who only yesterday claimed to be on the left has decided that from now on they no longer want to be left-wing, but simply "reasonable" people. It is this kind of abjuration that, on the one hand, is appreciated by the bourgeois media world because they like betrayal but not traitors, and which, on the other hand, means embarking on a slippery path that will in no way lead back to left-wing, solidified positions, but will

instead lead to ever more right-wing positions and the validation of the system in place.

Political processes and social dynamics

When, in the late 1970s, the foundations of the Green Party were laid, its battle cry was also "We are not on the right, not on the left, but for advance". A significant number of former leaders of left-wing organizations also proclaimed this, even if their persuasiveness was less than that of Petra Kelly, for example. But this break with the past was met with a broad sentiment, marked by the anti-nuclear, environmentalist, pacifist and feminist movements, which ensured that the new party could only develop to the left. The right-wing forces quickly broke away and, until 1986, the Greens generally continued to move to the left. It was only then that this trend began to reverse towards the extremism of the current Greens.

The creation of Die Linke also began with the break of many social democrats and conservatives in the PDS with their tradition, and more it was feared that the union of the WASG and the PDS would lead to an abandonment of well-established positions and a shift to the right. The opposite happened: against the background of effective social struggles against the Hartz IV neoliberal economic reforms and also against the destruction of the environment, Die Linke became a force capable of achieving successes, whose only prospect of development was on the left. This process was only reversed by the growth of structurally conservative forces within the party and the retreat of social movements, which revived the old right-wing forces within the party, a development that we, the current of the party called the Anti-Capitalist Left, have extensively described and criticized.

An unavoidable process

Now, a new attempt is being made by claiming that they no longer want to be on the left, but simply "for advance" and reasonable. But it corresponds to an adaptation, a shift to the right, in full expansion, on a mass scale. This cannot lead to a return to left-wing positions. The BSW party is therefore not - contrary to what some people claim today - a transitional stage towards a new mass party of the left, but the beginning of a theoretical flattening and an ever further political adaptation to the right. The slippery slope to the right is mapped out and many BSW members are more attracted to hundreds of thousands of supporters on the right than to left-wing positions that may have been theirs in the past.

The whole construction of the BSW as an artificial media project and the focus of strategic debates on elections and election polls will only reinforce this evolution.

Peace as a unifying theme

It is claimed - and this is not entirely false - that it is the common position against war that constitutes the central and unifying theme of BSW. But the question is how far this commonality of views goes. In contrast to Die Linke and its ever-current programme - which, contrary to BSW's claims, has been confirmed at all party congresses - BSW, or rather the leader who gives it its name, does not present war as the result of capitalist relations of production, but only as a "political failure." It is therefore limited to a moral criticism that has virtually no practical significance. The anti-war appeal of Sahra Wagenknecht and Alice Schwarzer, signed by nearly a million people, fizzled out. It did not create or strengthen any lasting anti-war initiatives. A glance at BSW's programme for the European elections, in which a greater autonomous profile for the European Union is mentioned, raises fears that

Oskar Lafontaine's old proposal for the creation of military units specific to the European Union, or at least Franco-German, will be introduced through the back door.

In a lengthy statement, the anti-capitalist Left current of Die Linke rightly called BSW a "right-wing social democratic ghost ship." It reads:

"The response that Sahra Wagenknecht and the group of Die Linke members gathered around her want to give to the crisis of Die Linke is wrong in every respect and one can only hope that the project it conveys will meet a quick end.

- The association supporting the BSW project seeks to save itself from the effects of parliamentarism by limiting itself to parliamentarism. It brings together a group of parliamentarians whose ties with the party had been largely severed and who sought to compensate for this by denouncing the party's executive committee. Insiders know that members of this group didn't have much to say to each other on most political issues in the past. The first assumption that prevails is therefore that it is leading figures in Die Linke, well represented at the parliamentary level, who are in the process of managing their own future.

- The creation of the BSW association is an opaque enterprise driven from above, in which only those who are approved by the top are associated. This is a delirious demolition of what was left of the pretence of functioning governed by the principles of democracy at the grassroots. After 170 years of experience in the workers' movement, we know that it is almost impossible to build a left-wing party solely through election campaigns, but trying to do so on the basis of media stunts concocted by a small group means only one thing:

what will result will be anything but a left-wing organization.

- As a preamble to its Erfurt programme, Die Linke had chosen (at Oskar Lafontaine's personal request) Bertolt Brecht's poem, "A Worker Reads History." In it, he shows perfectly that only the millions of people who actively oppose the power of millionaires by building an alternative will be able to break it. The historical narrative organized around the great enlightened leader is nothing but a tissue of lies. In the face of this, we are simply amazed to see how adult and cultured left-wing activists can adopt for their new association a construction scheme that has nothing to envy from the cult of personality.

- The focus on the cult of Sahra Wagenknecht - which is much more than just a choice of name to attract the public's attention - will at the same time be the fatal starting point from which the media - who are currently promoting the BSW club with euphoric accents and caressing it in the wrong direction with polls - will ruthlessly manipulate this new formation and eventually pass it on to the trapdoor.

This project, which is likely to be worse than the previous one, Aufstehen, will also end in political disaster and personal tragedy.

- The programmatic bases of the association "Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht - for Reason and Justice" do not seem to play a big role in its creation. It has already been a feat to produce such a set of texts without content! Anyone who consults the BSW website and makes the effort to read the foundations of the association will find, next to the Reichstag building in Berlin decorated with German flags (at least the BSW did not make the embarrassing mistake of the CDU and took a real

photo of the building), short texts on the so-called "important topics."

In these texts, everything that established a programmatic link with the left has been erased. These are positions that can be blindly adopted by any bourgeois party. It's about Germany as a location for industrial production, about meritocracy, performance-based wages, an innovative market economy, German companies inventing the technologies to roll back climate change, honesty and common sense - and so on, as if the fifties were back. Back to the future in Wagenknecht's flying car. And of course, one of the few concrete demands must not be missing: "immigration to Germany must be regulated and restricted." It is so isolated and concrete in this jumble of words that the suspicion arises that this might well be the main meaning of the whole operation.

Everything is still valid in this assessment. The BSW may achieve some initial successes at the electoral level, but it will not be the success of a left-wing party, nor will it foster the emergence of such a left-wing party. At the same time, it is to be feared that the entire structure of the BSW project, which is fundamentally conceived as a public relations operation, the total absence of democracy, the totally deficient programmatic and strategic bases and principles, will all favour the steps aimed at manipulating this project from the outside, increasing the pressure of the right and declaring the failure thus provoked, nevertheless, and once again, as a failure of Die Linke. In this sense, the fate of the German and European left is unfortunately linked to that of the BSW and its defeats will have repercussions beyond the BSW.

4 February 2024

Strikes in the transport sector in Germany

5 March 2024, by Jakob Schaefer

In recent months, however, there has been a noticeable change, and this is because the labour market situation is favourable to employees. In many sectors, there is a shortage of skilled labour. This makes workers more self-confident and more willing to fight. So for months now, under pressure from the rank and file, working conditions have become an increasingly important issue. They are demanding more bonuses for shift work, paid breaks and above all shorter working hours, but of course also higher wages, as was the case during the strikes by airport employees (security staff and ground staff of the Lufthansa Group).

Public transport

The most important struggle in this context is currently taking place in urban transport. During the week of 26 February to 2 March, workers paralysed urban transport in more than 70 major cities for one or two days. The special feature of this action is that four years ago, the Fridays for Future (FfF) organisation joined forces with the ver.di services union to form the *Wir fahren zusammen* (We go together) alliance. This time, highly

effective joint demonstrations took place on the main strike day, 1 March. This is the first time in Germany that a trade union and part of the climate protection movement have acted together. This was possible above all because the alliance emphasized: "For social and climate protection reasons, we need a turning point in transport, i.e. a massive expansion of public transport. To achieve this, we need more drivers. There is already a shortage of bus drivers, because too few people want to do this arduous job (the work is hard and the pay is too low). We need to make the job more attractive, and that means reducing working hours with full pay compensation."

Unlike what usually happens, this time the press did not attack the strikers, for two main reasons: the public sees the high workload of public transport employees and also sees the need to develop public transport.

Admittedly, this has not yet led to a satisfactory agreement (the union bureaucracy is unlikely to take advantage of the momentum now gained to push through the majority of demands). But the employees, buoyed by the success of the mobilisation and

their new-found self-confidence, will not be calming down any time soon.

Train drivers in struggle

Collective bargaining for train drivers has been going on for 4 months in a similar context of staff shortages. But there is one key difference: the train drivers' union (GDL) is not part of the major DGB trade union confederation and, because of its much more combative stance, it is under fire from both the government and the rival EVG union (a member of the DGB). The GDL received no support from the DGB; on the contrary, the major industrial unions demanded that the GDL give in.

During negotiations, which recently took place behind closed doors over a period of 4 weeks, the railway company failed to meet its main demand, namely a reduction in working time from 38 to 35 hours. It is therefore expected that in a few days' time there will be further strikes on the railways, bringing rail traffic to a standstill for several days.

4 March 2024

The Movement of the Uncommitted in Defense of Palestine

4 March 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Michigan has 200,000 Muslim voters, and counting another way, it has 300,000 voters from the Middle East and North Africa. Starting a couple of months ago, Palestinians in Michigan began to organize a movement urging voters in the state's Democratic primary election to cast their votes for "uncommitted" rather than for President Joe Biden as a protest against his failure to call for a ceasefire. "In a democracy you are told when things are not going right, you use the ballot box to send your

message," said Michigan State Representative Abraham Aiyash, a supporter of the campaign.

The Michigan uncommitted movement hoped to convince 10,000 people to do so in the presidential primary on February 27, but it won support not only from the Arab and Muslim communities, but also from some Jews, like those in Jewish Voice for Peace, from African Americans, and from young voters of various ethnicities and eventually received

100,000 votes. The Israel newspaper Haaretz reported that Michigan campaign manager Layla Elabed - Rep. Rashida Tlaib's sister - said the results will likely mean "Michigan will be sending two delegates to Chicago to declare that they are uncommitted to the Democratic nominee as long as he or she funds Israel's war in Gaza."

Michigan, a swing state, is key to the U.S. presidential election. In the last election, Biden won Michigan by only 150,000 votes, so if Muslims and

Arabs stay home, he could lose the state.

In Washington state, where the primary election will take place on March 12, there is another strong movement of the uncommitted. There the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, which has 50,000 members in the state, called upon its members to vote uncommitted. The UFCW praised Biden for being "an ally to workers over the years," but said, "in solidarity with our partners in Michigan who sent a clear message in their primary that Biden must do more to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Biden must push for a lasting ceasefire and ending US funding

toward this reckless war."

Washington state is predominantly Democratic and the union and other uncommitted voters are likely to vote for Biden in the general election, but many want to register their opposition to his policies. Still, the presence of a bloc of uncommitted delegates could affect the Democratic Party national convention where the presidential candidate is nominated.

Not all states offer the option of voting uncommitted, but there are several that do, including Kentucky, Maryland, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Colorado. Most of those have small Arab and Muslim populations,

and some like Colorado have campaigns to win uncommitted votes and perhaps delegates.

The movement in the streets also continues. On March 2, an International Day of Solidarity with Palestine, hundreds of thousands around the world demonstrated for a ceasefire. We marched in 85 American cities, including Los Angeles, Denver, Chicago, and in rainy New York City where I joined the protest. As long as the war goes on, the movement will go on, and the opposition to both Israel and to United States support for the war will grow.

3 March 2024

For the right to self-determination of Palestinians, for the withdrawal of imperialist forces from the Middle East

3 March 2024, by **Gilbert Achcar**

Interview with Gilbert Achcar by Antoine Larrache, Inprecor.

What phase of the Israeli intervention are we in now?

Things are relatively clear in light of the military reports of the occupying forces. The most intensive bombing phase has been completed for the north and is being completed for the southern part. In the northern half and centre, the occupying forces have moved to the next phase, that of a so-called low-intensity war. In reality they are organizing a complete grid of the areas they have occupied in order to destroy the network of tunnels and search for fighters from Hamas and other organizations who are always in ambush and can emerge at any time, as long as the tunnels exist.

Israeli forces are increasingly under international pressure, particularly American, to move to this so-called low-intensity phase of combat. But this name is misleading because in reality

low intensity is limited to bombing. The number of missiles and bombings by planes and drones will decrease since there is not much left to destroy in Gaza. They will move on to one-off interventions against groups of fighters who emerge here and there.

What followed on from 7 October was an absolutely devastating bombing campaign that took on genocidal proportions: the wholesale destruction of a vast urban area inevitably resulted in the extermination of an incredible number of civilians. More than one per cent of Gaza's population was killed. For France, this would correspond to the frightening figure of 680,000 deaths!

Added to this is the expulsion of 90 per cent of the population from their places of residence. A good part of the Israeli right - which is an extreme right in a country where the Zionist left has been crushed - would like to expel them from the territory of Gaza to Egypt or elsewhere. Israel wants to

ensure total military control of the territory, but that is an illusion: they will never succeed unless they kick everyone out. As long as there is a population in Gaza, there will be resistance to the occupation.

The drop in intensity of bombings on Gaza also allows Israel to raise its tone against Lebanon and Hezbollah. Zionist leaders are banking on the fact that part of Lebanon can be detached from Hezbollah for sectarian and political reasons. The threats are increasing day by day, with strong pressure for Hezbollah to withdraw to the north, to a distance from the border that Israel would deem acceptable. Otherwise, Israel threatens to inflict the fate of Gaza on part of Lebanon, in other words to raze the regions where Hezbollah is in a position of strength in the southern suburbs of the capital, in the south of the country, and also in the east, in the Bekaa.

What is the state of military

resistance in Palestine?

In Gaza, resistance can continue in devastated areas as long as there are tunnels. A sort of underground city was built for the fighters. It's like a metro network, but the Gazan population cannot take refuge there, unlike what we saw in Europe during the Second World War or as we see today in Kiev, Ukraine. The tunnels dug by Hamas are for the exclusive use of fighters.

Rockets continue to be launched from Gaza into Israeli towns, with Hamas and other groups trying to show that they are still active. Eradicating Hamas and all forms of resistance in Gaza is an impossible goal.

This is what leads the Israeli far right to say that we must empty the territory of its population, annex it, create Greater Israel from the Jordan to the sea and empty all this territory of Palestinians. The Israeli far right, including Likud, aspires to this. Netanyahu displays a more ambiguous official position due to his position as prime minister, but he keeps winking at this extremist perspective.

In the West Bank, the difference with Gaza is that the Palestinian Authority - which is in charge of the Palestinian populated areas in the West Bank - is exactly in the position of Vichy in relation to the German occupation. Mahmoud Abbas is the Petain of the Palestinians. There are organizations in the West Bank advocating armed struggle, such as Hamas and others, but what has attracted the most attention over the past year is the emergence of new groups of young people who are not affiliated - neither with Fatah, nor with Hamas, nor with any of the traditional organizations. In some refugee camps or towns, such as Jenin and Nablus, they have formed armed groups and carried out occasional operations against the occupying troops, which has led to massive reprisals.

Since 7 October, the occupying troops have been engaged in a mop-up campaign in the West Bank, a remake of the "Battle of Algiers", with the added use of aviation for the first time since 2001. Added to this is the action of Zionist settlers who harass and kill. As we speak, there have been around

300 deaths in the West Bank. This is not comparable to the absolutely terrible massacre perpetrated in Gaza, but the Israeli far right wants to repeat it in the West Bank at the first opportunity. That said, contrary to what Hamas hoped, there was no widespread conflagration with an uprising of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and inside the State of Israel in response to the Islamic movement's call. The reason is that the population of the West Bank is very aware of the disproportionate balance of military power. Unlike the Hamas soldiers in Gaza, where there has been no direct occupation force since 2005, the population of the West Bank comes into contact with the occupation forces on a daily basis and is directly confronted with the far right and the settlers. It knows that they are just waiting for an opportunity to repeat what was done in 1948, that is to say, to terrorize people and force them to flee from the territory. This explains why the West Bank has only moderately demonstrated its solidarity with Gaza.

What is the state of mobilizations in Israel?

The 7 October attack was a very strong shock, as was 11 September 2001 in the United States. Then there was its repeated use in the media. This shock continues to be exploited, with an endless series of testimonies in order to maintain a vengeful mobilization of the population. It was this type of campaign in the United States that allowed the Bush team to launch into the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. For now in Israel, this is also working, and the vast majority of Jewish-Israeli opinion supports the war.

A small anti-war minority denounces the genocide. We must salute its courage, because it faces complete rejection by its social environment. But what is striking is the virtual absence of mobilization by the Palestinian citizens of Israel, unlike in 2021, when there was a strong mobilization in solidarity with the start of the Intifada in the West Bank. This led to violent reactions from the Zionist far right in the country. In view of the hatred which has seized the Jewish-Israeli population after 7

October, if Palestinian citizens had tried to reproduce such a mobilization, the consequences would have been terrible.

This population suffers a very intimidating climate, with bullying, repression and censorship, which falls on them, worsening their status as second-class citizens. They are now pariahs in the eyes of much of Israeli society.

Why do you think there is not more action in Arab countries?

I belong to a generation that experienced the defeat of 1967 and its aftermath, then the 1970s which experienced very strong mobilizations. This time there were some big demonstrations in Arab countries, but no more than in Indonesia or Pakistan for example. In Jordan and Morocco, there were big demonstrations, but these countries did not even end their diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.

The relative weakness of the mobilizations can only be explained by the weight of the accumulated defeats. The Palestinian cause was weakened, in particular due to the divisions and the action of the Vichy-style Palestinian Authority, which allowed a certain number of Arab states to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

But there are also the defeats of the two revolutionary shock waves that the region has experienced so far, in 2011 and 2019. When we observe the region today, the conclusion is sad: there is almost nothing left of the conquests of these two waves.

The last two countries where there were still gains from the popular movement are Tunisia and Sudan. Tunisia went from the dictatorship of Ben Ali to that of Kaïs Saïed, with perhaps an aspect of "farce" coming after the tragedy. In Sudan, the resistance committees had some success until last year, when the two factions of the old regime began a ruthless civil war in April. The international media does not talk much about it, especially in the West, despite the tens of thousands of deaths and the millions of displaced

people, the sexual violence and everything else: the darker people's skin colour, the less they talk about it. It is an immense tragedy, for which the resistance committees were not prepared. They do not have armed wings that would allow them to play a role in a situation of this type.

We can concretely see the impact of the defeats since the "Arab Spring": Syria, Yemen, Libya, and now Sudan, are in situations of civil war; in Egypt, Sissi established a dictatorship more brutal than that of Mubarak which the population had got rid of in 2011, and in Algeria the military restored order by seizing the opportunity offered by Covid, then it was Tunisia's turn...

All of this does not create a climate conducive to broad mobilizations which, in Cairo or other capitals, would attack Israel's diplomatic representations and force governments to break their ties with the Zionist state.

Is it relevant to conclude that if the Zionist extreme right's project is realized, Israel's influence will increase in the region?

The Israeli far right knows that the governments of the region pay very little attention to the Palestinian question, that a large part of them have already established official relations with Israel, and that they get along well between reactionary governments. Israel therefore does not feel the need to make concessions on this front. They know that the Saudi government is hypocritical, that it is on the path to establishing relations with them as the Emirates did. There is security and military cooperation between them against their common enemy, Iran.

The Israeli far right attracted into its fold, with the effect of October 7, a part of what was considered as centre-right. Today it is banking on the fact that the American administration, which made the mistake of providing unconditional support to Israel for its enterprise against Gaza, has put itself in a position from which it can no longer retreat. Indeed, the United States has entered an electoral period, the Democrats are therefore in competition with the Republicans, and

Trump will not fail to seize on the slightest disagreement that could arise between Israel and Washington to attack the Biden administration. The latter is in a weak position, it has put itself in a position from which it is no longer able to exert strong pressure on Israel's genocidal enterprise. There is a lot of hypocrisy in Blinken's speeches urging Israel to show greater "humanitarian" concern: he is taking people for idiots, in the full knowledge that the genocidal destruction and massacres in Gaza were only possible thanks to American support.

This war is the first joint Israeli-American war, the first war where the United States has been fully, from the beginning, a party to the operation, its stated goals, its weaponry and its financing.

In addition, the Israeli far right and Netanyahu are banking on a return of Trump to the American presidency, which would greatly facilitate their realization of a greater Israel.

This is why they constantly announce that the war will continue throughout the year 2024. This is inseparable from the fact that this year 2024 is an election year in the United States. They will exploit this opportunity to continue their military momentum. The threat is therefore very serious for Lebanon and the West Bank, the two potential targets of a future large-scale Zionist military campaign. The ongoing "low-intensity" "counter-insurgency" war in the West Bank may intensify and, in Lebanon, the limited exchange of bombings on both sides of the border risks turning into a large-scale operation.

In light of the experience of historical mobilizations on war, whether Vietnam, Iraq or the first Intifada, what are the most effective slogans to counter the Israeli offensive? Many people are wondering how to act, since we seem to be facing an indestructible enemy.

The 7 October effect was exploited to the fullest by relying on what I called, after 11 September, "narcissistic compassion", this compassion which is only exercised towards those who resemble you. In France, the parallel

was immediately drawn between the rave party of October 7 and the Bataclan, so that people would identify with Israelis and put Hamas in the same category as the Islamic State.

Despite this, we have seen in Western countries a rise in the mobilization in solidarity with Gaza, which is however largely that of communities of immigrant origin from the Arab region or regions in sympathy with the Palestinian cause. Despite the absolute disproportion in the presentation of events in the media - for which a Palestinian death is much less important than an Israeli death - people realize the scale of the genocide underway. But, with the October 7 effect, the indignation is of a lesser magnitude than it should be in the face of a genocidal war of this type, which is taking place before the eyes of the whole world.

However, indignation is gaining ground and has begun to reverse the wave of October 7 in which voices of solidarity with Palestine were stifled by a campaign labeling the slightest expression of this solidarity as anti-Semitism, Nazism, etc.. We must now build for the long term, building on indignation at the genocide. What is happening in Gaza shows the reality of the State of Israel, governed by the far right for many years, an increasingly radical far right which took action by seizing the opportunity, using 7 October as the administration of George W. Bush had seized the opportunity of using 11 September to carry out actions that its members had been planning for a long time.

In terms of type of action, the BDS campaign is proven and effective. It must be continued and amplified. On the political level, we must emphasize the complicity of Western governments - to varying degrees. We can understand the historical reasons for the attitude of the German ruling class, but the lessons they learned from the catastrophe of Nazism are very bad if they lead them to support a state which, although claiming to be Jewish, behaves more and more like the Nazis.

In France, Macron must have felt he had gone too far when he offered to participate in Israel's war on Gaza, and France has now distinguished

itself from other European governments by supporting the call for a ceasefire. The procedure initiated by South Africa before the International Court of Justice on the question of genocide is also a point of support for pressure on governments.

We must also oppose arms deliveries to Israel, particularly in the United States, and highlight the hypocrisy and “double standards” of Western governments on the issue of Ukraine and that of Palestine. Their humanitarian and legal discourse on Ukraine collapsed like a pack of cards, especially when viewed from the Global South. Certainly, few people had any illusions, but now the double talk is quite blatant. This includes the qualification of genocide: it was quickly used for Ukraine even though what Russia has done there so far is of much less destructive and murderous intensity than what Israel has done in Gaza in three months.

A range of political themes makes it possible today to rebuild a truly consistent internationalist and anti-imperialist consciousness. The twinning of Ukraine and Gaza allows us to show that we are against any invasion, whether Russian, Israeli or American, and that as internationalists we are consistent in defending universal values such as peace, the rights of peoples, self-determination, etc.

Today there is room for numerous political education battles, confronted with the media, the reigning hypocrisy, and all the supporters of

Israel or Moscow. This war of narratives is facilitated by the evidence of far-right sympathy for Netanyahu and Putin. This also helps to show how anti-Semitism and Zionism complement each other. We must reverse the accusation equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism by showing that, although it is true that certain anti-Semitic speeches disguise themselves as anti-Zionism, this is far from establishing permanent equality between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. However, it is necessary to emphasize the convergence between anti-Semitism and Zionism: the anti-Semitic extreme right of Europe and the United States, which wishes to get rid of the Jews, supports Zionism because it also advocates the fact that Jews must go to Israel rather than live in Europe or North America.

Regarding the slogans for solidarity with Gaza, today we must articulate the various questions that we have raised and which are first of all of a defensive nature: that is to say the need to stop the massacre, which is the top priority, therefore the call for an immediate ceasefire. But this is not enough, because stopping the fighting in the face of armed occupation of the entire territory obviously poses a problem. We must therefore also demand the immediate, and above all unconditional, withdrawal of the occupying troops. We must also demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all territories occupied since 1967.

It is a slogan which conforms to an optic that the vast majority of people

can understand since international law considers these territories as occupied and therefore requires the end of their occupation and of any colonization put in place by the occupier. Likewise, international law recognizes to Palestinian refugees a right of return or compensation.

From there on, it is up to the Palestinians to decide what they want: the debate within the solidarity movement on one state or two states is often inappropriate in my opinion, because it is not in Paris, in London or New York that must be decided what is needed for the Palestinians. The solidarity movement must fight for the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people in all its components. It is up to the Palestinians to decide what they want. For the moment, there is a Palestinian consensus on the demands for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, for the dismantling of settlements in the West Bank, for the destruction of the separation wall, for the right of return of refugees and for real equality for the Palestinian citizens of Israel. These are all democratic demands, which are understandable to everyone, and must be at the centre of the solidarity campaign with the Palestinian people.

Beyond that, in the realm of utopia, there is food for thought and debate, of course, but that is not what mass campaigns are built on, particularly in the emergency of a genocide. in progress.

19 January 2024

Convergence of struggles around the tragic anniversary of Tèmbi

2 March 2024, by Andreas Sartzekis

On Wednesday 28 February, we moved up a gear, with an impressive mobilization one year after the Tèmbi rail tragedy. As you will recall, the

head-on collision of two trains travelling on the same track killed 57 people. Attributed by the government to a stationmaster's error, the

massacre highlighted the disastrous state of public services, and of the railways in particular, as a result of the privatization policy. Hundreds of

thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in anger and outrage. Since then, the Mitsotakis government has been using scandalous methods (for which it has been condemned by the European Parliament) to prevent a proper investigation and bring justice to the victims, as demanded by the families' association and a large part of the population. There is no question of forgetting, as many banners on 28 February made clear.

An anniversary day of struggle

To honour the memory of the victims and denounce the murderous destruction of public services, ADEDY (the public sector trade union federation) called for the 28th to be a day of strikes and demonstrations, with demands including 10% pay rises (a teacher starts at 734 euros, a nurse at 680 euros, etc.) and massive recruitment. And it had called for a major day of action on 28 February.

The call was widely heeded, even though the leadership of the GSEE (General Confederation of Greek Workers) did not join in. In Athens, there were marches from various public sectors, branches of the private sector, grassroots unions, and on an avenue parallel to the ADEDY demonstration, PAME and KKE.

Thousands more came from the education sector, including teachers and, in impressive numbers, young people at school, who were still reeling from the tragedy at Tèmbi, where many students died. Because of the large crowds, there were very large student contingents in various parts of the demonstration! Their rejection of the creation of private universities was all the more justified on this day.

In this huge demonstration, which probably drew at least 40,000 people, the common slogan for all was: "It's either their profits or our lives". And in many towns, such as Larissa, Karditsa and Patras, huge anger-filled demonstrations also took place on the 28th. In Thessaloniki, there seemed to be even more people than in Athens to denounce what was not an accident but a crime.

University protests continue unabated

For two months now, there has been no let-up in the mobilization against the plan to create private universities, despite the repression (cops recently at the Athens law school) and the propaganda about the "need to be a modern country"! General assemblies

and occupations continue, and every Thursday thousands of students demonstrate across the country. Faced with this, the government is trying to rush the situation: it plans to have its draft law debated very quickly and put to a vote in Parliament on 8 March.

In the same way that Mitsotakis refused to give anything to the farmers, the government is playing hardball despite the massive rejection (by students and university staff, the parliamentary left, and even Pasok, which was obliged to reject the bill)... and the fact that many legal experts consider the bill to be illegal: the constitution does not allow the creation of private universities, and this is becoming widely known!

The coming week will be decisive. There's no question of the movement giving up! This morning, they returned to Parliament Square: the names of the 57 victims, painted yesterday, had been erased that evening by the parliamentary services. The students rewrote them in paint, under the gaze of the cops, saying loud and clear: "You will not erase this crime". A determination that deserves the greatest solidarity!

29 February 2024

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

Portuguese Elections -Left Bloc leader in debate

1 March 2024, by **Dave Kellaway, Mariana Mortagua**

The Costa Socialist Party government fell at the end of last year accused of corruption. From 2015 to 2019, the Left Bloc had a confidence and supply agreement (the *geringonça* or contraption), alongside the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), with the Costa government. Unlike Podemos in the Spanish state, it did not join the government or take ministerial posts.

Their principled opposition to the 2019 budget, which neglected working class needs, effectively brought down Costa's government.

The subsequent Costa government, which collapsed in 2023, had an absolute majority and had no need for external support from the Bloc or the PCP. One of the campaign objectives

in this election is for the Bloc vote to be strong enough to prevent an absolute majority for the Socialist Party and thereby construct a new written deal with the Socialist Party, forcing real concessions to the needs of working people.

As we have seen elsewhere in Europe and even globally, there has been a

surge recently in support for the far right Chega (Enough), which is a recent phenomenon in Portugal. In the opinion polls, they are at 17%, while the Bloco has been polling between 7 and 4% and the PCP between 4 and 2%. Polling gives the centre (right) parties a two-point lead over the Socialist Party with 31%, but in order to form a government, they would need to do a similar deal as the Italian conservative parties have done with the far right. Such a government would mean a bigger attack on working people's lives and on public spending. Attacks on women's and LGBT+ rights would also follow. The Left Bloc is campaigning vigorously against the danger represented by Chega and its potential alliance with the centre right parties. No party or alliance is predicted to have a stable majority, according to the Portuguese media at the moment.

Below is a report from the [Left Bloc website](#) about a recent [radio debate](#) in which their lead candidate, Mariana Mortágua, participated.

“It’s the Bloc’s strength that can impose solutions” that they say are “impossible”

In the radio debate held yesterday between parliamentary candidates, Mariana Mortágua Bloco Esquerda (Left Bloc) leader insisted on measures to curb house prices and recalled that before the 2015 elections they also said that “it was impossible to raise the minimum wage.”

This Monday’s radio debate brought together representatives of the parties with parliamentary seats, with the exception of Chega (the far right party rising in Cpolls-Tr), which refused to attend. In the first round of speeches, the topic was the future of the Social Security system. Mariana Mortágua defended the increase in pensions and the diversification of sources of revenue for public Social Security, either through the gross added value of companies or through the tax on

large fortunes proposed by the Bloc. This is similar to what already happens today with the additional tax on luxury assets, a proposal that the Bloc had approved during the “geringonça” (contraption), when the Left Bloc externally supported certain policies of the Socialist Party government and voted to allow it to take office. The revenue from this tax is earmarked for the Social Security Financial Stabilisation Fund, contributing more than a hundred million euros.

For the Bloc coordinator, “the way to fight poverty and have more economic growth is by fighting economic inequalities,” as Portugal is the second-most unequal country in the OECD. But “this can’t be done by reducing personal income tax on the highest salaries, as proposed by the IL (Liberal Initiative, a neo-liberal party) and the right,” Mariana Mortágua continued, nor by privatising contributions to the social security system, which she considered a “disastrous” proposal.

“Portugal is a poor country because it pays poor wages”

All it takes is for all workers to contribute a thousand euros to a private fund, and you’ve just created a hole of 1.7 billion in one year in the fund for pension payments,” warned the Bloc coordinator, recalling that “there was a liberal prime minister who governed England for a month or so, and the financial chaos created was such that pension funds lost 40 percent of their value.” In other words, “anyone who retired at that time and had a pension dependent on market pensions lost 40 percent of the value of their pensions simply because there was an irresponsible neoliberal prime minister who blew up the financial markets with her governance of the United Kingdom for a month.”

Mariana Mortágua also criticised the PS’s absolute majority for having created “scaremongering” about the sustainability of the system, “saying that it couldn’t comply with the law because that would jeopardise 13

years of Social Security sustainability, lying, and sending altered data to Parliament.”

The debate continued with the subject of justice in relation to recent cases with a political impact and the actions of the Attorney General’s Office. Mariana Mortágua defended the chief prosecutor’s need to have “the capacity for dialogue with the people” and also to “explain the processes that are underway.” However, she stressed that this is not the problem with justice in Portugal, which is the country that “applies the highest sentences in Europe,” has “20% of the prison population in pre-trial detention,” and is “too expensive and time-consuming.”

The third topic was the question of governability, with AD (Democratic Alliance, a centre right electoral alliance) leader Luís Montenegro again failing to answer what he would do if he needed the support of the far right to govern. Mariana Mortágua once again argued that a left-wing majority is the only stable scenario for the country and that the advantage of a written agreement is that “people can get to know it” and hold it to account. An agreement for the legislature “allows us to look at the country and make major reforms, which is what we need,” she continued, guaranteeing that on March 10, “there won’t be an absolute majority.” She said that “it’s the Bloc’s strength that can impose measures on that majority that otherwise wouldn’t be there”: for example, “lowering the mortgage installment through Caixa” and “banning the sale of houses to non-residents,” measures that the PS says are “impossible” today. “I remember the time when it was impossible to raise the minimum wage and the European Union wanted to impose sanctions on Portugal,” recalled Mariana Mortágua, confident “in the strength of the Bloc to impose these solutions” as it did in the past with defending wages.

With regard to defence policy, Mariana Mortágua began by pointing out that “the principle of self-determination applies to Ukraine as it does to Palestine” and that “Portugal must always place itself in the position of collaborating with peace initiatives

and not with war initiatives,” as happened with the invasion of Iraq. And she argued that “the area of cooperation that must be protected is the area of European cooperation within the framework of the Organisation for European Security and Cooperation, in which our Armed Forces must cooperate, not subordinate themselves to any other force.”

As for defence spending, she believes that “it must be necessary to defend the country and comply with our Constitution” and cannot be used to “give in to foreign interests by importing technology produced abroad.” She also gave the example of

the PSD/CDS (centre-right parties) government’s choice in 2004, when it “decided to buy submarines from a German company that has been accused and convicted of corruption” instead of buying a multipurpose ship, considering it has broader functions”, such as rescuing the population and monitoring the sea coast. “That this can be combined with the recovery of the Portuguese naval industry is the most sensible thing,” he pointed out.

Regarding a possible change to the electoral law, Mariana Mortágua said she would accept the introduction of a national compensation constituency “without distorting proportional representation nor opening the door

to single-member constituencies, which are a distortion of democracy.”.

The final issue raised in the debate was the use of mobile phones in schools. Mariana Mortágua recalled the Bloc’s proposal to limit the use of smartphones in playgrounds, believing that “the playground should be for socialising and playing.” “We have to understand the impact that exposure to screens and social networks had during the pandemic and afterwards,” which led to “children socialising and playing less.”

*Introduction and translation by Dave Kellaway for **Anti*Capitalist Resistance**.*