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Palestine's fate in light of the onslaught on Gaza

30 April 2024, by Gilbert Achcar

The Arab defeat in 1967 led to an Arab retreat from that historical position and acceptance of the legitimacy of the Zionist state within the borders that it had prior to the Six-Day War, by way of acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution No. 242 (22 Nov. 1967), issued less than three months after an Arab summit held in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, famously proclaimed three No's: "No conciliation, no recognition, and no negotiation." Khartoum's No's were in fact contradicted by their very context, which called for "political efforts" aimed at "eliminating the aggression's results" by obtaining the Zionist army's withdrawal to the pre-war borders.

As for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), after having strictly rejected Resolution 242 upon its issuance, it gradually adapted to it by adopting the program of an "independent Palestinian state" alongside the Zionist state, until it officially accepted the resolution in 1988, at a meeting of its National Council held in Algiers. This was followed by the Oslo deal in 1993, concluded by Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas in the belief that it would bring about the desired "independent state", even though it did not even stipulate the withdrawal of the Zionist army from the 1967

territories, but only its redeployment therein outside the areas of high Palestinian population density, nor did it stipulate the dismantling of the settlements, or even the freezing of settlement activity, not to mention the issue of reversing Israel's decision to annex East Jerusalem and that of the refugees' right to return.

The Oslo deal opened the way for the Kingdom of Jordan to join Egypt and the PLO in "normalizing" its relations with the Zionist state. Sadat's regime had seized the opportunity of the third Egyptian defeat in 1973, which it called the "War of the Crossing" (of the Suez Canal) and claimed as a victory, to conclude a separate deal with the Zionist state, inspired by Resolution 242. Egypt recovered the Sinai Peninsula with reduced sovereignty and without the Gaza Strip that was administratively attached to it before the 1967 war. In exchange, Egypt agreed to a complete "normalization" of its relations with Israel at the cost of a temporary rupture of its relations with the Arab countries.

Fifty years after Sadat's "War of the Crossing" and thirty years after the Oslo deal, the "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation took place, intended to be a second "War of the Crossing". It led in reality to a second Nakba, more disastrous than the first in terms of

the extent of genocidal massacre, destruction and displacement. While other Arab countries had boarded the "normalization" train in 2020, namely the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the Kingdom of Morocco (in addition to the Sudanese military clique), the Saudi kingdom is now preparing to join them in order to complete the conditions for the establishment of a regional military alliance that brings together the Gulf monarchies, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco with the Zionist state under the military umbrella and supervision of the United States, against Iran and any other threat that may imperil the security of the alliance's regional members and the interests of their U.S. godfather.

As for the Palestinian fate, "putting the issue back on the table"—which Hamas is proud of having achieved because of its operation, regardless of the enormous human cost of this "achievement"—has led in fact to vigorous international efforts, primarily by the United States, to revive the Oslo project in a way that is even worse than what there was thirty years ago. The goal is to establish a rump Palestinian state on parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, subject to strict military control exercised by the Zionist state through the permanent presence of its forces

inside the two areas, not to mention the lands that are under Zionist army and settlements control in the West Bank, which Israel will be able to officially annex in exchange for its acceptance of the establishment of the statelet.

To be sure, if Washington succeeds in imposing this scenario that it is pursuing, it will constitute a (temporary) frustration of the intentions of the Zionist far right to achieve the "Greater Israel" from the river to the sea. However, these intentions were beyond reach, in any case, before "Al-Aqsa Flood" provided the opportunity for the Zionist army to reoccupy the Gaza Strip and escalate its operations in the West Bank, along with settlers' attacks. The fact

remains that the best "solution" that could result from the Zionist ongoing genocidal war is worse than what existed before it, and certainly worse than what appeared on the horizon following the Oslo deal.

The people of Palestine will have to cling to its land, rejecting the "soft" displacement (the incentives to immigrate) after the forced displacement, and continue the struggle along a strategy that enables it to advance its cause again, after the great decline that followed the important progress that this cause made at the peak of the first intifada in 1988, a decline that has now reached its nadir. The Palestinian struggle should aim at dividing the

Israeli society politically rather than uniting it through indiscriminate acts, by subordinating the necessary forms of armed resistance to the requirements of political and mass action, in order to return to the conditions that followed the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the first intifada after it, when a current began to rise among Israeli Jews, called "post-Zionist" at the time, which combined rejection of the occupation and support for the de-Zionization of the Israeli state in order to transform it into "a state of all its citizens".

Translated from the Arabic original published in Al-Quds al-Arabi on 30 April 2024 for Gilbert Achcar's blog-><https://gilbert-achcar.net/palestines-fate-after-gaza>].

Pro-Palestine Student Protests Spread Despite Repression

29 April 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

The protests began at Columbia University, then spread to other elite private universities such as Yale and Harvard, and the University of Southern California, but soon included state universities such as the University of California campuses at Berkeley and Los Angeles and the University of Michigan. At Columbia, at Emory University in Atlanta, and at the University of Texas at Austin, police in riot gear broke up encampments on the campuses, beat and arrested students. On some campuses, police also arrested professors.

The student movement began as a demonstration of solidarity with the Palestinian people, calling for a "ceasefire now" and for an end to U.S. funding for Israel's military. Quickly students also demanded that their universities divest from Israeli businesses, especially intelligence and arms makers, and some also called for an end to academic ties to Israeli institutions. Students pitched tents

and set up camp in university plazas, engaging in peaceful protests. They didn't engage in violence, did not damage property, and hardly interrupted university operations at all. Many of the protestors were both Palestinians and Jews, but also a diverse range of others.

College presidents, other university administrators, politicians, and some media characterized the demonstrations as anti-Semitic, claimed they were intimidating and threatening Jewish students, and alleged they were violent. Columbia University president Dr. Nemat Shafik was the first to call in the police, leading to beatings and arrests, outraging the students and many faculty members. Hundreds were arrested on various campuses around the country. While there doubtless some anti-Semitic remarks, they were rare exceptions and the demonstrations were fundamentally anti-Zionist and did not threaten Jewish students.

"Students are here because it has been over 200 days of watching a genocide unfold. Because people are tired of seeing their friends get beaten, arrested, suspended, and expelled for daring to use their voices to end their university's complicity in the system," says Cyn, a student at UC Berkeley. "Every year our universities send millions and millions of dollars to companies who manufacture weapons and surveillance equipment used to harass, intimidate, and brutalize Palestinians, and then our universities turn those same tactics on us. Our solidarity goes out to everyone fighting for a free Palestine."

Mike Johnson, speaker of the House, in a shocking and unprecedented political move, went to Columbia University and spoke, calling the pro-Palestine protestors "a mob" that had threatened Jewish students and "supported terrorists." He demanded that Columbia University president Shafik either bring the protests under control or resign. Republican Senators

Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Josh Hawley of Missouri, called for troops to be sent in to crush the pro-Palestine campus protests.

Other protests calling for an immediate ceasefire and an end to U.S. funding for Israel continue to take place, such as the one I joined, a

seder-protest held in front of the Brooklyn home of Senate Democratic majority leader Chuck Schumer, which blocked a major thoroughfare and led to 300 arrested.

Despite the repression, students appear to be determined to continue the protests and to force their

universities to divest from Israel and to stop their government from aiding the Israeli military. But classes end in May. Where will the movement go? Some plan to go to the Democratic Party Convention in Chicago on August 19-22. Will it be another 1968?

28 April 2024

Evaporating Solidarity: The Response to Displacement Cannot Be Sustained by Empathy Alone

28 April 2024, by **Daria Krivonos**

Despite the claims that there was an “exceptional response” in Poland and other EU states to Ukrainian displacement, local and international volunteers have been exhausted, the precarity of the displaced has become an individualized rather than a collective responsibility. The fragile structures that used to support Ukrainian refugees have started to crumble. Poland received the [most EU funds](#) for helping Ukrainian nationals fleeing the war. But already in 2022, [the Polish government stopped offering financial support to families hosting Ukrainian refugees](#). In February 2023, some shelters accommodating the displaced started to charge a fee.

In this piece, I suggest that much of the costs of after-war mobility became individualized and redistributed along asymmetrical networks of care and support created long before 2022. There is a need to take some distance from what has been initially described as a [paradoxical sense of joy of collective action](#) amidst the looming tragedy and violence and to critically examine the consequences of outsourcing support to [grassroot collectives and individual actors](#) driven by feelings of responsibility and the need to help. This individualization of responsibility should be tied to wider politics and infrastructures of the EU asylum regime, which was

never designed to sustain the lives of those seeking international protection, even of those supposedly [“blond and with blue eyes.”](#)

Refugees as humanitarian workers

Ever since the start of the invasion, Ukrainian nationals living abroad faced new challenges of evacuating their families and relatives, hosting and feeding them, and volunteering and donating to Ukraine while at the same time continuing to work in precarious and insecure labour markets benefiting EU economies. The international coverage of Poland as a hospitable government quickly overshadowed an attack on women’s and LGBTIQ rights, the [ongoing violence against other life-seekers on the border with Belarus](#), and the fact that the country refused to accept the refugees allocated through the EU quota system. While the Temporary Protection Directive that was activated for the first time in response to Russia’s invasion opened the possibility for Ukrainian nationals to receive immediate and temporary protection in EU member states — protections shamefully not extended to other non-European, non-white

asylum seekers – these were older networks of labour migration from Ukraine that largely bore the weight of the response to the displacement of people.

I came to Warsaw in the summer-autumn of 2023 as part of longer-term ethnographic research to follow up on my research participants – young Ukrainians, whom I had met in Poland in May 2022. Since then, many of them had been recruited in humanitarian aid organizations with precarious short-term contracts, a part of the expanding “project economy” and the NGO-ization of help funded by the EU, international organisations, and private donors. The funding is allocated to the organisations, which must deliver and demonstrate tangible results and products to justify the funds. Like [in other contexts of humanitarian aid work](#), these newly founded NGOs run on short-term funding and rely heavily on the labour of highly educated localized workers from displaced communities, to which Ukrainian refugees are no exception. The help that these NGOs provide is only possible thanks to the linguistic and other professional skills of the humanitarian workers who had been often displaced by the war themselves.

Vasyl, a fresh graduate of a Ukrainian university, told me after searching for

work that would match his qualifications for several months: “I was about to go to work in a factory as I needed money. Then, by chance, my relative told me about this humanitarian organization, so I applied for work there.” Vasyl’s work included interviewing Ukrainian refugees at bus and railway stations, and collecting data for a humanitarian organization he worked for. “All the people who do this frontline work are Ukrainians because they speak the language. But the higher you go in the hierarchy, there are fewer and fewer Ukrainian people with power to make decisions.”

When we talked in August 2023, he told me that his six-month employment contract was about to expire in a month, and he was ready to start searching for work again. During a WhatsApp call in January 2024, he said his contract was suddenly renewed for another six months, but he didn’t know if his organization would get more funding to continue this work. Ukrainian refugees like Vasyl become key protagonists of the social assistance provided to their communities through an increasingly privatized and outsourced aid model. Vasyl would tell me that his workday “would never begin and would never end” as Ukrainian people shared his phone number as the contact of a person who could help them. “I work 10 to 12 hours a day as people call me all day long even if they are not part of our programme. I cannot say no to people as they need help.” We joked that his phone number was shared all across Poland. This intense emotional involvement around the clock is draining and retraumatizing, but in the absence of wider stable institutions of support, it is Vasyl’s phone number that becomes a lifeline for many Ukrainian refugees in Poland. Meanwhile, he himself worries constantly about his future prospects and employment, which depend on unstable funding schemes of donor organisations.

When I volunteered for another local humanitarian organization providing clothes and food packages to Ukrainian refugees, its head was similarly concerned about funding. In the summer of 2023, they had a big office in the centre of Warsaw

provided by the municipality for affordable rent. The central location of the office was indispensable to the provision of help: passers-by would occasionally drop by to make donations, while those in need of clothes and food would easily reach their office by public transport. Those who volunteered for this organization were other migrant workers, often women, who would come to help other displaced women with food packages and clothes after a day of work as cleaners, domestic workers or teachers lecturing on Zoom to school kids in Ukraine. After their work shifts, they came to the organisation to sort and give away food packages and clothes. These invisibilized practices often get lost in the initial accounts of European solidarity with Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. When the international communities get fatigued by the war in Ukraine, an enormous amount of unpaid labour that sustains these spaces of help falls on Ukrainian migrant communities.

The “crisis” – to borrow this overused word – moved from the visible public spaces of railway stations and reception centres to less visible individual households, unequal labour markets, precarious project economy, and unstable funding schemes. In the summer of 2023, the Warsaw municipality started to demand higher rent. Then, the head of the office, who does all the work on a volunteer basis herself, told me: “Of course, this is a space right in the centre of Warsaw. They can make great money if they rent it to some restaurant.” She said they could not afford a higher rent as the donations that people used to make at the beginning of the war were starting to dry out. It was also unclear for how long their funder could keep supporting them. “People are tired of the war. We will need to move to the outskirts of Warsaw to afford rent. Those who need us will find it more difficult to find and reach us.” In late 2023 the office was still there but the same looming sense of desperation was in the air as the municipality was preparing to kick them out in search for more profitable tenants.

Not by empathy alone

There is still a lot to learn from the response to Ukrainian displacement. For instance, the arrival of 1 million asylum-seekers to the EU in 2015-2016 was framed both by researchers and the media as “a crisis”, leading to what has been now termed “(migration) crisis scholarship.” Now, Poland alone hosts over a million Ukrainian refugees, which shows that “crisis” has never been about numbers alone. This should not come as a surprise as the EU border regime has been [purposefully designed to keep non-European refugees out](#) and conditionally include some groups of desirable labour migrants. Prior to Russia’s full-scale attack, [Ukrainian nationals had been top recipients of labour-related residence permits and visas in the EU](#). Indeed, if we look at Ukrainian refugees’ destination countries after 2022, it becomes clear that their movement mirrored already established labour migration routes. Now, these migrant workers were confronted with new obligations of evacuating their families and relatives. This is why, as Vasyl said, the only choice left for a fresh graduate like him is between work in construction or service sector, and – often, almost equally low-paid – temporary work in humanitarian aid.

In many EU states, the Temporary Protection Directive – however generous it may be compared to the conditions imposed on non-European asylum-seekers – gives little but the right to work and keeps Ukrainian nationals often outside the domain of more extensive national welfare systems. It then comes as no surprise that once donations dry out and Europeans’ humanitarian feelings fade away, Ukrainians are left with the system that was never meant to support them, however “exceptional” and “unprecedented” the initial response was.

In the aftermath of the 2015 “refugee crisis”, [political theorist Ida Danewid wrote about the danger of centering pro-refugee activism in Europe exclusively around notions of empathy,](#)

generosity and hospitality. These feelings allow 'Europeans to constitute themselves as "good" and "ethical" subjects, innocent of imperial histories that often pushed people to migrate in the first place. Questions of structural reform are then simply replaced by the feel-good action and mere empathy. The desire to help and save a distant stranger may easily replace and silence the political struggle, which is needed to abolish the violent asylum and border regime that continues to kill people across the EU frontiers. In this context, it becomes difficult to argue that the reception of Ukrainian refugees was exceptional —

however grassroots-driven, precarious and temporary. But the accounts of my research interlocutors suggest that the asylum regime cannot be sustained simply by empathy, generosity, and hospitality of individual actors opening their homes to (some) strangers, as well as newly-minted NGOs precariously maintained by external funding and running on the labour of temporarily employed refugees.

The case of the reception of Ukrainian refugees offers a perspective on what happens when individualised fragile social relations that sustained the initial solidarity response to massive

displacement start to crumble. This question is a pertinent one not only because the Temporary Protection scheme for Ukrainian nationals is set to expire in Spring 2025 but also in the context of the EU's broader asylum regime. What is needed is not only access to international protection for all (including non-European) asylum-seekers but also functioning public institutions that can provide access to decent living conditions, accommodation, healthcare and work.

March 25, 2024

Source: [LeftEast](#).

What happens next after the successful strike against poverty in Greece?

27 April 2024, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

The reason the turnout was so high is that Greece is almost the most expensive country in Europe. The figures given by GSEE, the single private sector confederation behind the strike, are edifying: in three years, the price of olive oil, a basic product in Greece, has risen by 87%, dairy products by 34% and electricity by 39%. In the face of poverty, the KEPE Centre is proposing the introduction of free school meals for all children. Evictions of indebted homeowners are on the increase, despite frequent opposition from neighbours. For 6 out of 10 households, the monthly income is enough for just 19 days, and the various forms of "aid", despite the staging, are a bluff, and even a scandal: the Minister of Health is introducing a "special service" for operations in the public sector... for which a charge is made. And while the government rejoices in the country's attractiveness as a tourist destination, the revenue generated (20 billion over

the first 11 months of 2023) is not being used in any way to combat this terrible impoverishment.

Union divisions

GSEE had been absent from the recent mobilizations, although the public sector federation ADEDY joined in, and ended up calling for mobilization - although ADEDY did not! - to demand decent wages and the restoration of collective agreements. While the strike was successful - particularly in certain branches of the public sector - the demonstrations were less so! One of the reasons was division: on one side, PAME, the trade union current of the KKE (Greek Communist Party) with an anti-GSEE as well as anti-Right stance; on the other, the rank-and-file unions and part of the radical left; and finally GSEE, with its radical accents strictly for show, and with it part of the radical and reformist left.

All together!

As Prin, the newspaper of the NAR group, says of the demonstrations in Thessaloniki, "the rallies had their lowest turnout for many years, and this proves the crisis of the current trade union movement and the absence of a militant project and a framework that make workers want to fight". This observation applies to the whole country, even if we can see once again that the call from the GSEE bureaucrats led to a successful strike. Thanks to the massive student assemblies and the "All Together" demonstrations, it was able to overcome the divisions to last and, even if it has not yet won, it has shown the way.

20 April 2024

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Defeat the BJP, rely on the strength of workers, poor peasants, and all the oppressed social , ethnic, regional groups of people

26 April 2024, by **Radical Socialist**

The BJP is a fascist party. Or, even by any amount of minute analysis, a fascist type party. But exactly what does that mean and why does that matter? To understand that we should begin by simply noting major changes in the political, economic and social spheres that have already happened, and remember that Narendra Modi as part of his election campaigns has warned that what we have seen in the last ten years is only the appetizer.

So how does that appetizer look? In the political sphere, we have seen the steady destruction of democracy. There is a lazy pseudo-Marxist assertion that all bourgeois democracy is a sham, and therefore it does not matter. There is the opposite position, which says, distorting Lenin, that to fight fascism one must vote for “democratic” bourgeois parties.

Contrary to what Engels or Lenin had thought, bourgeois democracy proved more durable and tenacious. On one hand, the very existence, however briefly, of workers’ democracy made the ruling classes take bourgeois liberal democracy as a form seriously, even as they strove to dilute its content more and more. From ‘rule of the people’ as was its original Greek meaning, democracy was reduced to the act of voting, and that too in as undemocratic a way as the ruling classes could manage. Thus the First Past the Post [FPTP] system in many countries, the large-scale role of money power, restrictions on who can vote, and other kinds of measures. On the other hand, the masses wanted to sustain and strengthen it from below. But the European historical experience of fascist Germany and Italy, of extreme right Bonapartist regimes in Spain, Portugal, Hungary, and elsewhere as well as colonialism

and then the hegemony of bourgeois/petty bourgeois forces after independence imbued large parts of the working classes everywhere with more parliamentary illusions than before. Periodic parliamentary elections became the key factor in ideologically masking the reality of the rule of capital.

The Political Trajectory Under the Modi Regime:

However, in the last one decade we have seen in India further degeneration. The parliamentary system has been made increasingly defunct. Debates have been curtailed. The resort to Select committees to examine draft laws is much less. The function of parliament has been to rubber stamp the diktats of the Prime Minister and the handful of policy makers around him. In order to ensure this, opposition MPs have been silenced by the Speaker in the Lok Sabha and by the Vice President who presides over the Rajya Sabha.

The Election Commission is behaving like an accomplice of the ruling party. In the 2019 elections, the EC used the Pulwama “surgical strike” as its supposed exhortation to voters to go out and vote, when it was clear that Pulwama was an electoral campaign theme of the BJP. Likewise, the EC has repeatedly refused permission to opposition candidates when in similar cases ruling party candidates were given a go-ahead. The EC has destroyed VVPAT slips despite the law stipulating they have to be kept for a year.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), Income Tax Department, to say nothing of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), have been turned into pure and simple hounds of the ruling party. Amol Kirtikar of the Shiv Sena (UBT) was declared to be the candidate for his party from Mumbai North West. Within hours an old case was revived and he was summoned by the ED. On the other hand, between 2014 and 2024, at least 25 politicians who faced corruption charges crossed over to the BJP. Among them ten are from the Congress, four each from the Nationalist Congress Party and Shiv Sena, three from the TMC, two from Telugu Desam, and one each from the SP and the YSR Congress. Another investigation showed that 95% of corruption cases by the ED after 2014 targeted opposition politicians. Two Chief Ministers, Hemant Soren and Arvind Kejriwal, are in jail at the moment. The Income Tax department has been used to freeze the accounts of the Congress party. The CPI (M) and the CPI have been handed Income Tax notices which might lead to the same consequences. The CBI has been used to arrest and frame charges against oppositionists, as well as against civil society activists. In several cases, after years of unlawful arrests, people have been finally let out, while a greater number, including activists like Umar Khalid remain in jail. Four years after the 2020 Delhi riots, chargesheets are yet to be filed in 47% of the non-fatal cases. Even in 37% of cases involving deaths, charge sheets are to be filed. This crackdown began soon after the BJP came to power in 2014. In the notorious Bhima Koregaon case, trumped up charges led to arrests of nine activists, academics and human rights lawyers. This rose to 16 by 2020, and Stan

Swamy, a very senior person, died while incarcerated. National Crime Bureau Record shows that in 2016 there were 35 cases registered under UAPA, rising to 93 in 2019.

Courts have also been heavily tilted over the period. Prasant Bhushan, Swara Bhaskar, and Kunal Kamra were among the more well-known persons who found criminal contempt cases filed against them.

In October 2020, following the rape and murder of a Dalit woman in UP, there were protests. Chandrashekhar Azad, leader of the Azad Samaj Party, and 400 others were arrested for protesting, charged not only with violating Sec. 144, but also accused of rioting and violating the Epidemic Diseases Act.

The biggest political shifts, along with these gross violations of democratic rights, have been the total centralisation of power under the Central Government. Funds for provinces ruled by opposition parties have not been released. Governors have been intervening like opposition politicians or central government agents.

The commitment to secular India has been totally trampled. The Supreme Court accepted that the destruction of the Babri Masjid was unlawful but did nothing beyond that, while accepting the legitimacy of building the Ram Temple. Ranjan Gogoi, then Chief Justice and a member of the bench that passed the verdict on building the temple, later became a BJP member of the Rajya Sabha. This route has been followed by other judges, including for the 2024 elections by former Calcutta High Court judge Abhijit Ganguly.

The Ram Temple construction was a political act of immense significance, since the government committed itself to supporting the building of the temple.

The passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 has been a gross communal act. By distinguishing between people of different religions who can or cannot get Citizenship it targets Muslims in the first place, but also others. Ultimately the CAA, and the National register of Citizens,

enables the state to target almost anyone it chooses, by demanding that it is up to them to prove they are real citizens. Moreover, this creates a formal category of "illegal immigrants".

Finally, the Electoral Bonds scheme showed how political power was used to garner money for the ruling party. This was one case which the government finally lost in the Supreme Court. It was recently declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. In compliance with a directive from the Supreme Court, the Election Commission of India (ECI) recently uploaded data on electoral bonds on its official website. The State Bank of India (SBI) supplied the information, which includes details about these electoral bonds. According to The Wire, on 18 March 2024, out of the total bonds sold worth about Rs. 16,518 crores, the BJP received Rs. 8,251.8 crores, or just under half. The Congress came second with 1,952 crores, and the Trinamool Congress, essentially a one province party, coming third with 1,705 crores. It is also significant that a number of quid pro quo payments have been noted. Thirty Pharma and healthcare companies bought around 900 crores worth of bonds. To cite one example, Hetero Pharma purchased the electoral bonds in April 2022, and July and October 2023 after IT raids that allegedly detected Rs 550 crore unaccounted income linked to the firm. Hetero Pharma is known for manufacturing active pharmaceutical ingredients (API), along with drugs for cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes, among others. Significantly, the government during the pandemic pushed for indigenous manufacturing of APIs, giving financial support to companies who manufacture it through its production-linked incentive scheme.

Of 26 companies that bought the bonds and have faced action by investigative agencies, 16 donated to political parties through bonds only after they came under the radar of these agencies. Further, the donations of another six companies surged after these agencies started cracking down on them. A survey revealed that 37.34% of the bonds purchased by these parties went to the BJP. Other

state ruling parties like the TMC got 18.29%, DMK 11.35%, BJD 4.48% and BRS 8.59%. The Congress, which rules in three states, got 11.97%.

The Economic Field:

The public boast is, the Indian economy is set to grow fast, that it is the fifth largest in the world, etc. But who benefits? Between 2014-15 and 2022-23, the income inequality, already huge, became even more pronounced. A research paper by Thomas Piketty and Nitin Bharti said: "By 2022-23, top one per cent income and wealth shares (22.6 per cent and 40.1 per cent) are at their highest historical levels and India's top one per cent income share is among the very highest in the world, higher than even South Africa, Brazil, and the US." The 10,000 wealthiest individuals among all Indian adults own an average of Rs.22.6 billion in wealth—16,763 times the country's average—while the top 1 per cent possess an average of Rs.54 million in wealth.

Against this we have to set the mass of the people of the country. An average Indian spent ₹3,773 per month in rural India and ₹6,459 in urban India in 2022-23. The average monthly food spending of an average rural and urban Indian was ₹1,750 and ₹2,530, respectively. At 2011-12 prices, the average monthly spending by rural and urban Indians has increased from ₹1,430 and ₹2,630 respectively in 2011-12 to ₹2,008 and ₹3,510 in 2022-23. Even the top 5% of rural and urban Indians spend ₹10,501 and ₹20,824 on average in a month.

Nor is this disparity simply some inexorable law of economics. This is tied to choice, to specific actions and policies. This brief discussion would turn into a book if we were to explain the details of each scam. So, we will merely highlight a few.

The demonetization was a gimmick aimed at blocking the funds of opposition parties shortly before the UP elections. It hurt ordinary people, not any black money holder. At the same time, the BJP manipulated

purchases. Days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the demonetisation policy, the BJP bought land worth crores of rupees. The party, in power at the Centre, bought several land parcels in Bihar up to the first week of November. And on 8 November Modi announced the ban on Rs 500 and Rs 1000.

The Rafale Scam. A deal was signed by the Modi govt to purchase 36 Rafale jets at a rate much higher than what was negotiated by the UPA government. Modi government has refused to make public the price of the aircraft, saying a secrecy clause exists between India and France. However, this secrecy clause only binds India from revealing the technical specifications and operational capabilities of the aircraft, and not the price. French manufacturer Dassault has already released the total price of 36 aircraft, which is about ₹60,000 crore. This makes the per aircraft price to be ₹1,660 crore, as against ₹526, as negotiated by the UPA. The UPA's price included transfer of technology (ToT), and the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) was to make 108 aircraft. Under the new deal, there is no ToT, and HAL, which has a good record in defence production, was superseded by Reliance Aerospace owned by Anil Ambani.

Scams concerning Adani - there are of course plenty of these. 4,305 acres of land was allotted to the Adani Group by the Gujarat government at throwaway prices for the Mundra Port and SEZ development. The land was allotted in Kutch at prices ranging from Re 1 to Rs 32 per sq metre. Adani was also awarded five airports in part of the privatization drive, another scam contested among others by the Kerala government.

There have been, beyond specific large scale wealth transfer cases, a massive change in how the regime deals with the mass of Indians. Ever since the beginnings of globalization, Indian big capital and its hired economists, management specialists and media persons have been saying that labour laws must change, that industry must get greater flexibility, that big capital must get full access to agriculture. The Congress had tried all

of these but had been only very partially or fractionally successful. This was where the BJP, in the second Modi government, made the decisive push. It passed the new labour code, which smashed much of working class organisational rights. It passed the three Farm Acts that sought to increase the power of big capital over farmers. It is to be recognised that despite massive production of wheat, rice, fruits, vegetables, meat and milk, In 2021, India ranked 101 out of 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index. Pushing the farmers directly into the hands of capitalist agribusiness would have further intensified that situation. These laws, like many others, were introduced without consultation and bypassing due parliamentary procedures. That they were halted, was entirely due to massive protests by farmers, primarily from the Punjab, but supported by farmers from Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, as well as elsewhere. The Indian government's November 2021 decision to withdraw the three farm laws did not mark the end of the farmers' movement. The SKM and its allies continue to mobilise around a range of demands including, most prominently, the passage of a national law guaranteeing MSPs for agricultural products and a full waiver of existing debts of farmers and agricultural workers. However, negotiations with the government on these demands have shown little progress and it remains unclear whether farmers' unions and allied organisations will come together again for large scale protests. Yet, that was the one major movement that defeated the Modi government. In other domains, including on the CAA, it has faced big challenges but has proceeded forward. This is also evidence that it is not simply by mouthing calls for religious amity, but by focusing on issues where common interests have to bring together people across religion and caste, that the hegemonic discourse can be challenged.

The Congress government, which had initiated the drive to privatization and the driving down of wages and incomes, had however faced constraints. This led to the UPA-I starting MNREGA. The Modi government has steadily cut down on

MNREGA as well. It has used MNREGA funds also as political instruments against opposition ruled state governments.

Modi came to power offering 20 million jobs. Government statements and pronouncements, to say nothing of BJP claims, exude confidence on that count. However, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy indicates unemployment rates to be much higher than the government numbers. The share of self-employed people in the workforce rose from 49.5% in 2013-14, to 57.3% in 2022-23. The share of salaried workers declined from 23.1% to 20.9%. Jobs in the manufacturing sector halved between 2016 and 2021. The ESIC saw a 7.5% decline in formal job creation in November 2023. Data gaps, data fudging, are important factors that do not permit proper assessment.

The Distinct Fascist Agenda:

Fascism/fascist-like politics differs fundamentally from other right wing politics. Bourgeois parliamentary right-wing parties seek power, their leaders seek personal gains, they have links with the ruling class, and they will serve the needs of the ruling class as far as they can. Fascism and currents similar to it, not merely Mussolini and Hitler, but a range of others, have shown a distinct agenda from birth. In the case of the RSS, this was and is the promotion of aggressive Brahminical Hindu nationalism. This has a wide range of goals, which were previously kept partially concealed but are now entirely open. Fascist type nationalism desires a total homogenization of the nation under a rigid hierarchy. In the Indian context, this means the demonization of Muslims. The Gujarat pattern shows what Muslims can expect in a fully Hindutva India. They will get increasingly less opportunity in education, in better paid jobs. They will be living under constraints imposed by the Hindutva forces. They will face periodic violence. Inevitably, groups within them will try to resist, whereupon the full force of counter-terrorism mechanism will be applied, regardless of whether it was violent or

peaceful resistance, whether it was “terrorist” in any sense, etc. Violence ON Muslims will be normalized and disregarded, as we have seen with the killing of Pehlu Khan.

The RSS agenda is not, however, restricted to violence on Muslims. One cannot be a Hindu without accepting the Varna/Jati system. There is therefore a contradiction between some of their electoral propaganda, where compulsions of electoral nature result in speaking softly to Dalits and Adivasis, and the long term goal, which is one of re-asserting Brahminical (forward caste) hegemony. The Hathras rape and murder, and how it was hushed up by the UP government, is one extreme and brutal example of that.

Violence, organised from below, and targeting Dalits, Adivasis, secular activists (Gauri Lankesh, Maleshappa Kalburgi, Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare), along with the use of state power to arrest, keep in prison, file false cases against larger numbers, is a curtain raiser to what will happen if a full-fledged Hindutva regime is imposed.

In matters of ideology, the Hindutva agenda calls for a homogenized nation-state. This involves the tightening of Hindi imposition. This also involves a massive rewriting of history. Much of this is now in the realm of state policy, with the NCERT throwing out the old books, the UGC dictating what is to be taught and what is to be excluded. As Irfan Habib as explained, the low-key reference to Ashoka and the exclusion of Akbar is a blatant distortion of India’s real history.

Along with this the fascist agenda also tries to dovetail with the capitalist agenda. The destruction of state funded secular, low cost education is proceeding apace from primary level to the University level. The critical thinking in Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences means opening the doors ever more widely to privatized education., with technical education and management taking first place.

Finally, there has been an aggressive take over of media. And independent

attempts at creating alternative media and platforms on social media are under regular attack.

How and Why?

The shift to neoliberal capitalist globalization was not accidental. The state-led economic growth model had been necessary in the early decades of independent India, because private capital did not have adequate resources. But as the power of private capital grew, it wanted to re-insert India in the world capitalist economy. Globalisation was that attempt. It meant doing away with legally limited working hours, it meant scrapping all social security, and it meant reducing to the minimum state expenditure on public welfare. The process was starting when Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister for the last time, and it was given a boost by Rajiv Gandhi. However, it was from the P. V. Narasimha Rao government that India started full tilt for opening up the economy. What the Congress and the United Front governments could not do, however, was to abandon fully her vote banks. As a result, the thrust to globalisation, competing with bigger powers to enable Indian capitalism to grow faster, was repeatedly pulled back or slowed down. This was what led Indian capitalism to finally turn to the BJP, with the RSS standing behind it. As we have shown, the Sangh has delivered the economic goods to big capital. In order to get that, though, they have been compelled to accept the Sangh agenda. It is possible to note the turn from when at Vibrant Gujarat programmes, the capitalists like Ambani raised the call for a Modi government. Indian capitalism has accepted that it may have to give up bourgeois democracy. Which means it will have less opportunity to move different parties on the political chess board, promote one when another proves less popular. But in exchange it is getting the benefits of silencing workers, forcing peasants to the defensive despite their heroic battles of 2020-21, super-exploiting Adivasis, overturning the forest laws, smashing all environment protection measures for fast and short-term profits.

This means that fighting fascism is not just a matter of cobbling together an

electoral alliance that might get more votes than the BJP/NDA. From the point of view of workers and peasants, it means campaigning for a definite programme that must include the following elements that simultaneously challenge the Hindutva ideological hegemony and articulate the class goals of the workers, peasants, and the social goals of key sectors of the oppressed, so that a counter-hegemonic discourse starts being formulated.

Will the official opposition fight such a programme? It is obvious that they will not. The Congress has been the initiator of many of the developments that were brought to fulfilment by the BJP under Modi. To keep bourgeois hegemony, the ruling class projects a distorted image - ranging from claims that its goals are identical with the goals of all the common people, also deploying the ideas of bourgeois economics to convince working people, for example, that although capitalist policy is in the ultimate interests of the capitalist class, they too gain some of the benefits via trickle-down effects. Would the Congress and the parties in the INDIA alliance turn away from all that? The experience of history shows that when out of power, within the framework of parliamentarism, such parties can make huge promises. It needs to be remembered that in 1936, as Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru thundered that he believed in socialism, which, he explained, he used in the “scientific” sense. In other words, Nehru promised to fight for class struggle socialism. Then the next year the Congress won elections in several provinces. It proceeded to offer very mild reforms and to make compromises even with Permanent Settlement landlords.

We will be told, by bourgeois liberals and their leftish hangers on, that the principal contradiction is between fascism and all anti-fascists, so the campaign must focus on calling for No Vote to BJP, leaving it to the wisdom of the voter so that they elect the best candidate. Such an approach has nothing in common with Marxism. The “wisdom of the voter” had led them to vote for the BJP in 18 seats in 2019 in West Bengal, for example. Moreover, such false humility does not benefit

working class struggles. A revolutionary working class party cannot tail end after bourgeois liberals. Even during the fight against semi-feudal Tsarist autocracy, the left wing of Russian Social Democracy (Lenin and the Bolsheviks, Trotsky, Luxemburg and the SDKPiL) put forward this perspective against the right wing (Plekhanov, Martynov and other Mensheviks).

But Dimitrov?

All those are seemingly outdated because Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International called for an anti-fascist United Front, which would also encompass the 'democratic' bourgeois parties. This is not the place to enter into long theoretical and historical discussions. Our brief response would focus on a few issues. First, the copybook case was the Spanish Revolution. The Dimitrov style United Front meant the liberals had to be kept happy. So when workers led by Anarchists and the POUM rose up in Catalonia and took away the factories they were forced to disarm and the factories were given back to the bourgeoisie, and many of the leaders were arrested, even killed. Morocco was not given its freedom. As a result, Franco defeated the Republicans and put in the most long lasting fascist type dictatorship.

Second, a fight against fascism in collaboration with bourgeois liberals, many of them quite right wing, would mean dropping even basic democratic demands. One need only think about the AFSPA, the UAPA, or the destruction of the Public Distribution System.

West Bengal and the TMC Case:

One of the most intriguing issues in the formation of this so called opposition bloc is its totally unstable character. Supposedly, both the CPI (M) led left front and the TMC are in the INDIA bloc, along with the Congress and a range of other parties. But in Kerala, the Left and the Congress are the principal opponents.

In West Bengal, the one state where the TMC has a real solid presence, the TMC has rejected any alliance, seat sharing, call it what you will, with even the Congress, to say nothing of the Left.

But there is clearly a tacit campaign by a substantial section of the far left in favour of the TMC. The steps of the argument go approximately the following:

- The BJP is fascist
- A third term for Modi would spell the end of India as we know
- So the task is to vote for whoever can win, against the BJP
- Yes, we would support the INDIA bloc, but West Bengal is not the only place where the bloc has not been able to put up common candidates. Look at Kerala
- We are calling for people to vote wisely and defeat the BJP, choosing the candidate most likely to win.

This time, in 2024, there is a slight coyness because the crimes of the TMC are better known. But ultimately, not calling categorically for votes for left candidates is a backdoor route to calling for votes for the TMC, since on paper at least, given the results of the 2019 Parliamentary elections and the 2021 Assembly elections, the TMC is better poised to defeat the BJP than the left is.

Why do we reject the TMC? One accusation whenever we oppose the TMC has been, we are a bhadralok left and that is why we hate the "subaltern" TMC. Are we to believe that Mamata Bandyopadhyay is not a savarna? Nor is Radical Socialist a Bengali savarna organisation, but one involving comrades from various parts of India and with a mixed social composition.

More serious is the political analysis. Two dimensions come together here. For many on the far left, the theory of social fascism is still alive. So they fail to distinguish between right-wing bourgeois parties like the TMC, and formerly Stalinist, now increasingly social democratic parties like the CPI (M).

What is the TMC? In its inception, at a time when the BJP was weak in West Bengal, it received much help from the RSS. In 1999, the NDA won ten seats from West Bengal, of which 8 were won by the TMC, and 2 by the BJP. With TMC assistance, the BJP received over 11% votes. Since we will be reminded that the CPI (M) had made a bloc with the BJP to prop up V. P. Singh's government, we should clarify that at that time, Trotskyists had been the only political force that saw the BJP-RSS as fascists and opposed any alliance or adjustment with them, in even a tacit manner. But the sustained relationship between the TMC and the BJP goes way beyond that. In 2002, even after the pogroms, Mamata Bandyopadhyay shared a platform with Mohan Bhagwat and others. In the last Parliament, several bills could be passed in the Rajya Sabha because of the "timely" withdrawal of the TMC MPs from that House. Among these we should list the CAA. Thus, while Ms. Bandyopadhyay assures Muslims in West Bengal that she will fight to protect them her party MPs facilitate the passing of the CAA.

The news about the Electoral Bonds also throws light on the BJP and TMC story. Some reports suggest the TMC received the second highest amount of funds from the Bond scam, others suggest it was in the third position. Given that the BJP and the Congress are the only two actually all India parties, the massive difference between what the BJP got and what the Congress got shows why the bonds were floated, and why there was a tooth and nail fight to protect the data from public scrutiny. The fact that the TMC, a one province party, got such a huge amount is not just a matter of talking about corruption, but pointing to the nexus between the big donors, the BJP and the TMC.

The TMC has also been systematically anti working class, and anti communist. If a number of far left groups have continued to be kind to the TMC, that is because, like those CPI (M) supporters of earlier times who out of a hatred of the TMC moved to vote the BJP in 2019, these parties and groups have such a hatred of the CPI (M) that they believe the anti-communism of the TMC will spare them. Meanwhile the TMC has hit

trade unions hard, has opposed every all-India general strike called by the Central Trade Unions, etc. In a competitive Hindu communalism stance, it has given holiday for Ram Navami in West Bengal, a province where Ram has never been a deity and where 19th and 20th century culture from Madhusudan Dutt to Sukumar Ray and Leela Majumdar have inverted the narrative.

The TMC has also played along with the BJP's privatization drive in education. Funds for state universities have dried up. Teacher selections have been held up. The Universities are sinking under overwork by numerically few faculty, lack of research funding. Undergraduate colleges have had the four year course imposed on them. Yet new full time posts have not been sanctioned, and many old posts remain vacant.

As for school education, the stench is huge. As a result of a long drawn out court case, it is now evident that something like over 6000 posts have been given to undeserving candidates. The SSC and the government are accomplices in this, and they are covering the tracks by refusing to produce proper documentation (OMR sheets etc). If indeed 1100 super-numerical posts were created to put in favoured candidates, not only the Education Ministry but also the Finance Ministry is implicated. That the Court verdict is a poor one, where applicants who had required qualifications are also for the moment removed from their jobs, is true. But it does not exculpate the TMC regime. And it had now contributed to the already disastrous scene of school level education in West Bengal

Finally, the TMC has shown that it is as willing to use force against political opponents as is the BJP. It is restricted only by the fact that as a provincial government its government has less power.

Voting for the TMC therefore cannot be a good option to voting for the BJP. We are aware that many honest citizens will take that path, but we warn them to look at the past records first.

Our short election programme

We are unable to put up candidates, and we do not have any perspective of revolutionaries forming governments in a coalition with bourgeois forces, so the programme we put up is of course not a full agenda for a government but a set of basic demands that look at political, economic and social demands of the workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, and in all cases women from all such categories, as well as people of other sexualities and gender choices. We believe these to be key elements that have emerged due to mass movements, and represent the basic starting agenda for a working people's alternative.

- Scrapping the discriminatory CAA-NRC-NPR
- Scrapping the AFSPA, UAPA and other laws that allow arbitrary arrests and provide protection to "law enforcement agencies" when they commit crimes
- Scrapping the concept of Sedition
- For a Proportional Representation system and state funding of elections
- Restoration of the status of Jammu and Kashmir to the situation when the J&K Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 1957 as a preliminary to a democratic resolution
- For an anti-discriminatory amendment to the Constitution prohibiting discrimination based on religion, caste, gender, sexual orientation and disability
- Scrapping the Labour Code
- Full trade union rights for all sectors
- Minimum wages based on the 15th ILC recommendations, pegged at Rs 26,000 monthly for 2024
- MSP for farmers based on the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission and negotiations with farmer unions and organisations
- Extension of MNREGA to 300 days of work for all rural unemployed.

Making MNREGA wages the same as at least the minimum wages.

- State funded public health security for all
- Restoration of full rationing for all
- Increased funding for state aided education for all
- Extension of social security including retirement benefits to the unorganised sector through taxes on the wealthy
- Paid maternity leave and childcare facilities for women in all workplaces.
- Improved public transportation for all
- Strict implementation of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act and the Manual Scavengers Act
- Gender Justice not uniformity as the primary goal in reform of personal laws
- Full rights for the transgender community
- For equality of all languages in Schedule VIII of the Constitution
- For special measures to protect marginalised languages and cultures

Who to Vote

Who not to vote comes first. No vote to the Fascist BJP and its allies, open and covert.

Who to vote? We call for a vote to the left, to independent civil society candidates, to Dalit, Adivasi, regional minority voices when not in alignment with BJP. We do not call for NOTA. But we warn all working people, all oppressed masses, that all calls to vote anyone but BJP tends to set up for a repeat of the tragedies of the past. The argument we get is, if BJP/NDA loses we get a breathing space. But the longer term struggle to permanently defeat the forces of Hindutva requires struggle much more on the extra-electoral fronts of various kinds. Here the reconstruction of a much more internally democratic and non-sectarian Left that has shed

Stalinism and Maoism is necessary. This Left must also develop stronger fraternal relations with various

progressive social movements and groups. The slightest reliance on bourgeois liberals weakens the

independent struggles of the masses.

26 April 2024

The Anticapitalist Left presents a list for the European elections with Philippe Poutou

25 April 2024, by **Laure Horlait**

The year 2024 is particularly important in electoral terms, as Belgians will be going to the polls for all levels of government (European, federal, regional in June, and municipal in October). In addition to the French-speaking parties in the outgoing government (PS - social democrats, Écolo - ecologists, MR - liberals) and the "centrist" Les Engagés, the Gauche anticapitaliste is competing with the PTB (Belgian Labour Party) in the European elections, while providing critical support for it in the other elections. There are differences between our two organizations on a number of issues, including degrowth, the regularization of the status of undocumented migrants and, above all, international issues, in particular support for the Ukrainian people in their resistance to the Russian invasion. The choice for the European elections is based in particular on this link with the rise of the PTB, as well as having the advantage of being able to mobilize the entire organisation in a campaign for a single list throughout French-

speaking Belgium.

Philippe Poutou as candidate

This level of power also allows internationalist values to be put forward, both in the programme and on the list, which includes Philippe Poutou, three-time presidential candidate in France, thus strengthening the links between the Gauche anticapitaliste and the NPA. Alongside him are activists active in various fields, notably in the climate, trade union, feminist, LGBTI and anti-fascist movements. Led by Denis Verstraeten, a maths teacher in a working-class neighbourhood and activist in the climate movement, and Charlotte Thomas, a shop steward and worker at Delhaize (a supermarket that went on strike in 2023 following its franchising policy), the list aims to bring the voice of the struggles, the oppressed and the exploited into the political and media arena. The Belgian-French collaboration and the

presence of Philippe Poutou are a significant advantage in terms of visibility.

The urgent need for a new world

The candidates on the Anticapitalistes list are determined to provide political outlets for their struggles and to bring them together to strike against the capitalist system. From a drastic reduction in working hours to solidarity with peoples in struggle around the world, via the socialization of energy, banks and insurance, the disarmament and definition of the police and massive investment in the fight against gender violence, the programme of the Gauche anticapitaliste convincingly defends the eco-socialist, feminist, anti-racist and internationalist alternative.

25 April 2024

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

Remembering the Carnation revolution

24 April 2024, by **Brais Fernandez, Dave Kellaway**

The concept of "revolution" is undoubtedly one of the most controversial. Often it is trivialized by the ideology of "common sense", which associates it with superficial

changes. The media proclaims "revolutions" in many aspects of our lives. A new commodity is advertised as revolutionary for example. Beyond these conceptions, the term revolution

is also associated with structural, long-lasting changes that irreversibly modify history. This is the most common meaning in sociology.

However, from a political point of view, it is more useful to associate revolution with a juncture in which social contradictions are concentrated, in which hitherto absent actors burst into history. We can think of revolution as an opera or play staged in a theatre.

At any given moment, the actors perform the piece calmly, in a routine manner, while the audience, passively enjoys it. In that scene, only the audience and the actors exist. But suddenly, and unexpectedly, the theatre workers (back stage, front of house) get up on stage and begin to demand attention. They call for their share of the credit for the play: "Without us, this play can't happen!" Nobody pays them any attention, the actors/esses look at them with disdain, part of the audience boos. The workers open the theatre doors. Many more people come in than ever before to see a play. At a certain point, the audience and the actors have to (temporarily) leave the stage and the workers begin to perform their own version of the play.

However, in a revolution, as in the premiere of a play, no one knows the ending.

Thus, revolution is the entry into politics of those who make history on a daily basis, with their effort and their work, but who do not enjoy the wealth (economic, cultural, social) that they themselves generate. This is the idea of revolution as a fork in the road, a crucial choice, as "concentrated politics", in which history can go one way or the other.

Many historians of the ruling classes, see history from a positivist prism, that is, as an inevitable, linear development towards progress. However, when 1989 marked the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution, bourgeois historiography was forced to respond to the phenomenon: what had happened, why was Louis XVI overthrown, how do we explain the guillotines, Sans-Culottes, the subsequent wars, the masses taking centre stage, the Jacobin leadership?

The dominant ideology, which as soon as it has become dominant ceases to

be revolutionary, is thus forced to deny its own origins. In order to remain in power, it forgets its revolutionary origins, the barricades and mass uprisings. Revolutions are uncomfortable times for the ruling classes. Even when they use or ride them to conserve or reformulate their own power, they are felt as anomalies, full of barbarism that interrupt the "normal" course of history. A history characterized by a "natural" economic inequality but compensated by a corresponding tendency towards a political-representative equality embodied by liberal democracy.

The Carnation Revolution that broke out on April 25 1974 is not free from paradoxical judgments. It was experienced by the Portuguese bourgeoisie with fear, but at the same time it needed to intervene in it to derail it. All the parties or fractions made reference to "socialism". Social democracy and the parties linked to the elites saw in the revolution a way to get rid of the old dictatorship. It was anachronistic and dysfunctional for the new forms of domination that Capital needed. On the other hand, a very important sector of the population, among whom a significant percentage of the working class and the army, adopted forms of democracy and popular power that put at risk, not only the political apparatus of the Salazarist dictatorship ("the regime"), but also the relations of exploitation and oppression on which the power of the oligarchy was based.

The Portuguese Revolution had no pre-ordained endgame: both the seizure of power by the working class and the neoliberal counterrevolution with democratic forms were both potential options. The revolution opened a confrontation that was not only present in "the political", understood as the sphere of representation, in the form of struggle between parties and personalities. It was also a conflict in the whole of society, in the form of struggle in the spaces of civil society that govern daily life. It took place in the living communities crossed by class contradictions in which social relations are generated: in the factories, the neighbourhoods and in sectors of the State apparatuses such as the military.

This force of the revolution, of the irruption of the people onto the political scene, has had consequences in the configuration of Portuguese politics after April 25. Not only in the Constitution of the regime, which in its origin, in its formal aspect, partially reflected the condensation of forces produced by the mobilization from below, although without touching the fundamental nodes of capitalist power.

Also, for example, it has affected the make-up of the political parties, with a strong pro-Soviet Portuguese Communist Party. It draws its strength and its capacity to resist the decline of "Marxist-Leninist" parties as a result of the fall of the Berlin wall through its generationally transmitted identification with the Carnations revolution. The same applies to the Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc), one of the most important radical formations in Europe, which comes from Maoist and Trotskyist groups that began their journey in the heat of the revolutionary wave. Finally, Portuguese politics is defined by this revolution. Nobody denies it, because it is the founding event of modern Portugal, but each one gives it a different meaning: some, the radical or revolutionary left, see it as an unfinished work, which we have to take up again and conclude. Others, those at the top, see it as an uncomfortable moment in which they finally won and which they can now assimilate.

This book is about this tension between revolution and counterrevolution. Before commenting on it, let us recall a few facts.

Europe's (pen)ultimate revolution

On April 25, 1974, a military uprising put an end to the right-wing dictatorship that had ruled Portugal for 48 years under the name of "Estado novo". The government of Marcello Caetano (who would go into exile in Brazil, where he would die in 1980 without being tried), successor to the veteran Salazar, was ousted from power to the rhythm of the now

famous “[Grandola Vila Morena](#)” [a popular song used on the radio as a signal for the military uprising]. [1] Thus began the period known as the “Carnation Revolution”.

It may be useful to place the Portuguese Revolution in the international political context in which it took place. All over the world there was “a great disorder under heaven”. The crisis of 1973 hit the process of capitalist accumulation. Colonial revolutions were culminating in processes of independence. In Europe, the long wave of anti-systemic agitation that began in 1968 called into question the prevailing model of development, seeking new ways of understanding and building socialism. While the most conscious supporters of capitalism presented themselves with more homogeneous features (the famous triad of religion, family and property), socialism was divided among families, very poorly aligned with each other, with a common “ideological” objective but with many strategic differences: Maoists, pro-Soviets, Guevarists, Trotskyists, left-wing socialists, anarchists...

All these issues had a decisive influence in Portugal, although the centre-periphery inequalities, were not only expressed in economic development, but also politically. In the countries of northern Europe a democratic model based on the integration of broad sectors of the subaltern classes but incapable of satisfying many of the needs of workers, women and youth was questioned. Whereas in the countries of the south (Greece, Spain, Portugal) the thread of resistance was strongly conditioned by the struggle against dictatorships that represented the interests of a minority military, religious and business caste but which dominated the entire structure of the State.

This meant that, from the outset, the struggle for the overthrow of the regime gave rise to frontal confrontations with and within the State apparatus, with elements of dual. The State appeared “naked” in the eyes of the population, not as the representative of the nation as a whole, but of a rich, parasitic, corrupt and incapable minority. Portugal

experienced during the 1960s and 1970s a relatively powerful process of economic development, similar to that of Spain, although less explosive. For a sector of the bourgeoisie it was necessary to accelerate the economic and political connection with Europe, a process that would link Portugal to the European market and at the same time update the forms of political power. This sector sought ways of integrating of the working classes that would not alter the property structure, but would allow certain freedoms and spaces to organize dissent. However, another sector clung to the mechanisms of domination of the corporate state, with a posture very marked by its dependence on colonial markets and its fear of being absorbed by foreign capital.

From below, an incipient mobilization of the labour and student sectors appeared in the life of the country in parallel with economic development. Since the end of the 1960s, a new workers’ movement was formed through mobilization, with the founding of Intersindical, the embryo of what would become the future CGTP, Portugal’s main trade union. In 1973, more than one hundred thousand workers took part in strikes. The occupation of universities and the struggles of high school students followed one after the other. The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), during the years of resistance to the dictatorship, was the hegemonic organization at the level of popular implantation, although progressively a radical left emerged which introduced new themes and perspectives. While not reaching the levels of the PCP, this new left was capable of dialoguing with, and implanting itself in, workers’ and students’ milieus.

However, we cannot forget that all social life in Portugal was marked by a harsh armed conflict aimed at maintaining the African colonies (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe), directly involving 10% of the active population. A conflict suffered by the popular classes and by the colonized countries, but which also eroded the dominant role of the ruling caste. The latter was bent on resolving the colonial conflict from a military point of view, an option that was beyond the

reach of a country of Portugal’s size and resources and, undoubtedly, out of time in a context in which decolonization was an irreversible process at the global level.

This precarious balance between antagonistic social forces established in the years prior to the revolution would generate a sense of “end of cycle” in Portuguese society. Since the early seventies, the ruling class could no longer govern as it had done until then and, at the same time, the dominated classes did not accept to continue to be governed in the same way. The accumulation of internal contradictions opened the way to a regime crisis, which only needed a trigger to explode and open the way for the popular masses to actively intervene in national politics.

On April 25, 1974, a significant sector of the Portuguese army carried out the removal of the dictatorial government of Marcello Caetano. These officers, organized in the MFA (Movement of the Armed Forces), thus opened a crisis in the state apparatus, but their action unleashed all the energy and the yearning for freedom present in the Portuguese people. The situation became complex. The so-called “ongoing revolutionary process” began, in which classes, political tendencies and different conceptions of society struggled to convert their particular project into a national project for society as a whole. This confusion and these conflicting interests also cut across the MFA, divided between moderate sectors linked to Spínola (first head of government after the fall of the regime) and others more linked to the popular movements and the left that sought to organize a transition to socialism, such as the mythical Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho.

Despite the importance of the MFA, its role was conditioned by its nexus with the revolutionary masses, but also by the pressures it suffered from the bourgeoisie: only 400 of the 4000 officers that the Portuguese army had at that time belonged organically to the MFA. The military were the vanguard that initiated the Portuguese revolution, but they were undoubtedly responding to a much deeper movement of change in society.

Undoubtedly the most fascinating thing that April 25th opens up is the process of popular self-organization that followed. The movement of "moradores" (neighbors who occupy dwellings and manage life in the neighbourhoods) appears. The workers' commissions (CT) arose, which were organized autonomously, involving different productive sectors, and which were configured as a unitary space for the workers beyond the different political tendencies. They carried out experiments in self-management against private property. The banks were nationalized by the workers themselves and the government has no choice but to sanction such action. Soldiers were not immune to this process of collective empowerment and form their own bodies, Soldados Unidos Vencerán (Soldiers United will Win - SUV), which led multiple popular demonstrations in uniform.

This report in the book by Daniel Bensaïd, Carlos Rossi (pseudonym of Michael Löwy) and Charles André Udry [*Portugal: la révolution en marche*, Paris, C. Bourgois, 1975), highlights the dynamics that marked the daily life of popular power, when the mass meeting was the basic form of social relations. It is worth quoting despite its length:

In a popular neighborhood of Lisbon, a mansion was occupied by the population. Immediately the furniture and objects were grouped together to return them respectfully to the owner: they only needed the walls and the garden. In the cellar they even found, and burned, some Nazi magazines from the 1930s [...] On Saturday the population of the neighbourhood was summoned for a general assembly in order to organize the occupation and elect the occupation commission. There were many women, serious with children asleep in their arms. There was a veteran of the Communist Party, imprisoned during the dictatorship and also a PCP militant with a very comical look who wanted to bring order to the debates. The chairing group on the platform was submerged by

the assembly that gathered, questioned, discussed in groups [...]

First interruption: the arrival of the military police from the nearest barracks was announced. The soldiers in their leopard uniforms were on their way to clear the garden, where the children would play.. Second interruption: The arrival of the owner was announced! What a nerve! People crowded at the door and jostled to get him out. An argument ensued between two groups of women, the first pacifist and the other who wanted to lynch him. The owner was thrown out. Third interruption: a while ago a fat man had arrived, dressed in a yellow polo shirt, covered with PCP badges. And he started attacking everyone. Then they asked him: - Are you from the neighbourhood? - No. - In that case, go away or shut up.

In the meantime, there were two disputes. First of all, the question of whether the occupation should be aimed at creating a day-care centre or whether it should play a role of a political hub by publishing a newsletter and making contact with businesses in the neighbourhood. Those who defended the first position were in the minority. Next, on the status of the elected committee, the representative of the tenants' commission wanted the occupation to be placed under municipal authority. Another member of the PCP, supported by militant from the Internationalist Communist League, defended self-organization.

A motion was voted that ratified the expropriation of the building. Then the election of the commission took place. And it began by taking a census of the professions of the persons present in order to assign them tasks in fitting out the nursery.

I wanted to quote this long paragraph in order, through a concrete example, to describe the underlying logic,

characteristic of every revolutionary process: the recovery of social relations by those at the bottom. The proposal of an alternative model of society to the capitalist one, liberating the collective and cooperation as opposed to competition. Of course, this process is neither irreversible nor free of contradictions, debates and disputes. Ideological differences, tactics, different factions of the same class, all are present but are unified in common experiences and spaces. The Carnation Revolution leaves us many examples of how popular power is constructed, which can be the basis of a socialist democracy. In this type of experience we also find an outline of administration, management and control arising from the base, which tries to embrace the whole of the social life of the country.

It is an outline of an alternative state project, built by the workers, incompatible with capitalist institutions, what in Leninist language has been called "dual power". The struggle between two legitimacies and two ways of managing collective life was, let us say it clearly, a struggle between two incompatible models. The revolution could only triumph if it staked everything on these embryos of a new state, on a new constitution, in its deepest sense, for the country. The counterrevolution could only triumph if it could win hegemony for its representative institutional model. It had to eliminate the active exercise of power from the citizenry and restored order in the workplaces and economy through which the power of capital is materially based. Here there is another fundamental question: the hegemony of the capitalist class must have a strong consensual foundation. It has to be accepted to a large extent by all parties, since its particular form of hegemonic articulation needs to present the interests of a social minority as the interests of the population as a whole.

Proletarian hegemony, on the contrary, needs to "decode" that fiction, building a broad, political, historical bloc, in alliance with other layers, that breaks the fiction of the "general interest", generating a new consensus that excludes the elites and composes through conflict what Gramsci would call a new moral

direction for the country. The great battle of the Portuguese Revolution was to define who was “the motor” of the nation, its moral leadership, the “indispensable” class. While the ruling class accused the popular movement of sowing economic chaos (the Times went so far as to say that capitalism was dead forever in Portugal) there was an immediate and accurate response from the streets that “the greatest wealth of a people is its population”.

These conflicts generated great concern throughout society. While for the ruling class these were times of great disturbance, for the oppressed they were times of happiness. Gabriel García Márquez wrote in those days that in Lisbon “all the people talk and nobody sleeps. There are meetings until late at night, the desks have the lights on until the wee hours of the morning. If anything, this revolution is going to increase the electricity bill”. The revolution certainly achieved much more than that: social rights, freedoms, strengthening of a public sector that guaranteed a minimum wage in kind for workers; but perhaps much less than it might have.

The Socialist Party (SP) led by Soares headed the reconstruction of capitalist stability and the Communist Party, without legitimizing the subsequent regime, never clearly supported the forms of new power promoted by the people. In 1975, in its newspaper *Avante* it described as “idealistic illusions” all that “which leads some sectors to see in the forms of popular organization the future organs of State power”. The extreme left and the most radicalized sectors of the popular movement made a final show of force through the candidacy of Otelio Saraiva de Carvalho in the 1976 presidential elections, who won 16% of the votes, but was unable to institutionalize the embryos of popular power emerging from below. This struggle for the leadership of the popular movement was a constant throughout the revolutionary process.

The SP, a party that barely existed before the fall of the dictatorship, was capable of gathering the democratic yearnings of broad sectors of the popular classes who saw it as a “European” alternative to the model proposed by the PCP, incapable of leaving behind its pro-Soviet schemas. The extreme left was hegemonized by Maoism (UDP, MRPP), grouping thousands of young students and workers, with delirious levels of pro-Chinese fanaticism and sectarianism towards the communist world, which they saw as the “main enemy”, all this combined with opportunist alliances with the SP. The MRPP, the main Maoist party, in which Durão Barroso was a militant, did not hesitate to support a conservative military man like Eanes and the SP in the 1976 presidential elections.

In spite of the fact that at certain moments the revolutionary left had influence in a decisive sector of the vanguard, relying on the radicalism of certain sectors of the working class and on very advanced experiences of struggle, it was not capable of articulating a strategy for taking power. Meanwhile, the SP built its hegemony on two social realities: a) the desire for social improvements within a democratic system shared by broad sectors of the population and b) the understanding by a sector of the elites that the counterrevolution would not be carried out “Chilean style”. Given the relationship of forces existing during the “Ongoing Revolutionary Process” (to use the expression of those years), a process of integration of the demands from below was necessary, making concessions that did not fundamentally touch the structure of capitalist reproduction.

And then... the neo-liberal counter-revolution

This book, also deals with what happened after the “ongoing revolutionary process” was unable to consolidate the anti-capitalist dynamic. The neoliberalism implanted in the West through the conservative counterrevolution led by Reagan and Thatcher has had devastating consequences in Portugal. It is not by chance that all the parties in Portugal claim ownership of the Carnation Revolution: for the parties of the elites it is an uncomfortable moment that must be reclaimed. For the PS it is a disorderly moment, a price to pay to get rid of the anachronistic dictatorship of Salazarism and to be able to build a model of capitalist domination integrated in Europe, with its liberal democracy and its structure of exploitation intact. For a certain left, the PCP, it is a memory that helps it survive, but which it is incapable of returning to in a self-critical manner. For the radical left, it is an incomplete event, a point from which to resume the struggle.

Thus, much of the dispute over the meaning of Portugal revolves around what the Revolution symbolizes. The writings of Fernando Rosas and Francisco Louçã, both leaders of the Bloco de Esquerda and Marxist intellectuals, analyse the meaning of the Portuguese Revolution, the powers it unleashed and the moments of rupture it generated. They also outline what have been the political and economic mechanisms on which the neoliberal counterrevolution was founded, such as austerity policies or attacks on wages, as well as the process of underdevelopment of Portugal. A book which composes a complex picture of the dialectic between the attempts of the working classes to change the world at the base and the attempts of the elites to prevent it.

18 April 2024

Translated by Dave Kellaway from [vientosur](#).

Meloni's government censors anti fascism

23 April 2024, by **Dave Kellaway**

Giorgia Meloni, the current prime minister of the hard right coalition government, grew up politically in the continuity neo-fascist MSI party. She was a youth activist in the Rome area. Although she and her party have distanced themselves from some aspects of the fascist period—for example, the persecution of the Jewish community—they have not completely repudiated that regime.

At the same time, this political current has, for some time now, and with some success, tried to downplay and even eliminate the anti-fascist foundation of the Italian Constitution of 1948. I recommend reading the text (just the intro) for its progressive content—as far as a bourgeois constitution allows—compared to the British framework.

The current government wants the word anti-fascism removed from all official discourse. People say these divisions are old-fashioned and do not matter in Italy's society today. Of course, the official mainstream left has helped this change along. They have worked together to manage capitalism and have failed to put up any real fight against the upper classes.. The left's abandonment of its own historical principles has significantly impacted anti-fascist traditions. The president of the Senate, Ignazia La Russa, the second highest institutional post in Italy, who is also a member of Meloni's party, has specifically refused to use the term anti-fascism. He presided over some of the official ceremonies on 25 April.

This year, *Il Manifesto*, a left-wing daily, has been building a national demonstration in Milan on 25 April. It has been twenty years since it called for a similar successful demonstration at the time the neo-fascists were first admitted to one of Berlusconi's governments. Today, the post-fascists are not just a very junior partner but

also the leadership of the government, which has maintained the support it won at the last election. Fratelli D'Italia, Meloni's party, is likely to be the biggest party in the European elections in June.

The monologue was censored not so much for its analysis of the fascist period as for its direct reference to the current prime minister's opposition to the values of anti-fascism. Meloni has since tried to distract from the accusation of censorship by publishing the monologue on her Facebook page. She also falsely accused Scurati of asking for too much money for his appearance on the RAI channel and that this was the "real" reason for why he was de-invited from the Che Sara TV show.

The controversy has dominated politics in Italy in recent days, and paradoxically, it has probably caused more people to read or listen to the text than if the RAI had allowed the writer to appear. Other presenters started to narrate the same monologue. Already, the RAI is being purged by the regime; its new director, Roberto Sergio, is close to Meloni's politics, and a significant number of its presenters and journalists have been pushed out or have resigned. Scurati himself has been the target of the right wing and its media, and this has surprised him since he has not been particularly involved in politics.

The left and progressive forces will mobilise for the national mobilization this Thursday, but its real test is to build a fighting opposition to the current hard right government.

This is the text of Antonio Scurati's monologue for April 25, which RAI did not want to air, published in full on the Repubblica website on 20 April 2024.

Giacomo Matteotti was assassinated

by fascist goons on 10 June 1924.

Five of them, all squadristi who had come from Milan, professionals of violence hired by Benito Mussolini's closest collaborators, waited for him under his house.

The Honorable Matteotti, the secretary of the United Socialist Party, the last person in Parliament still openly opposing the Fascist dictatorship, was seized in the centre of Rome, in broad daylight. He fought to the last, as he had fought all his life. They stabbed him to death, then disposed of his corpse. They desecrated his body so they could shove him into a pit dug badly with a blacksmith's tool.

Mussolini was immediately informed. In addition to the crime, he was guilty of the infamy of swearing to the widow that he would do everything possible to find her husband and bring him back to her. As he solemnly promised, the Duce of Fascism kept the victim's bloody papers in his desk drawer.

In this false Spring of ours, however, we commemorate not only Matteotti's political murder; we also commemorate the Nazi-fascist massacres perpetrated by the German SS, with the complicity and collaboration of Italian fascists, in 1944.

Fosse Ardeatine, Sant'Anna di Stazzema, Marzabotto - these are just some of the places where Mussolini's demonic allies cold-bloodedly massacred thousands of defenseless Italian civilians. Among them were hundreds of children and even infants. Many were even burned alive, some beheaded.

These two concomitant mournful anniversaries — the spring of '24, the spring of '44 — proclaim that Fascism was throughout its historical existence — not only at the end or occasionally

— an irredeemable phenomenon of systematic terrorist political violence.

Will the heirs of that history recognize this, for once? Everything, unfortunately, suggests that they will not. The post-fascist ruling group [led by Giorgia Meloni], having won the elections in October 2022, had two paths before it: repudiate its neo-fascist past or try to rewrite history. It undoubtedly took the second path.

After avoiding the topic in the election campaign, the Prime Minister, when forced to address it because of official historical anniversaries, stubbornly

stuck to the ideological line of her neo-fascist origins: she has distanced herself from the indefensible heinous acts of cruelty perpetrated by the regime (the persecution of the Jews) without ever repudiating the fascist experience as a whole. She has shifted the responsibility of the massacres carried out with the complicity of the fascist republicans onto the Nazis alone. Finally she has disavowed the fundamental role of the Resistance in the rebirth of Italy (to the point of never mentioning the word “antifascism” on the occasion of the official April 25, 2023

commemoration).

As I speak to you, we are again on the eve of the anniversary of the Liberation from Nazi-Fascism. The word that the Prime Minister refused to utter will still throb on the grateful lips of all sincere democrats, whether left, centre or right. Until that word – antifascism – is uttered by those who govern us, the spectre of fascism will continue to haunt the house of Italian democracy.

23 April 2024

Source [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#).

Historic victory for the “Aînées pour le climat”

22 April 2024, by **Maryelle Budry**

This is a major first, and a verdict that will set a precedent in the 46 other countries of the Council of Europe. For eight years, a group of old ladies had been waging a legal battle. They accused Switzerland, with evidence to back up their accusations, of failing to take care of their health and well-being in the face of increasingly worrying heatwaves, and of failing to take steps to achieve the target set for 2030 by the Paris Agreement in 2015. They had chosen this original angle to force Switzerland to take the climate threat seriously.

A battle begun in 2016

These old ladies, numbering 2,500 across Switzerland, were environmental activists from the very beginning and were already feminists in the 1970s with the MLF. They know what it means to fight. In 2016, they first submitted their application to the Federal Council, but the Federal Department of the Environment declared their request inadmissible. In 2017, they turned to the Federal

Administrative Court, which rejected their request, and in 2019 to the Federal Supreme Court, which rejected their appeal.

In 2020, supported by Greenpeace (Swiss and international) and an excellent international team of lawyers, they took their case to the European Court of Human Rights. Their case was given priority. And in March 2023, the Aînées pour le Climat (KlimaSenioriennen / Anciane per il clima) were heard by the Grand Chamber in Strasbourg. It was a very impressive hearing (I was there as an individual plaintiff in addition to the collective action), where the 17 judges listened very carefully to the arguments put forward by the Aînées’ lawyers and the (rather weak) defence of the Swiss government. The judgement was handed down one year later, on 9 April 2024.

Hopes on the environmental side

and anger on the right

And it was a resounding victory for the Aînées. The judges were unanimous, whereas they had ruled inadmissible two similar cases, which were certainly less well-founded. The Swiss women’s victory will therefore set a precedent and raise great hopes.

On the other hand, the ruling has aroused the ire of the right in the Federal Assembly. The Union Démocratique du Centre, Switzerland’s most right-wing party, referred to the origins of Switzerland: in 1291, the three peasants who sealed their alliance of mutual support opposed the interference of foreign judges in their affairs. Nearly eight centuries later, this party is fulminating and calling for Switzerland to leave the Council of Europe. Lawyer Raphaël Mahaim, who is also a Green National Councillor, has received insults and threats from his opponents. The Federal Office of Justice has taken note of the ruling, but we do not know when or how

effective measures will be taken. Even the lawyers are not in a position to give an opinion at the moment, as the 300 pages of the ruling will first have

to be analysed in detail. The Aînées, energized by their success, are continuing the fight!

18 April 2024

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

Auto Workers Union Wins Historic Victory at VW in Tennessee

21 April 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Workers at the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee voted overwhelmingly on April 20 to join the United Auto Workers Union, a historic victory, winning the first union election in that industry in the South since the 1940s. Some 2,628 cast votes in favor and 985 against, that is 73% voted for the union. All together 4,326 were eligible to vote and about 84% did.

Union president Shawn Fain told workers celebrating the victory, "You all have just done the most important thing a working-class person can do, and that is stand up."

Until now, the South has been a bastion of bosses, of non-union open shops, where workers had no vote and no voice in their workplaces. If this victory leads to others, as it is expected to, it will change completely the balance of forces between the corporations and the working class in America. The South, based on slavery until the late 1860s, and on Jim Crow segregation, disfranchisement, and lynching until the 1960s, has remained the U.S. region with fewest unions, lowest wages, the poorest educational level, the worst public health, and the most backward political attitudes in the country. This UAW win could begin to change all of that.

The UAW failed for decades to

organize this plant and other auto plants in the South, despite spending millions of dollars. Why this victory now? Under the leadership of UAW president Shawn Fain, the union carried out last year a 45-day strike against Ford, Stellantis, and General Motors and won a contract in October with large wage increases, an end of tiers, and some union representation in electric vehicle plants. For the first time the UAW struck all three companies at once, using an escalating strike of strategically chosen plants that eventually involved 50,000 workers across the country and forced the corporations to yield. The United States had not seen a union lead a strike of industrial workers like that for decades. Workers in the non-union VW plant, now seeing a leadership willing to fight decided they too should join the union.

Having won that strike, the UAW dedicated \$40 million to organizing industry's non-union plants and has now won its first victory. Now having won at VW, next month the UAW will attempt to win the vote of the 5,200 workers the Mercedes-Benz plant in Alabama. The strength of the UAW will be essential to defending workers as the industry makes the transition to electric vehicles.

Republican governors in the South took a strong stand against unions in

their region. Tennessee governor. Bill Lee and the governors of Texas, South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama signed a joint statement saying that voting for the union could threaten the state's economy, the workers' jobs and "the values we live by." "They proudly call themselves democratic socialists and seem more focused on helping President Biden get reelected than on the autoworker jobs being cut at plants they already represent," said their statement.

President Joe Biden, on the other hand, became the first president ever to walk on a picket line with striking UAW workers last year. He congratulated the workers, saying, "I was proud to stand alongside auto workers in their successful fight for record contracts, and I am proud to stand with auto workers now as they successfully organize at Volkswagen." The UAW has endorsed Biden for president.

We are at the beginning of what could become a wave of union organizing such as we have not seen since the 1960s. Petitions for union elections rose by 35 percent in 2024 compared with the previous year and some 67 percent of Americans now say they support unions. Unions are now poised to organize the South. A new day may be dawning.

21 April 2024

Ecuador: Indigenous Resistance and Political Challenges - an interview with Leonidas Iza

20 April 2024, by **Iain Bruce, Leonadis Iza, Martín Mosquera**

What do you think about the intrusion into the Mexican embassy where Jorge Glas, former vice president during the Correa administration, was taking refuge?

CONAIE strongly condemns the recent violation of the Mexican embassy in Ecuador. The government of Ecuador, under the mandate of President Daniel Noboa, has committed an act of extreme gravity by violating the inviolability of the Mexican embassy in Ecuador.

Embassies represent the sovereignty of the countries that host them and are protected by the principle of inviolability enshrined in the Vienna Convention. The Ecuadorian government's illegal incursion into the Mexican embassy in Quito is a clear transgression of Mexican sovereignty and an absolute disregard for international norms.

It is alarming how the Ecuadorian government, authoritarian and repressive in nature, resorts to force to secure its political objectives. This action not only affects bilateral relations between Mexico and Ecuador, but also sends a disturbing message to the international community.

In addition, we denounce the violent, authoritarian and abusive practices which are being replicated in the territories of the peoples and nationalities, such as Palo Quemado. Noboa's government shows a clear disregard for the law and the rule of law by using force and violence to impose its political interests and persecute community, political and social leaders. This action reflects desperation and irrationality on the part of the government, which seems to lack support for the 21 April Popular Consultation and resorts to patterns of manipulation to justify policies that directly harm the Ecuadorian people.

Could you describe what has happened in Palo Quemado in relation to the anti-mining struggle and the repressive response of the state? How did the events unfold and what is the current situation in the community?

The Ecuadorian state has experienced 50 years of dependence on the oil industry and in recent years has been trying to make the transition due to oil depletion. It is estimated that by 2030

there will be a reduced average production. Currently, the focus is on the dispute over new territories for mining extraction, which has led to two fundamental issues: first, the state is offering concessions and sovereignty to transnational corporations, even considering ceding legal sovereignty to resolve conflicts through international arbitration. Second, communities, including indigenous peoples, peasants, Afro-descendants and farmers, are reluctant to cede their territories. This conflict covers about 15% of the national territory, which is equivalent to between five and eight million hectares, depending on the phase of mining extraction.

In this sense, there is a conflict in which the Ecuadorian state resorts to the use of the armed forces, as evidenced in Palo Quemado and the Pampas, to guarantee the private security of transnational corporations. They have flagrantly violated the right to free, prior and informed consultation of indigenous peoples, as well as the right to environmental consultation, that is, the right of all communities to be informed and decide on projects that may affect their environmental rights. Despite the fact that the Constitutional Court has already declared the reference manual used by the national government in the past to be unconstitutional, the latter has implemented an emergency mechanism through a similar ministerial resolution. There is a sense of desperate motivation on the part of the government, because it also has a stake of its capital in the mining area in Ecuador, which suggests a clear favouritism towards that sector to the detriment of the rights of the affected communities

The repression in Palo Quemado was intense and appears to be linked to the state of emergency declared by the government following the 9 January drug trafficking attacks. How would you explain the sudden appearance of drug trafficking in Ecuador's recent history and what political impact is militarization and increased repression having?

The current situation can be attributed to several factors. First, Daniel Noboa rode on the strategy of previous governments of saying that the state is too big, and that he cannot spend economic resources to maintain the obesity of the state. That was the discourse. So, he has reduced the budget in areas such as education, health, social development. But also in security, dismantling the administrative infrastructure in the control of prisons. Second, the lack of effective border control has allowed drug trafficking to enter, taking advantage of the vulnerability created by the lack of economic opportunities for young people. A third issue is that if you don't have education, you don't have health, you don't have minimum conditions for people, what do you have? A breeding ground for drug

trafficking. The lack of employment has led many to be recruited by drug traffickers. Finally, governments, from Guillermo Lasso onwards, have tried to confuse the population by saying that the indigenous movement is involved drug trafficking, in order to delegitimize the protests, generating confusion and polarization in society.

So, what happened in Palo Quemado has been skilfully used to focus attention on the problem of insecurity, an issue that, although it is a reality, does not represent a generalized situation at the national level, but is more concentrated on the coast. Indigenous and peasant communities in the Sierra and the Amazon have managed to maintain a level of control over their territories. However, by trying to equate the indigenous movement with drug trafficking, they intend to establish in the opinion of the people that everything must be razed to the ground. In Palo Quemado there is no identified presence of drug trafficking or illegal mining, but the national government has used the national situation to repress indigenous communities in Palo Quemado. Even in the National Assembly, where we confronted the joint command of the Armed Forces for spreading misleading information. It is true that illegal mining linked to drug trafficking is occurring in other places such as Buenos Aires, Ponce Enríquez, Azuay and Napo, but this is due to the lack of response capacity of the communities, as a result of the violation of their territorial organization processes. In territories where these organizational structures are present, the national government tries to create confusion about the real situation.

Could you talk about the referendum proposed by the government, detailing the

issues at stake, and what is the position of the indigenous movement on this?

In relation to the popular consultation, it is important to divide the analysis into three blocks. The first concerns security, where it is feasible to carry out reforms within the existing legal framework, which does not require spending \$60 million on a consultation when these modifications could be resolved through the National Assembly. Security-related thematic areas have already been identified, including relevant articles.

The second block concerns the reform of the judicial system and institutions, which could also be addressed through reforms proposed by the National Assembly, without the need to resort to consultation.

The third block, of great relevance to us, deals with labour reform. For years, we have been clear in our stance that companies seek more flexible labour rights to increase their profits at the expense of worker exploitation. The question raised in the consultation about hourly pay would trigger a significant imbalance, both at the state level and for workers. How are you going to calculate retirement? Calculating retirement and contributions to the retirement system would become complicated. We would have no possibility of demanding overtime pay when you are outside the current working day. It could be at night, it could be in the day, it could be Saturday, it could be Sunday. So, it is practically guaranteeing the conditions of exploitation and overexploitation for the benefit of the employers.

Another crucial aspect is consultation on international arbitration. The question is whether we agree that disputes with foreign companies should be resolved through international arbitration, which would be detrimental to Ecuador's sovereignty. The case of Chevron Texaco is a clear example of how

companies have demanded that Ecuador cede sovereignty and submit the dispute to international arbitration, resulting in significant losses for the country. It is vital to reaffirm the sovereignty and unity of the Ecuadorian state in all legal, economic and political spheres.

In summary, we have rejected the eleven questions of the consultation, as they do not represent CONAIE's position on any of the aforementioned aspects.

I would like to talk about the Noboa government, which initially gained popularity after declaring a state of emergency after 9 January, but then began to lose support. How would you characterize his leadership and what is his current situation in terms of popularity and stability?

In the eagerness to win an election, the government made promises based on illusions, which Ecuadorians ended up accepting as truths, even though in reality they are lies. And what has happened to the national government? It has gone against its own promises in four key areas. What did it promise? To reduce the price of fuel. And what's going on? An increase in fuel prices is announced. It was said, "There will be no increase in VAT or other taxes," but in fact value-added tax was increased. What else did it promise? That there would be no privatization of strategic

sectors. However, laws have been enacted that pave the way for the privatization of businesses essential to Ecuadorians. And fourthly, what was said? Exploring alternatives to guarantee energy in the country, including the modernization of the electricity system with the promise of reducing costs. Instead, however, prices have risen and problems in electricity management have not been resolved.

though it is true that the President initially gained a lot of popularity with the issue of insecurity, the focus of his administration has been directed mainly towards the repression of the popular and impoverished sectors of the country, who are the most affected by the consequences of the structural adjustments imposed by the International Monetary Fund and neoliberal policies. What we have observed is that their strategy has focused on arresting young people, criminals and addicts, presenting them to the country and the world as trophies of their fight against crime. Of the 11,800 detainees recorded, the majority of them, approximately 11,500 people, have been arrested without any legal proceedings being initiated against them, suggesting that these arrests may be more focused on a media spectacle than a real plan to dismantle the country's criminal structures.

Another worrying aspect is that, although there are groups identified as responsible for serious criminal activities, the President has not declared these groups as terrorists, as is the case with the "Albanian mafia" or the Jalisco group in Mexico. This raises questions about whether the fight against drug trafficking and insecurity is being used more as a political tool to neutralize political opponents than anything else.

On the other hand, the apparent protection of the upper classes linked to drug trafficking is alarming, as evidenced by the recent discovery of large quantities of drugs in ports controlled by private companies. Let's just look at where the drug comes from. In these days we have seen one and a half tons, but in the previous months ten tons left the ports that are controlled by private companies.

Whose? Who are the exporters? The exporter Noboa.

Or look at the case of Guillermo Lasso and his brother-in-law linked to the "Albanian mafia." What did the prosecutor say? That he has a presumption of innocence and that since it is confidential information, the names or information could not be given. But that criterion does not apply to poor, drug-addicted young people, who do not have the presumption of innocence that is granted to the elites.

It is also worrisome that certain members of the Armed Forces are disseminating irresponsible information that says that we are fighting against transnational mining because we want to or are linked to illegal mining. They are trying to generate tensions and misunderstandings in the population and in the military ranks themselves.

Now we would like to delve into a more general topic. The indigenous movement has been a key player in recent years, with important milestones such as the outbreak of October 2019 or June 2022. What do you think is the current role of the indigenous movement in this

political conjuncture and, in particular, how do you see the debate around a possible indigenous candidacy in the next presidential elections?

At this time, I believe that the fundamental role that indigenous organizations can play in the country is to realize the ideal of plurinationality, which, although it has been present in the constitution of Ecuador since 2008, has not yet materialized in the daily life of society. The current task of the indigenous movement and other popular and peasant sectors is to make this plurinational state a reality in organizational terms. I believe that the indigenous movement would have the possibility to share its organizational experience of more than 500 years.

In the midst of the crisis of insecurity, in what territories has it been almost impossible for drug trafficking and organized crime to enter? In territories where it has organizational capacity. Our communities have been saving the state millions of dollars by ensuring our safety with community guards and indigenous justice systems. I believe that we can make a qualitative leap and contribute to the definition of public policies with our contributions. In addition, we must work to build an intercultural society that respects and promotes community democracy and legal pluralism, fundamental values for indigenous peoples.

Let us now consider the possibility of the indigenous movement participating in the upcoming elections. It's an option that's on the table. There are minimum conditions that we must consider as we approach the opening of the new electoral

process. Subsequently, it will be necessary to make decisions about the mechanisms that have historically supported us: a participatory and communitarian democracy that defends our organizational structures without provoking internal divisions or ruptures.

You have mentioned on several occasions the importance of the unity of the left in the context of an eventual indigenous candidacy. How do you visualize that unity on the left? Is it viable? What would be the necessary conditions for an indigenous candidacy to be effective? And, if those conditions are met, what would be the next step?

Structurally, our society and our democratic system are dominated by representative democracy, which tends to fragment power into different political parties or movements. To move towards a true transformation of the country, we must break with those parcels of power that each party defends for itself and focus on a comprehensive project for the transformation of Ecuador. We have said: elections have to be seen as part

of a process of struggle. Elections for us do not become exclusive, they have to be part of a process of struggle, the struggle in the streets, the struggle in the legislative assembly, the legal struggle, the struggle in the demands of the national and international courts. To move forward in the electoral process, what will it take? Breaking those parcels of power. So, what does the matrix need to be in order to get out of this process? The matrix has to be to define the project for the transformation of Ecuador. In this project of transformation of Ecuador, all the movements, political parties that have this ideology of the left are either part of the popular camp or question the neoliberal model. So, let's come together in this project of transforming the country.

The indigenous movement, made up of 18 peoples and 15 nationalities, represents millenary societies that have existed long before the formation of the Republic 200 years ago. These communities have endured for millennia. How can we integrate the ideology of the original nations into this political project that we defend from the left and that criticizes the current model? How do we achieve this convergence among those of us who defend these values?

Right now, we're facing this challenge, aren't we? Achieving the union of diverse sectors of society: mestizos, whites, cholos, indigenous, Afro-descendants, all sharing the vision of the left or the objective of transforming society. On the other hand, we also have the vision of indigenous peoples, represented by 18 peoples and 15 nationalities, who aspire to transform this country by preserving their lives, worldview and culture. I think it's possible to build from these visions, which would be nice, don't you think?

Do you think it's possible that *Correismo* or other left-wing

movements could join this perspective?

All left-wing movements must be questioned and shaken up, including Correa. We are not attacking *Correismo* as a phenomenon, but rather questioning how it is possible that, if it defines itself as left-wing, it is supporting radicalized right-wing neoliberal policies in our country. Over the past 15 days, I have raised this debate. Some fear being labelled radicals, so they choose to moderate, but the problem is that the right is radicalizing, not just here, but globally. So, who is responsible for the increasingly radical right-wing policies advancing? Not only the right, but also those who consider themselves to be on the left but vote for these policies. Even *Correismo* must be shaken up. Is it possible to continue to call oneself left-wing when, through voting, policies such as privatization, tax increases and debt forgiveness for large economic groups are supported, while continuing to implement a fiscal policy that affects the poor and the middle class? I believe that at this

moment it is necessary to call on all left-wing movements to look beyond their own interests and consider a program of a plurinational left-wing government. This also implies opening a debate within the indigenous movement. Ecuadorian politics has stigmatized having a political stance, and if someone from *Correismo* participates in a broader program that seeks to transform Ecuador, what will the stigma be? It will be: are you a Correista or an anti-Correista? And who benefits from this division? The radicalized right in Ecuador. That is why I believe that we must open this process at this time. These parcels of power will only dissolve if we can unite in a project to transform Ecuador. Therefore, all left-wing movements must mobilize and work to build a more inclusive process at the national level.

What is the situation in the Pachakutik movement?

The situation in the Pachakutik movement is complicated to address

due to an ideological softening that has occurred over the past 15 years. It has been claimed that the indigenous movement is not aligned with either the left or the right, which has led to confusion among the political cadres. This confusion has been exploited by the right, since no one wanted to be identified as a Correista and that is why many sectors of the indigenous movement ended up supporting the right. However, at the moment, the Pachakutik leadership is taking a more defined and left-wing stance. Even so, we must confront a sector of social democracy both within the indigenous movement and in society at large. It is essential that we maintain clear positions on what it means to be on the left and to belong to the indigenous movement, as these positions must serve as a basis for building something different. We cannot allow moderate positions to be supported in the name of social democracy that ultimately support the most radical policies of the right. Currently, at Pachakutik we are in a process of redefinition and reflection, with the aim that the candidates who go to the National Assembly not only seek to obtain a space, but also see that space as an integral part of the transformation project in Ecuador.

Global crisis, conflict and war: what internationalism for the 21st century?

19 April 2024, by **Jaime Pastor** , **Pierre Rousset**

Jaime Pastor - It seems clear that we are in the context of a multidimensional world crisis, one of the characteristics of which is relative geopolitical chaos, in which we are witnessing a multiplication of wars and a worsening of inter-imperialist conflicts. How would you define this phase?

Pierre Rousset - You refer to a "multidimensional world crisis" (I would rather say a *planetary* crisis). I

think it's important to stop and think about this, before tackling the geopolitical issues. This crisis overdetermines everything, and we can no longer be content to play politics as we did before. We are reaching the 'tipping point' that we have long feared, and much sooner than expected.

Jonathan Watts, Global Environment Editor of *The Guardian*, sounds the alarm with the headline of his April 9 article "Tenth consecutive monthly

heat record alarms and confounds climate scientists". Indeed, "If the anomaly does not stabilise by August, 'the world will be in uncharted territory', says one climate expert [...]. [...] It could imply that a warming planet is already fundamentally altering how the climate system operates, much sooner than scientists had anticipate".

The expert quoted considers that stabilisation by August is still possible, but whatever the case, the climate

crisis is already *part of our present*. We are in the midst of it, and its effects (climate chaos) are already being dramatically felt.

The global crisis we are facing affects all areas of ecology (not just climate) and their consequences for health (including pandemics). It concerns the dominant international order (the insoluble dysfunctions of neoliberal globalisation) and the big power geopolitics, the multiplication of conflicts and the militarisation of the world, the intimate social fabric of our societies (weakened by the widespread precarisation fed by all the above)...

What do all these crises have in common? Their 'human' origin, in whole or in large part. The question of human impact on nature is obviously not new. The growth in greenhouse gas emissions dates back to the industrial revolution. However, this 'general crisis' is closely correlated with the development of capitalism after the Second World War and then with capitalist globalisation. It is characterised by the *synergy* between a set of specific crises that plunge us into a situation without precedent, on the border between multiple 'uncharted territories' and a global tipping point.

To describe it concisely, I like the term "polycrisis". It may be a little confusing and foreign to everyday language, but it underlines the fact that we are talking about ONE multifaceted crisis, resulting from the *combination* of multiple specific crises. So we're not dealing with a simple *addition* of crises, but with their *interaction*, which multiplies their dynamics, fuelling a death spiral for the human species (and for a large proportion of living species).

What is particularly revolting, and quite frankly mind-boggling, is that the established powers are now cancelling the meagre measures that were taken to try to limit global warming even slightly. This is particularly true of the French and British governments. It is also the case with the big banks in the United States, and with the oil companies. At a time when it was obvious that they needed to be strengthened, and

strengthened badly. The very rich dictate the law. They do not consider that we are all in the same boat. Entire regions of the planet are on the verge of becoming unliveable, where temperature rises are combined with very high levels of humidity in the air. Never mind, they'll go and live where it's still warm.

We have now entered the era of pandemics. The destruction of natural environments has created conditions of promiscuity favourable to the inter-species transmission of diseases of which Covid has become the emblem. The melting of the Siberian permafrost has been announced, and could release ancient bacteria or viruses against which there is no immunisation or treatment. Here, too, we risk entering uncharted territory: the climate crisis is creating a multidimensional health crisis.

The disaster was foreseeable and predicted. We now know that the major oil companies commissioned a study back in the mid-1950s that described the coming global warming with remarkable accuracy (although they denied it for decades).

We haven't finished exploring the thousand and one facets of the 'polycrisis', but perhaps it's time to draw some initial conclusions.

It is around the poles that the geopolitical impact of global warming is most spectacular, especially in the Arctic. An inter-oceanic shipping route is opening up to the north, along with the prospect of exploiting the riches beneath the subsoil. Inter-imperialist competition in this part of the world is taking on a new dimension. Since China is not a country bordering the Antarctic, it needs Russia to operate there. It is making Moscow pay the price for its solidarity on the western front (Ukraine) by ensuring its free use of the port of Vladivostok.

In terms of global geopolitics, I would like to highlight the importance of two issues that are not mentioned in the questions that follow.

Firstly, Central Asia. It occupies a pivotal position at the heart of the Eurasian continent. For Vladimir Putin, it is part of Russia's privileged

zone of influence, but for Beijing, it is one of the key passages on the land side of its new "Silk Roads" to Europe. A complex game is currently being played out in this part of the world, but our analyses do not take much account of it.

Global warming also reminds us of the crucial importance of the oceans, which cover 70% of the earth's surface, play a decisive role in regulating the climate and are home to vital ecosystems, all of which are threatened by rising sea temperatures. As we know, the over-exploitation of ocean resources is a major issue, as is the extension of maritime borders, which pose no fewer problems than land borders. Global geopolitical thinking cannot ignore the oceans and the poles.

Another key aspect of the "multidimensional crisis" we are facing obviously concerns capitalist globalisation and financialisation. This has led to the formation of a more unified world market than ever before, to ensure the free movement of goods, investments and speculative capital (but not people). A number of factors have disrupted this 'happy globalisation' (for big business): a stagnation in trade, the rise of speculative finance and debt, the Covid pandemic which revealed the dangers of the international division of production chains, and the degree of Western dependence on China, contributing to the rapid change in relations between Washington and Beijing (from entente cordiale to confrontation).

It was big business in the West that wanted to turn China into the workshop of the world, in order to ensure low-cost production and break up the workers' movement in their own countries. It was Europe that was at the forefront of the generalisation of the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which Beijing had joined. They were all convinced that the former Middle Kingdom would be definitively subordinate to them, and so it might have been. If this was not the case, it was because the leading wing of the Chinese bureaucracy, once popular resistance had been broken in blood (1986), succeeded in its capitalist mutation,

giving birth to an original form of state capitalism.

State capitalism has a long history in East Asia, under the aegis of the Kuomintang (Guomindang) in China or Taiwan, South Korea... Because of its history, the Chinese social formation is obviously unique, but it combines quite classically the development of private capital and the capitalist appropriation of state owned enterprises. We are not dealing here with two separate economic sectors (a fundamentally dual economy); they are in fact closely linked through multiple links, as well as through family clans present in all sectors.

Firstly, under the aegis of Deng Xiaoping, China, which had converted to capitalism, quietly began its imperialist take-off and was able to benefit from the geographical distance from the United States, which for a long time was incapable of refocusing on Asia (this was only achieved by Joe Biden, in the wake of the Afghan debacle).

To conclude this section, let us note that :

- The international geopolitical situation remains dominated by the face-off between established imperialism (the United States) and rising imperialism (China). They are not, of course, the only players in the great global game between powers large and small, but no other power carries as much weight as the two "superpowers".

- A particular feature of this conflict is the very high degree of objective interdependence. The crisis of neo-liberal globalisation may be obvious, but its legacy is still with us. There is no longer any such thing as "happy globalisation", but neither is there any such thing as "happy (capitalist) de-globalisation". Geopolitical conflicts are both a symptom of this structural crisis and accentuate its contradictions. To some extent, here too we have entered in an "uncharted territory", unprecedented.

- While still the main "superpower", the hegemony of the United States has undergone a relative decline. It cannot continue to police the world without

the help of reliable and effective allies, who are missing in action. They have been weakened by the political and institutional crisis provoked by Donald Trump and its lasting diplomatic consequences (loss of confidence among their allies). It could be said that there is no longer any "classic" imperialism, given the scale of the country's deindustrialisation. Joe Biden is now mobilising considerable financial and legal resources to try and turn things around in this area, but it is not an easy task. Remember that a country like France was incapable, even in the face of a life-threatening emergency (Covid), of producing hydroalcoholic gel, surgical masks and N95s, gowns for nursing staff. But this is not cutting-edge technology!

- China was in a much better position in this area. It had inherited from the Maoist era an indigenous industrial base, a population with a high literacy rate for the Third World, and a trained working class. Now the workshop of the world, it has ensured a new wave of industrialisation (partly dependent, but not exclusively). Huge resources were invested in the production of cutting-edge technologies. The party-state was able to organise the country's national and international development (there was a pilot in the plane). That said, the Chinese regime is now more opaque and secretive than ever. We know how the political and institutional crisis is affecting US imperialism. It is very difficult to know what is happening in China. However, the hypercentralisation of power under Xi Jinping, who has become president for life, now seems to be a factor in the structural crisis.

- The relative decline of the United States and the unfinished rise of China have opened up a space in which secondary powers can play a significant role, at least in their own region (Russia, Turkey, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, etc.). I believe that Russia has not ceased to present China with a series of faits accomplis on Europe's eastern borders. By acting in concert, Moscow and Beijing were largely masters of the game on the Eurasian continent. However, there was no coordination between the invasion of Ukraine and an actual attack on Taiwan.

In this context, can we consider that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Western powers' support for Ukraine in response to it make this war an inter-imperialist war which leads us to evoke the Zimmerwald policy (war on war) in response? Or, on the contrary, are we facing a war of national liberation which, although supported by the imperialist powers, obliges the Western Left to show solidarity with the resistance of the Ukrainian people against the Russian invasion?

Zimmerwald's policy was to call for peace without annexations. Now, some of the people who present themselves as Zimmerwald's heirs are proposing to cede this or that piece of Ukraine to Russia, to organise referendums there to validate their separation from Ukraine, etc., but let's move on.

The simplest way to answer this question is to go back over the sequence of events. An invasion is prepared by mobilising considerable military resources at the borders, which takes time and is obvious. Putin did it. At the time, NATO was in the midst of a political crisis, following the Afghan adventure, and the bulk of its operational forces in Europe had not been redeployed to the East. Biden's main concern was China and he was still trying to play Moscow off against Beijing. The US secret services were the first to warn that an invasion was possible, but the warning was not taken seriously either by the European states or even by Zelinsky himself.

Most of us in Western Europe had little contact with our comrades in Eastern Europe (particularly in Ukraine) and many of us analysed events in purely geopolitical terms (a mistake that should never be made), thinking that Putin was simply exerting strong pressure on the European Union to stir up post-Afghan dissension within NATO. If this had been the case, the invasion should not have taken place, because it would have had the opposite effect: it would have given new meaning to NATO and enabled it to close ranks. And that's exactly what happened! What's more, before the Russian invasion, a majority

of the Ukrainian population wanted to live in a non-aligned country. Today, only a very small minority see their security as anything other than a close alliance with the NATO countries.

For my part, it was only very shortly before the invasion that I had the feeling that it was possible, alerted by my friend Adam Novak.

We now know much more: the invasion had been prepared for several years. It was part of a grand plan to restore the Russian Empire within the borders of the Stalinist USSR, with Catherine II as its point of reference. The existence of Ukraine was merely an anomaly of which Lenin was guilty (in Putin's own words) and it was to be reintegrated into the Russian fold. In fact, Ukrainians call it the *full-scale invasion* and point out that the subversion and military occupation of Donbass, Luhansk and Crimea in 2014 was a *first phase of the invasion*. The "Special Operation" (the word "war" was prohibited until recently and remains so in practice) was to be very rapid and continue all the way to Kiev, where a government under orders would be established. The Western forces, caught unawares, could only bow to the fait accompli - and they were caught unawares. Even Washington was slow to react politically.

The grain of sand that brought the war machine to a halt was the scale of Ukrainian resistance, unforeseen by Putin, but also in the West. We can truly speak of a massive popular resistance, in osmosis with the armed forces. It was a national resistance, in which many Russian speakers took part (and the whole political spectrum, with the exception of few Moscow's loyalists). For those who doubted it, there was no clearer proof than this: Ukraine does exist. This is the second scenario you mentioned.

Time cannot erase this "original" truth and our obligation of solidarity. A double obligation of solidarity, I would add. With the national resistance of the Ukrainian people and with the forces of the left that continue to fight, in Ukraine itself, for the rights of workers and trade unions, for freedom of association and expression, against the authoritarianism of the Zelensky

regime and against neo-liberal policies (advocated by the European Union)...

Naturally, Ukraine has become a flashpoint in the Russian-Western power struggle. Without the supply of arms from the United States in particular, the Ukrainians would not have been able to hold any "fronts". However, arms supplies have consistently fallen short of what would have been needed to decisively defeat Moscow. To this day, the Russian army's control of the air has not been countered. And NATO countries are once again divided, while the pre-election crisis in the United States is blocking the vote on funds for Ukraine.

After having had the opportunity to build up defences in depth and reorganise, Moscow continues to be the driving force behind the military escalation in Ukraine, with the help of North Korean shells and funding provided by India and China (via the sale of oil products), and it is pushing the policy of fait accompli to the point of ignominy: the deportation of Ukrainian children and their adoption into Russian families.

If so, how do we respond to those who believe that support for the resistance serves the interests of the Western powers (with the approval of the Zelenski government) who want to prolong the war, regardless of the devastation (human and material) it is causing, and that it is therefore necessary to promote an active policy of defending a just peace?

I myself am not actively involved in Ukraine solidarity. I am maintaining my Asian solidarity activities, against the tide of current events. I have immersed myself in the Israeli-Palestinian question (which is hard to live with). So I will remain cautious.

We are all aware of the scale of the devastation caused by this war, all the more so because Putin is waging a war that shamelessly targets the civilian population. It is unbearable.

However, it is not our support but Putin who is prolonging this war. We must not dilute responsibility. If by the

term "just peace" we mean an indefinite truce on the current front line, that would condemn five million Ukrainians in the occupied territories to live under a regime of forced assimilation, with several millions deported to the Russian Federation proper.

I believe that the role of our solidarity movement is, above all, to help create the best conditions for the struggle of the Ukrainian people and, within it, for the Ukrainian social and political left. It is certainly not up to us to determine what the terms of a peace agreement might be. I think we need to listen to what the Ukrainian left, the women's movement, the trade unions, the Crimean Tatar movement and the environmentalists (among others) are calling for, and to respond to their appeals.

We must also listen to the left and the anti-war movements in Russia itself. Most sections of the Russian anti-capitalist left believe that Russia's defeat in Ukraine could be the trigger that opens the door to the democratisation of the country and the emergence of various social movements.

Those on the Western Left who claim that the Left in Eastern Europe "hardly exists" are mistaken.

To believe that a bad compromise on the backs of the Ukrainians could put an end to the war is an illusion that seems dangerous to me. This is to forget the reasons why Putin went to war: to liquidate Ukraine and continue the reconstitution of the Russian Empire, but also to seize its economic wealth (including its agriculture) and establish a colonial regime in the occupied zones.

Putin's state apparatus is gangrenous with secret service men (KGB-FSB). It has already intervened throughout its area of proximity, from Chechnya to Central Asia and Syria. It only exists internationally through its military capabilities and its sales of arms, oil and agricultural products...

I have a total mistrust of "our" imperialisms, the fortitudes of which I am well aware and which I never stop fighting. I will never rely on them to

negotiate or impose a peace agreement. Just look at what happened to the Oslo agreements in Palestine!

For me, then, there is no question of solidarity movements "falling in with the logic of the powers" (whatever they may be). They must retain their complete independence from states and governments (including Zelensky's). I repeat, we are listening to the forces of the Ukrainian left and the anti-war left in Russia.

On the other hand, the US and the EU are using the Russian war in Ukraine and rising international tensions as an alibi for rearmament and increased military spending. Can we speak of a "new cold war" or even the threat of a world war in which the use of nuclear weapons is not excluded? What should be the position of the anti-capitalist left in the face of this rearmament and this threat?

I am against rearmament and increased military spending by the United States and the European Union.

Having said that, I think we need to take a broader view. A new arms race is underway in which China (and even Russia) seem to have the initiative in several areas, including supersonic weapons that would render existing anti-missile shields ineffective or allow the armada of an aircraft carrier to be targeted from very far away. To my knowledge, nothing has really been tested, and I don't know what is true and what is science fiction, but other comrades are certainly more knowledgeable than I am in this area.

However, the arms race itself is a major problem. For the usual reasons (militarisation of the world, capture by the military-industrial complex of an exorbitant share of public budgets, etc.), but also because of the climate crisis, which makes it even more urgent to get out of the era of permanent wars. Production of weapons and their use is not included in the official calculation of greenhouse gas emissions. A terrible denial of reality.

Putin has repeatedly threatened to use

nuclear weapons, to no avail (I'm not asking him to be consistent with his statements). I doubt that the threat of nuclear war is a direct result of the current Ukrainian conflict (I hope I'm right), but I nevertheless think that it is (unfortunately) a real issue. Here too I'm going to broaden the subject.

There are already four localised nuclear 'hot spots'. One is in the Middle East: Israel. Three are in Eurasia: Ukraine, India-Pakistan and the Korean peninsula. The latter is the only one to be "active". The North Korean regime periodically carries out tests and launches missiles in a region where the US naval air force is stationed and where the largest complex of US bases abroad is located (in Japan, especially on the island of Okinawa). Joe Biden already has his hands full with Ukraine, Palestine and Taiwan, and could do without a worsening of the situation in this part of the world (and China too), a situation in which Trump bears a heavy responsibility, but so does the last scion of the hereditary North Korean dynasty.

A small problem: it takes twenty minutes for a North Korean nuclear missile to reach Seoul, the capital of South Korea. Under these conditions, the commitment not to use nuclear weapons first becomes difficult to apply.

France is one of the countries politically preparing public opinion for the possible use of a "tactical" nuclear bomb. We must vigorously oppose this attempt to make nuclear weapons commonplace. Unfortunately, there is a kind of national political consensus that means that "our" nuclear arsenal is not a matter of principle for political agreements, even on the left and even when we are in favour of abolishing it.

The issue of rearmament, of the new arms race, of nuclear power, must be part and parcel of the activities of anti-war movements on both sides of the border. For example, despite the terrible intercommunal violence that accompanied the partition of India in 1947, the Pakistani and Indian Left are jointly campaigning for disarmament.

Can we talk about a "new Cold War"? I

used to find this phrase very Eurocentric. In Asia, the war was torrid (the US escalation in Vietnam). What does it mean today, at a time when Russia is waging war in Ukraine? I understand that it is used in the press and in debate, but I don't think we should use it ourselves, for two main reasons:

- It reduces the analysis to a very limited approach to geopolitics. War is only "cold" because there is no direct confrontation between great powers. This formula does not prevent, but it does not contribute to a concrete analysis of 'hot' conflicts.

- Generally speaking, I'm not keen on historical analogies: "are we in...". We're never "in...", but in the present. I know that history helps to explain the present and that the present helps to revisit the past, but the formula "new Cold War" illustrates my reticence. The "first" Cold War pitted the "Western bloc" against the "Eastern bloc". At that time, the Soviet bloc and China had only limited economic relations with the capitalist world market. The revolutionary dynamic was continuing (Vietnam, etc.).

Today, the capitalist world market has become universal. Globalisation has taken hold. China has become one of its pillars. There is close economic interdependence between China, the United States and the countries of Western Europe. It is impossible to understand the complexity of the Sino-US conflict without taking this factor fully into account. So why resort to an old formula and then add: but everything is now different, of course.

I would say that the theme of the new Cold War suits the campists on both sides. Those who want to justify their support for Moscow and Beijing. Or to those who want to side with Democracy and Western values against autocrats.

A little counterpoint in conclusion: Biden is a man of the past. He has learned to negotiate nuclear threats through several major crises. This experience can still be useful to him today.

What is at stake in Israel's war of

extermination in Gaza? Why does the United States continue to support Israel, despite its recent abstention from the UN Security Council? What role should our internationalist solidarity with the Palestinian people play?

What is at stake in this war? The very survival of the people of Gaza. A specialist in these issues (the elimination of populations) had a phrase that I think is very apt. He had never seen a situation so serious in its "intensity". In other cases, a greater number of people have died, but Gaza is a tiny territory undergoing a multi-faceted attack of unprecedented intensity. Even if the bombing stopped and aid arrived en masse, the deaths would continue over time.

The entire population will be living with repeated post-traumatic stress, starting with children, whose mortality rate is staggering. The youngest children, victims of malnutrition, will never have the right to a "normal" life.

Other issues at stake include the very existence of the West Bank, where Palestinians are subjected to daily violence by Jewish supremacist settlers, supported by the army and paramilitaries. Will the surviving Gazans be forced into exile via Egypt or the sea? Will the surviving West Bank Palestinians be expelled to Jordan? Will the Greater Israel project take hold?

The colonisation of Palestine can be seen as a long-term process, but this is a terrible turning point. Netanyahu has never defined his war aims (apart from the total destruction of Hamas, an undertaking that has no end). I'm not going to try to define them for him, especially as the situation is volatile.

The bombing of the Iranian consulate in Damascus on 1 April is an example of Netanyahu's headlong rush beyond the borders of Palestine. It is a flagrant violation of the Vienna Convention protecting diplomatic missions. The target of the attack was senior Hezbollah leaders who were there, but that doesn't "justify" anything. There are always "enemies" of choice in diplomatic missions,

including senior officers. The Israelis know this well, as Mossad agents disguised as diplomats have murdered or kidnapped more than one person in foreign countries. It is curious and worrying that this bombing did not provoke more protests.

Tehran does not want war, but it must react. We are on a razor's edge.

Joe Biden has set his own trap by declaring his unconditional support for the Israeli government from the outset, out of his own Zionism and without consulting the experts in his own administration, which has led to a series of shock resignations. He could no longer support the unbearable, but he did not stop supplying arms and munitions to Israel. I may be wrong, but I have the impression that he has simply lost his diplomatic hand in the Arab world and is currently busy ironing out defence agreements with Japan and the Philippines, in case Trump wins the next presidential election.

[An update: Iran carried out an air strike against Israel on the night of 13-14 March. According to an Israeli count, more than 300 projectiles were fired: 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles and 110 ballistic missiles. Tehran had announced the operation, which was confirmed by the United States. It takes several hours for these weapons to reach Israel, so there was plenty of time to shoot down many of them along the way. The United States, Great Britain, France and Jordan all contributed to the operation. An Israeli military base was nevertheless hit. The aim of this operation was clearly political, a warning in response to the attack in Damascus. It was the first time that the Iranian regime had attacked Israel directly in this way. Tehran announced that its operation would not be followed up, at least not if the Israelis left it at that. Faced with Iran, Joe Biden is still in a position to activate a front of Western and Arab countries. Israel's dependence on its protectors is confirmed].

Let's come to the last question. What, in my view, are the tasks of internationalist solidarity with the Palestinian people?

First of all, the absolute urgency, on

which a very broad consensus can be reached: an immediate ceasefire, the entry of massive amounts of aid via all access routes to the Gaza Strip, the protection of convoys and humanitarian workers (many of whom have been killed), the resumption of the mission of UNRWA, whose role is irreplaceable, a halt to settlement on the West Bank and the restoration of the rights of Palestinians who have been dispossessed, the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian political prisoners, etc.

We defend the Palestinians' right to resistance, including armed resistance, without any "buts"; but this does not imply political support for Hamas or denying that war crimes were committed on 7 October, as many independent sources attest. These sources include Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHRI); Bedouin villagers in the Negev whom Israel refuses to protect, but who have been repeatedly attacked by Hamas; Israeli activists who have dedicated their lives to defending the rights of Palestinians...

Hamas is now the main military component of the Palestinian resistance, but does it have an emancipatory project? We have always analysed the movements involved in the liberation struggles that we supported. Why should it be any different today?

Our role as internationalists is also to draw a line, however tenuous, between present tasks and an emancipatory future. We defend the principle of a Palestine where the inhabitants of this historic land "between the sea and the river" can live together (including the return of Palestinian refugees). This will not happen without profound social upheavals in the region, but we can give substance to this perspective by supporting the organisations that are acting together today, Jews/Jews and Arabs/Palestinians, against all odds. They are all taking great risks to continue to show this Jewish-Arab solidarity in the current context. We owe them our solidarity.

Jewish-Arab solidarity is also one of the keys to the development of international mobilisations,

particularly in the United States where the Jewish Voice for Peace movement has played a very important role in countering the propaganda of the pro-Israeli lobbies and opening up the space for protest.

How do you analyse China's foreign policy strategy and its conflict with Taiwan?

I think that Xi Jinping's priorities are to continue China's global expansion and consolidation, to compete with the United States in the field of high technology with both civilian and military use, to seek significant diplomatic alliances (an Achilles heel in the face of the United States), to develop its own zones of influence in regions considered strategic at this stage (such as the South Pacific), and to strengthen its military aeronaval and space capabilities or its surveillance and disinformation capabilities. The invasion of Taiwan would not be on the agenda.

China's paths of expansion differ from those of its predecessors. Times have changed. Beijing has only one large conventional military base, in Djibouti. However, it is signing agreements with a growing number of countries to gain access to their ports. Better still, it takes possession of all or part of them, which gives it an extensive maritime network of points of attachment for both civilian and military use. The security services present in Chinese companies abroad are provided by military personnel, enabling the army to obtain information and establish contacts.

Chinese policy is imperialist in nature, and it is hard to see how it could be otherwise. Any major capitalist power must guarantee the security of its investments and communications, and the political and financial profitability of its commitments.

Beijing has proclaimed its sovereignty over the whole of the South China Sea, a major international transit zone, which it has militarised without taking into account the maritime rights of neighbouring countries. It is appropriating fish stocks and prospecting the seabed. An authoritarian regime uses authoritarian methods wherever it

thinks it can. Of course, a so-called democratic imperialist regime can do the same...

In addition to the protracted war situations in Syria, Yemen, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, there is a war in Burma that is little talked about in the West. Could you comment on the current state of this conflict?

A word about Sudan. There is a wealth of experience of grassroots resistance in this country, under extremely difficult conditions, which deserves to be better known (and supported).

Burma was a textbook case. On 1 February 2021, the military grasped all power in a putsch. The next day, the country went into dissidence in the form of a widespread work stoppage and a huge movement of civil disobedience. The putsch was aborted, but the army could not be ousted for lack of immediate international support. The military gradually regained the initiative through a merciless crackdown. In the central region, which was initially peaceful, the popular resistance had to go underground and then engage in armed resistance. It sought the support of armed ethnic movements operating in the states of the country's mountainous periphery.

It's hard to imagine a broader civic resistance movement than the one in Burma - but the armed struggle became a vital necessity, basing its legitimacy on the evidence of self-defence. This enabled it to withstand the test of fire and gradually organise itself in the form of independent guerrillas or those linked to the National Unity Government, the expression of the parliament dissolved by the military and (at last) opened up to ethnic minorities.

The conflict took terribly harsh forms, with the army in particular having a monopoly on aviation. It was also complex, with each ethnic state having its own characteristics and political choices. Gradually, however, the junta lost the upper hand. It had the support of China (a neighbouring country) and Russia, but proved incapable of guaranteeing Beijing the security of its investments and the construction of

a port giving access to the Indian Ocean. Its international isolation has deepened and its ASEAN allies have become divided.

Today, the army is losing ground in many regions and the opposition front against the junta has widened. Burma has a very rich history, but unfortunately it is little known in the West.

In conclusion, the worsening of the economic crisis and the multiplication of conflicts at both international and regional level seem to indicate a turning point in the international context that requires us to rethink the policies of internationalist solidarity. What are the avenues for building an internationalism that is in tune with the changing nature of international conflicts in the 21st century?

There is an in-depth recomposition, with the opposition between "campism" and internationalism as the main line of force. We may have many differences of analysis, but the question is whether we are defending all victimised populations.

Each power chooses the victims that suit it and abandons the others. We refuse to enter into this type of logic. We are defending the rights of the Kanaks in Kanaky, whatever Paris may think, the Syrians and the peoples of Syria in the face of the implacable dictatorship of the Assad clan, the Ukrainians under the deluge of Russian fire, the Palestinians under the deluge of US bombs, the Puerto Ricans under US colonial rule, the peoples of Burma even when the junta is supported by China, the Haitians denied protection and asylum by the so-called "international community".

We do not abandon victims in the name of geopolitical considerations. We support their right to decide freely about their future and, when that is the issue, their right to self-determination. We stand with progressive movements around the world that reject the logic of the "principal enemy". We are not in the camp of any great power, be it Japanese-Western, Russian or Chinese. Occupation is a crime in

Ukraine as it is in Palestine.

Faced with the militarisation of the world, we need a global anti-war movement. It's easy to say, but hard to do. Can we rely on local cross-border solidarity (Ukraine-Russia, India-Pakistan) to achieve this? Or on the huge solidarity movement with Palestine? Or social forums like the one that has just taken place in Nepal?

We also need to integrate the climate issue into the problematic of anti-war movements and, conversely, militant environmental movements would gain, if they have not already done so, from integrating the anti-war dimension into their struggle. The same applies to nuclear weapons.

Greta Thunberg's personality seems to me to embody the potential of the younger generations confronted with

the violence of the 'polycrisis'. But her commitments require tenacity, which she certainly doesn't lack, and the ability to act over the long term, which is by no means easy. My generation of activists was launched into orbit by the radicalism of the 1960s and, for us in France, by the seminal experience of May 68. Quite an impetus. What is the situation today?

15 April 2024

A year and a half of right-wing rule

18 April 2024, by **Franco Turigliatto**

Another crucial element is the centrality of business, which must not be subjected to any constraints (leaving capitalists a free hand!) and which, on the contrary, must be supported by further tax cuts. The twelve tax amnesties in one year for the petty and middle classes, the government's main electoral base, were a blatant invitation to tax evasion.

Repression, arms race and reactionary ideological offensive

Added to this is the severe penalization of all the weakest sections of society (the poor, migrants and people with disabilities), both economically and in terms of standards. These measures are being implemented through the introduction of 22 new criminal offences ranging from the repression of rave parties to the criminalization of collective action by young environmental activists, while more "serious" measures are being prepared to crush the solidarity movement with the Palestinian people in universities.

Internationally, Meloni fully supports

the imperialist NATO coalition, the arms race and the dispatch of the Italian fleet to the Persian Gulf.

Her action is also accompanied by a continuation of the process of privatizing schools, accentuating class divisions within them and an ideological offensive aimed at rewriting the country's history in a reactionary and revisionist sense. Representatives of the armed forces are increasingly present in the life and education of many schools and we are witnessing the activation of all the reactionary impulses in society, including racism, nationalist patriotism and the old colonialism.

There is a systematic occupation at all levels of institutions and power, with total control of public television and media and attempts to muzzle and even criminalize critical journalists.

The cult of the so-called democracy of the leader elected by the people is expressed in an institutional counter-reform which will give enormous powers to the Prime Minister, completely altering the balance of power in the State, combined with the counter-reform of the so-called differentiated autonomy, which will make the rich regions even richer and which will further destroy public health care in favour of the private sector.

Death at work and destruction of the gains of the Resistance

They want to put an end to the "civil reformist religion" (which promotes rights, freedom and the pursuit of social justice) that characterized the country for years after the victory of the Resistance, expressed by the workers' movement and the social, trade union and political forces of the left. The defeats of the working class, its fragmentation and the austerity policies pursued by the centre-right and centre-left governments have opened up a motorway for the far right to attempt to establish what Gramsci called a reactionary "passive revolution" of the ruling classes.

A never-ending and unacceptable chain of workplace deaths, a veritable massacre of workers, now marks the condition of the working class, and it is clear that this government, which does not want to put any obstacle in the way of the free exploitation of companies and precariousness, is even less able and willing to put in place effective legislation and adequate controls to combat these murders.

Towards a new season of struggles?

The government is well aware that if it is to consolidate its power, it must confront the labour movement (and it is preparing to do so). The labour movement retains its trade union and organizational strength, albeit weakened. So far, this direct confrontation has been postponed because of the passivity of the trade union leaderships, including the total subordination of the CISL (Italy's second largest trade union), and the

government's hope that trade union inaction will further accentuate the demoralization and divisions of the working class, but the tensions over wages and employment are very real and (with the arrival of the austerity budget law) could precipitate the confrontation. The rank-and-file unions, but also the leaderships of the other two big unions, CGIL and UIL, are trying to react in one way or another, starting with the renewal of employment contracts for many categories in the public and private sectors, whose wages have been massacred by inflation. On 11 April, strikes and mobilizations took place across the country against deaths at work. On 12 April, 10,000 workers from Stellantis and the car industry

took to the streets of Turin to defend their jobs.

Moreover, two symbolic dates of struggle for the workers' movement, 25 April, the anniversary of the defeat of fascism, and 1 May, are very close together. The perspective must be that of a new season of struggle, of a revival of the workers' movement, capable of withstanding the harsh social confrontation against the fascist government that manages the interests of the capitalist class.

17 April 2024

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

"If we didn't join the armed forces, the left in Ukraine would cease to exist," says Taras Bilous

17 April 2024, by **Taras Bilous**

We are meeting outside the army base. Are political discussions between soldiers problematic?

The military leadership does not censor the opinions of the rank and file. However, I know from personal experience that when subordinates talk to the media, especially on political topics, it can make junior officers nervous. It has happened to me that a commander was worried that he would get a slap on the wrist for my interview, even though realistically there was no such threat.

In any case, I try to avoid unnecessary discussions. I don't loudly proclaim my political views or the fact that I'm a historian, to save my energy. Otherwise, immediately someone wants me to talk about Kyivan Rus' or some provocative questions come up. If I see that there might be a possible collaboration in activism with some person in the future, then I'll start

talking more openly to them.

How challenging is it to work with people who have different views?

Opinions don't bother me in this context. There are all kinds of people here, but you rarely get to discuss broader political issues. But on issues that directly affect our lives and military service, such as senior leadership, we find common ground quite easily.

A much bigger problem in the military is the human factor. Some officers give stupid orders that get people killed unnecessarily. Any soldier who has served at least six months can tell you more than one such story.

As for the rank and file, in the first few months of the invasion they all pulled themselves together, but now, after two years, fatigue has set in. In the West, many expect that with fatigue, our will to fight will gradually wane.

However, just because we are tired does not mean that it is not important for us to continue to resist.

But as I said, there are all kinds of people here. Some, despite the actions of the officers, understand that we need to keep working and keep pushing. And others... I once served with a soldier from another company and we spent four days in a collapsing trench. I started fixing it, and the soldier says, "stop fucking about. Let the commander come and fix the trench himself."

Despite a shared determination to continue resisting Russian aggression, everybody asks themselves: "Why should I be the one to make the sacrifice?" If the leadership has miscalculated on something, why should ordinary soldiers pay for it with their lives? And that includes civilians, whose willingness to enlist is declining. Even some of my friends who tried to enlist in 2022 and didn't

get drafted are now trying to escape mobilization. It's not so much about fear as it is about certain nonsensical practices that are common in the military: everyone knows about them. They could have changed them a long time ago, but with a few exceptions in a few separate units, they didn't.

In 2022, you decided to join the army despite not having experience of fighting after 2014. Do these two stages of the war differ for you?

In 2014, it was a war for territory. Some people really wanted to join Russia, even though [they were a minority](#). Quite a significant number of people with pro-Russian views wanted to stay in Ukraine, but they wanted federalization [Ed: more autonomy for Donetsk and Luhansk]. Of course, what percentage of the Donbas population held which view could be debated at length, and of course what the people living there thought has changed over time.

On the eve of the Russian troop intervention in 2022, a [survey](#) in the Donbas showed that welfare was more important to most people than which state they would live in - Ukraine or Russia. This is true for people living on both sides of the frontline. Of course, the opinion gap between the two parts of the Donbas has widened over the years. These are people who have become accustomed to a dual identity, so to speak. When they go to Lviv, people call them Muscovites, and when they are in Moscow, people call them Khokhols [Ed: Russian pejorative term for Ukrainians].

In 2014, a Russian, Igor Girkin [Also known as Igor Ivanovich Strelkov - Ed.], started the war (as the military commander of the Donetsk People's Republic, author's note), and later that year Russian troops invaded. But certainly, a lot of locals, for various reasons, decided to join the fight against the Ukrainian army.

At that time the war had a completely different effect on me. It killed any nationalism in me. But in 2022 we faced an open invasion, including areas like Kyiv, where nobody welcomed the Russian army. An invasion of the south, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions, where most

people want to return to Ukraine. In that sense, it's a different kind of war now. It's all much simpler.

Do you feel the influence of this "double identity" directly among your fellow combatants?

Opinions differ everywhere, even here in the squad. For example, my current company commander apparently supported Anti-Maidan in the spring of 2014. I have a strained relationship with him, so I infer more from how he argues in conversations with other officers. According to him, the people in eastern Ukraine didn't like Maidan, so they demanded federalization, but the government was unwilling to agree to negotiations. However, since Girkin's group [separatists backed by Russian soldiers — author's note] seized the town of Slovyansk in 2014, he says it has been a Russian intelligence operation. He also dislikes language activists who want us all to switch to Ukrainian. Most of my unit is from the eastern regions and from what I hear they do not like nationalists. Some of my acquaintances also served in units with members of the former riot police Berkut, who defended the Yanukovich regime during the Maidan — they haven't changed their views on the Maidan. Nevertheless, they are defending Ukraine against Russian aggression.

What military position do you hold?

During the first two years of the full-scale invasion, I served primarily as a signalman. In practice, it was quite a varied job - sometimes behind a computer, sometimes setting up radios and laying communication cables. Most often, as signalmen, we stayed in a trench several kilometres away from the front line. We provide a backup channel of communication for the guys on the front line. If, for example, the general channel of communication goes down or the signal doesn't reach them, we are there to provide a backup.

Recently my job has changed, I'm serving in a reconnaissance battalion, but what exactly I do I'd rather not say publicly.

In the Czech left-wing milieu, solidarity with civilians and refugees is strong, but there is little sympathy for armed resistance, or understanding why Ukrainians voluntarily join the army. There are also demands to stop the supply of weapons. What do you think about all this?

When you feel the invasion first hand, it changes you. As one of our editors said, it is much easier to prioritise at such critical moments. There are a lot of things that are important to you in everyday life. But when your own life is at stake, that becomes the main thing and everything else is secondary. It clears the mind a little.

In the first days of the invasion, I understood that the future of the left movement in Ukraine depended on whether we actively participate in the war or not. We are all largely judged by our actions at such critical moments. We - the left - are already not very influential in this country and if we had not gone to fight, everything would have fallen apart. The left would have ceased to exist as any kind of entity in Ukraine. For some reasons, I was and still am one of the most visible representatives of the left movement now serving in the armed forces. And so, I have a responsibility not only for myself but for others. It was also easier for me, I am not married, I don't even have children.

I don't like to answer journalist questions about why I decided to join the army. To put it mildly, I wasn't sure if I would make a good soldier. And that's one of the reasons I didn't prepare for it. I always thought I'd be more useful in other ways, like writing articles. Honestly, I'm still not much of a soldier (laughs). But I'm gradually learning and then we'll see. I still have at least a whole year ahead of me.

Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian aggression, you have written two influential articles, "[A Letter to the Western Left from Kyiv](#)" and "[I'm a Ukrainian Socialist. Here's why I resist the Russian invasion](#)". which have been translated into several languages. Is it possible to continue writing under conditions of war?

Since the beginning of the invasion, I was only able to write in a concentrated way in the first few months when I had the strength to do so. There was more time. My adrenaline was completely out of control during those first few months. I've never found it so easy to write in my life. I usually torture myself in formulating every sentence, but at that time I sat down and wrote an article in half a day. Not anymore. I don't have the energy or the confidence. I'm more critical now, and I turn things round in my head.

You mentioned in one [interview](#) that it is not certain what will happen to the pro-Russian population of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Crimea once these territories are liberated. What will be the relationship with this part of society? What will happen?

We already have liberated areas, that is, we have a practice that we can analyse. For example, a friend of mine, a journalist and former left-wing activist who fled Crimea in 2014 to Ukraine, is now dealing with issues of collaboration in Lyman. People there are often tried unjustly. There are, of course, cases of those who actively participated in the repression, and they certainly need to be condemned. However, there are also cases where Ukraine is clearly unjustly judging, for example, an electrician from the technical services who maintained the living conditions of ordinary people in Lyman during the occupation.

There is a large grey area where it is not so clear-cut. The term 'rule of law' does not quite apply to Ukraine, given how many problems there are with the judiciary here. Despite all this, the level of repression and respect for human rights in the Russian-occupied territories and in the rest of Ukraine are incomparable.

The narrative in the Ukrainian mainstream about the eastern regions is also somewhat schizophrenic when it comes to the local population. On the one hand, people see them as "ours", on the other hand, they see them all as "separatists". There is no consistent narrative about what happened there in 2014. Moreover, if

you go beyond a certain accepted discourse, when describing those events, you are considered a separatist. So, in that respect, I really don't like the way this is all working out in Ukraine.

You have written that the Zelenskyy government is implementing neo-liberal policies during the war. At the same time, you are of the opinion that Zelenskyy was the most centrist candidate, or at least the candidate furthest from the radical right. We would be interested to know how this has changed in the last two years. How does the electorate perceive this? Are there any changes on that level?

Yes, there are changes. At the time I meant that in terms of nationalism, Zelenskyy is the most moderate among those politicians who have a chance of becoming president of Ukraine. There have been no changes in this so far. However, the general consensus has moved towards stronger nationalism. And Zelenskyy has moved in that direction as well. One can also find politicians who are more open [than Zelenskyy - Ed.] towards the Russian-speaking population, but they have no chance of winning a presidential election. It also seems to me that some on the Western left don't understand that an open stance on language issues does not mean a generally progressive agenda. From my point of view, this is often just a strategy of populists to win over those who formerly voted for the pro-Russian parties.

Zelenskyy spent the first year and a half of his mandate trying to achieve peace in the Donbas, and Poroshenko's minions still blame him for that. In the early months of the invasion, Zelenskyy again addressed the Russian audience in his speeches. Like many Ukrainians, he hoped that people in the Russian Federation would eventually revolt. At some point he gave up and began to support the demand that Russians should not be issued visas and banned from entering Europe.

In the autumn of 2022, Putin declared a mobilization and Zelenskyy again spoke to the Russians in Russian. By that time, the Ukrainian mainstream

had shifted to the point that talking to Russians in Russian like that was no longer seen as appropriate. So, we can see at such moments that Zelenskyy's politics are still more inclusive than the Ukrainian political mainstream. So, yes, we are lucky that things have turned out this way.

But this doesn't change the fact that Zelenskyy acts like an asshole on many issues. Most recently, for example, in the way he has approached the Palestine question. Also, how he responds to criticism, how he competes with political rivals and how he concentrates media power. He and his closest associates are showbiz people, and they take a very professional-technical approach to capturing the mood of the public. For example, in the first days of the Russian invasion, they combined the television news of all channels into a common telethon. At that time, it was appropriate to the situation; no one could provide such coverage of current events alone. That arrangement should have been abolished long ago because it limits freedom of speech. But it has not been abolished. They are assholes and idiots. We could make a long list of their totally inadequate policies.

What about the participation of the left in the Maidan? You weren't part of the left-wing movement then. Could you describe the context at the time?

I have a contradictory relationship with that period. I was at the Maidan, but I don't like the pathos around it. I was an activist before the Maidan. A few months earlier, we had tried to organize a protest about education. We handed out leaflets on campus, but people were very passive. But as soon as Maidan started, the same people who a few months back were saying that there was no point to protest, or something similarly cynical, all of a sudden, they got passionate about the cause and made such revolutionary speeches that I just stared at them (Laughter). I didn't realise back then that people change suddenly in the case of big uprisings.

Maidan is a story about resistance to the state and the repressive apparatus, and about solidarity. But

when the protest moved into a violent phase, participation in that violence changed people, which made me quite uncomfortable. I'm from Luhansk, so from the first day I was following what was happening over there. That was one of the reasons why I experienced Maidan differently from my classmates and friends from Kyiv. From the beginning I was worried that it would all turn into something nasty in the Donbas. Unfortunately, that is what happened.

I became a leftist in the middle of all this, in 2014, when the Western left did not show itself in the best light. And in fact, the Ukrainian left was in decay because of the same problems that we now blame on the West.

The reaction of the Western left is generally better now than in 2014, not least because it is now clear who the aggressor is. Even so, in the early days of the invasion, I felt it was necessary to provide some help from here to explain what and how, so that we could put an end to the misguided reactions right away. I thought, in my exaggerated way, that the people of the West would wake up. Now I see how naive I was and how I underestimated the scale of the problem. I had already had the experience of 2014, enough to not be too surprised by the reaction of the Western left. But we also have younger members who came into the left movement in the years immediately before the invasion, and for some of them it was a shock.

In one of your [articles](#), you addressed the right to self-determination and criticism of the arguments that the invasion of Ukraine is a mere proxy conflict. In your view, part of the radical left even takes a more "imperialist" position on this issue than, for example, US officials. How does this manifest itself and where do you think it has its roots?

Part of the Western left has bought into prejudices against Ukraine, uncritical perceptions of Russia, and so on. What do many anti-war leftists actually want, besides a halt to arms shipments? They want the US and Russia to make a deal without considering the views of those who

live here. Such solutions have nothing to do with leftist values. Such an approach implies a certain acceptance of neo-realism in international relations.

There is no left consensus about how to approach such issues. The only consensus is probably on the right to self-determination of peoples, but in the case of Ukraine, this has suddenly been forgotten by a section of the left. When a situation becomes critical, some otherwise reasonable people suddenly write complete bullshit.

In this particular case, the United States is basically saying that Ukraine can decide when and under what conditions it will end its resistance. However, in the case of many other armed conflicts around the world, the US takes a very different position regarding support for the right to self-determination. At least in the countries of the global South. Like now, when the western left supports Palestine and the USA supports Israel.

We Ukrainians have also published a [letter of solidarity with the Palestinians](#). But the Western left has various approaches to supporting Palestine. It shocks me when some, often the same Western leftists who have shouted the loudest about the Ukrainian far right over the last year and a half, now uncritically support Hamas. So what the hell is it all about? I can no longer take any of their statements about the hypocrisy of the Western governments seriously.

It seems to me that there is a certain moralising in that position?

Yes. This is despite the fact that there has been a lot of feminist criticism in recent decades that rightly condemns the discrediting of women as emotional and non-objective beings. In the case of the war, they project this "emotionality" onto us Ukrainians. Although there is nothing wrong with emotion. The opposite of emotionality is not rationality, but indifference. And then it comes to hard decisions and the left somehow forgets everything.

The main problem seems obvious to me, and that is the confusion of anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism. All

conflicts are seen in terms of opposition to the United States.

Another thing that is still surprising to me is the confusion between the Russian Federation and the Soviet Union. We can discuss the Soviet Union and what the proper assessment of it should be. But Putin's Russia is in no sense the Soviet Union. Today, it is a completely reactionary state. One cannot help but notice how many leftist writers slip into their texts comments and arguments revealing that they still see Russia as the Soviet Union. This is even though they rationally acknowledge that Putin's regime is reactionary, conservative, neoliberal, and so on. And then, boom, suddenly they blurt out something to the effect that the United States' support for Ukraine is some sort of revenge against Russia for the Bolshevik Revolution. Well, what bullshit! (laughter).

What advice would you give to the Western left?

A significant part of the left has taken an absolutely inadequate position. Those who devote their time to arguing in support of Ukraine are, after all, doing the right thing. The left is in crisis everywhere. It's just that in some places it's completely screwed up, like here, and in some places, like in the West, things are not as bad. If I were to give some general advice, I would recommend paying less attention to which abstract position is correct, and focusing more on practical action to help us climb out of the hole we are in.

Even in our own organization [Social Movement - Ed.] until 2022, we took different positions on the war in the Donbas. Sometimes it was difficult to reconcile these sensibilities. In order not to escalate the situation, we often censored ourselves. One of my arguments is, let's not argue about things that we cannot influence. Left-wingers are often condescending, they consider themselves to be the only reasonable and critical ones. Yet, from the inside, you can see how much of this is learned boilerplate. For example, how some leftists articulate their position and strategy in debates. Instead of analysing specific conditions, they often just repeat

examples taken from a completely different context and time, which do not fit the situation at all. We need to move away from these templates. Marxism is not dogma, but for some reason too many Marxists in practice reduce Marxism to a mere repetition of established dogmas. “No war except class war” and so on.

One telling situation occurred when the German delegation of *Die Linke* from the Bundestag arrived last spring. Until then, their position on the supply of arms had been completely negative. When they left, the chairman of the group said that they had reconsidered some of their positions after their experience in Kyiv. For example, that the Ukrainians clearly need missile defence. The same missile defence that they had refused to supply until then, was actually protecting them in Kyiv! And so, more than a year after the invasion, they realized how necessary it was. It took them a long time to come to this understanding, and there is still a lot they need to understand (laughter). But this is at least the basic minimum.

Is there anything you would like to say to the Czech left, for example in relation to the extreme pacifism you mentioned?

The Czech left has the historical experience of the suppression of the Prague Spring, so I don't understand why they don't find more understanding for our defiance. Perhaps it is because of an over-dependence on Western leftist theory. Frankly, it was exactly the same in our country and in some aspects it is still the same today. After 1989 the left in Ukraine was very depressing, and we looked all the more to Western authors. At Commons review, we certainly do translations. But at a certain level we understand and feels that we need a kind of decolonization of ourselves. February 24, 2022, the day of the Russian invasion, also became a moment of intellectual emancipation for us. It is necessary to be more critical of what Western authors write. We have learned a lot from them, and openly admit it, but we have a somewhat different context. We must not be afraid to look at it from a local perspective. And this includes developing a local analysis of the ideas of Western left-wing authors.

In the local leftist environment, we have also, to our detriment, many times just repeated the views of the Western left. The two scourges of contemporary left politics are historical reconstruction and the adoption of trends. People read

hundred-year-old authors and proclaim themselves Marxists or feminists according to those classic texts. The world has changed a lot, and people read the classics too literally; even when they don't really fit the current conditions anymore. And secondly, the left can't break its habit of adopting trendy western culture wars or subcultures. In 2016, two leftist activists at an event in Ukraine decided to chant the slogan “Money for education, not for war!” The thing is that they imported this from a completely different context, from Italy, which has been involved in imperialist aggressions. Our case is different: Ukraine is, first and foremost, a victim of the aggression of another state. In short, it was a disaster. The consequences for the local left were simply terrible. We were already in a difficult situation after 2014, and this one action, one slogan, made things much worse. So yes, we have made a lot of mistakes. It's true that some of us also drew the wrong conclusions. We still have a lot to learn. But at the same time, we've learned some things from our bitter experience.

13 April 2024

Translated from the [Czech](#) by Adam Novak for [ESSF](#).

Philippe Poutou to be candidate in Belgium for “Anticapitalistes” list in European elections

16 April 2024, by Gauche anticapitaliste/SAP Antikapitalisten

A sacked auto worker, former presidential candidate for the NPA in France and a city councillor in Bordeaux, Philippe Poutou will be a candidate this time in Belgium with the support of the NPA. “It is to make this simple idea heard that there can be another Europe than the one

imposed on us, a fraternal Europe, a Europe of solidarity between peoples, between workers” he said on Saturday 13 April in Brussels.

“We think that another society is possible, in Belgium and all over the world as well. But in order to achieve

this alternative society, we need to build a balance of power, not only nationally but also internationally. With the support of Philippe Poutou and the NPA, we are mutually reinforcing” said Denis Verstraeten, head of the list and spokesperson for Gauche anticapitaliste.

For Gauche anticapitaliste, which is running for the first time in the elections under the acronym "Anticapitalistes," it is a question of offering a political expression for social and ecological struggles. "We have supported all the emancipation movements that have shaken Belgium in recent years: feminist strikes, environmental actions, mobilizations against police violence, the Delhaize strike, solidarity with the Ukrainian resistance... and, of course, the movement in support of Palestine" said Laure Horlait, feminist activist, candidate and spokesperson for Gauche anticapitaliste.

"We think it's important that anger, struggles and social movements can find a political outlet. Because this other society for which we are fighting, egalitarian, supportive, beautiful and pleasant to live in, will not be built solely through an election. Our list is therefore also a call to fight alongside us for an eco-socialist, feminist, anti-racist, internationalist

and radically democratic alternative" she added.

"The urgency of a new world"

With the slogan "The urgency of a new world," Gauche anticapitaliste wants to put forward a project for an alternative, radically democratic society. Socialization is one of the key demands of its program: that is to say, the requisitioning, under direct control of workers and users, of several key sectors of the economy (energy, banking and insurance, mass distribution, the food industry, housing, health, education, transport). Such a requisition makes it possible to redistribute profits, to plan the necessary transitions (towards carbon-free energy production, towards pesticide-free food, and so on), but above all the reorganization of these sectors around real needs, which can finally be guaranteed, while useless

and harmful but profitable productions for capitalists can be abandoned.

For Philippe Poutou, "it is important that there are organizations like the Gauche Anticapitaliste that can stand to make an anti-capitalist voice heard that says that we are not obliged to suffer, to resign ourselves. It is a fight that we must wage for an anti-capitalist Europe that opposes a capitalist and neoliberal Europe; for an ecological, feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-imperialist Europe; a Europe that fights against policies of closing borders, which defends freedom of movement and the welcoming of all. Finally, it is also to make the idea heard that we must mobilize ourselves, that the people must fight, organize and struggle."

13 April 2024

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

"Tehran found itself backed into a corner by the attack on its consulate."

15 April 2024, by **Gilbert Achcar**

What was Israel seeking by striking the Iranian consulate in Damascus?

The Israeli attack continued the long series of strikes against Iranian objectives in Syria that started some ten years ago, when Iran began to establish itself in that country seizing the opportunity created by the civil war that followed the 2011 popular uprising. However, the Israeli authorities could not ignore that the destruction of the consulate, adjacent to the Iranian embassy, constituted a major escalation, even beyond the identity of the victims that included a high-ranking member of the Islamic revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the ideological armed wing of the Iranian regime, and seven other officers.

It therefore seems to me that this was a deliberate provocation aimed at prompting an Iranian response and setting in motion a spiral that could lead to large-scale action against Iran. There are two main reasons for this, one of which is "trivial" and the other strategic. The trivial reason is that the military headlong rush is in the interest of Benjamin Netanyahu, whose retention of power is conditioned by the state of war, as everyone knows. It is also in the interest of the entire Israeli government, which is facing growing antipathy in Western public opinion. However, a confrontation with Iran, which has a very negative image, is likely to restore Western solidarity with Israel. This also applies to the Biden administration, which has

recently suffered from the deterioration of its Israeli ally's image.

As for the strategic reason, it is obvious: since Donald Trump repudiated in 2018 the nuclear agreement concluded in 2015 with Iran, the latter has considerably accelerated its uranium enrichment activity to the point that it is now estimated that it would take Tehran only a few days to produce at least three nuclear bombs. If we add Iran's remote strike capability, which we saw demonstrated last Saturday, it is easy to understand Israel's fear of losing its regional monopoly on nuclear weapons, and therefore its dissuasive capacity. To be sure, Israel has a considerable number of nuclear warheads, but its territory is much

smaller than that of Iran. It is therefore to be feared that the attack on the consulate was designed as the first salvo of a military escalation leading to an Israeli attack against Iran's nuclear potential.

What can we read in the Iranian response?

We can read a great embarrassment. Tehran found itself backed into a corner by the attack on its consulate. Its deterrent "credibility" has been considerably eroded over the years by repeated promises of revenge that were never kept, at least to a significant level, as after the assassination in Iraq, ordered by Trump in January 2020, of the head of the IRGC Al-Quds force, Qasem Soleimani. There has also been the lack of direct intervention against Israel's war in Gaza, contrary to Hamas's urgings. Iran was content to involve its Lebanese and Yemeni allies, within a clear self-limitation in the case of Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Tehran therefore had to act this time so as not to completely lose face. At the same time, Iranian leaders are aware of the aim of the Israeli provocation and fear that an attack on their soil might happen before they have achieved a balance of terror by acquiring nuclear weapons. This is

why they opted for a seemingly massive attack, which they knew would not have much impact. To launch an attack on a state equipped with the best air defence in the world, and aided by powerful allies, primarily the United States, by means of drones and cruise missiles from 1,500 kilometres away, for a journey lasting several hours, is to expect that very little will reach destination. Only a few ballistic missiles were able to slip through the Israeli protection net.

Iranian sources were quick to declare the matter closed as far as Iran is concerned. This is very naïve indeed. Had they attacked an Israeli diplomatic representation in the United Arab Emirates or Bahrain, for example, no one could have seriously blamed them. But by launching hundreds of devices directly on Israeli territory, they walked into the trap, thus legitimizing a direct Israeli attack on their own territory. It is not very difficult to understand that they have demonstrated at the same time the threat they represent for Israel, thus strengthening the Israeli argument for a pre-emptive destruction of their own potential, and their strategic weakness in the face of an opponent much better equipped than them. In my opinion, this is an error which could prove to be as monumental as that which Hamas committed by launching the

operation of October 7, 2023.

What are the consequences for the war in Gaza and the negotiations?

The negotiations were already deadlocked before all this. Now, the prospects of an agreement have become very slim, especially since Western pressure on Israel will very likely decrease in intensity, and since uncertainty hovers over the fate of the hostages. Israel has already destroyed most of Gaza, transforming it into a firing range and field for occasional intervention of its armed forces. There remains Rafah, which Israel is preparing to invade after having displaced the civilian population. This requires much less effort than the offensive carried out until last January. Furthermore, the confrontation with Iran does not require additional ground mobilization, except in the north to ward off a possible Hezbollah offensive. As for the Israeli potential for remote strike, it remains intact since the Biden administration sees to it that it is kept at high level through continuous deliveries of weapons, in addition to its direct contribution to the Israeli war drive.

Interview conducted by Pierre Barbancey

Source: Gilbert Achcar [blog](#).

Republican Attacks on Abortion Help Biden Campaign, But Will that be Enough Given Reaction to His Position on Israel?

14 April 2024, by Dan La Botz

The Supreme Court of Arizona, made up of seven Republican appointees, ruled on April 9 that the state's 1864 law banning all abortions except those carried out to save the life of the mother was once again state law. The law was passed before Arizona became a state and before women won the right to vote there, both of which

occurred in 1912. The 1864 law, which has no provisions for abortion in cases of rape or incest, had been in abeyance until the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision providing federal protection for abortion was overturned in June of 2022.

Arizona is a crucial swing state. Biden only won Arizona by about 10,000 votes over Trump, a 0.3% margin, the first time a Democratic presidential nominee carried Arizona since Bill Clinton in 1996, and only the second time since Harry S. Truman's 1948 victory. Consequently, the Arizona Supreme Court's decision horrified

Republican politicians and, despite its reactionary implications, thrilled Democrats, as both parties recognize it will help Biden and the Democrats in the upcoming presidential election. As Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris are saying in their TV ads, "Trump did this."

The Arizona decision follows a ruling earlier this month by Florida's Supreme Court that upheld a ban on abortions after six weeks of pregnancy, a law that had been passed by the Republican legislature and signed by Republican Governor Ron DeSantis. Since most women don't even know they are pregnant at six weeks, it is effectively a total ban on abortions. And in Georgia, the Supreme Court of that state virtually outlawed invitro fertilization, making it more difficult for women who wanted to become pregnant through IVF to do so. All of this makes it

absolutely clear that the Republicans are a danger to women's rights.

The Republican politicians attack on women's reproductive rights, driven by the party's white Evangelical Christian base, has led to a strong political reaction by Democrats, independent voters, and even some Republicans. In the last three years in seven politically diverse states—Kansas, Vermont, Montana, Michigan, Kentucky, California, and Ohio—voters have either voted to enshrine abortion rights in state law or have rejected attempts to penalize it. And in the 2023 elections, Democrats won gubernatorial or legislative elections where they were seen as the defenders of women's abortion rights. The attack on abortion most analysts believe will drive more women, young people, and suburban voters to the polls to vote for Biden

and the Democrats in November.

At the same time, however, Biden's continued support for Israel in its genocidal war on Palestinians—at least 32,000 dead, including 13,800 children—may cost him the state of Michigan, another crucial swing state. Trump was victorious in Michigan in 2016. Biden won Michigan in 2020 by 154,000 votes. But the state has some 300,000 Muslim or Arab voters. It now appears likely that Biden has lost the support of tens of thousands of Arab and Muslim voters in Michigan, as well as other Arab, young, and Black voters who may either sit out the election or vote for a third party. The contradiction between the Democrat's progressive abortion policy and its reactionary imperialist foreign policy may lead to Biden's defeat.

14 April 2024

European elections: a radical, unitary and democratic left for a real alternative

13 April 2024, by **Collective**

The European elections will take place in a new context on a continental scale, marked by the war in Ukraine and its multiple consequences and the prospect of several enlargements in the eastern part of Europe. These elections must be an opportunity to affirm and strengthen, in France and in Europe, a radical left anchored in social, feminist, anti-racist and ecological struggles, the popular neighbourhoods, capable of stopping the rise of the extreme right and promoting to the greatest number the perspective of a global alternative to the capitalist, ecocidal, patriarchal, racist, imperialist and ableist system.

Social movements

lead the way

Today, in demonstrations and committees in support of the Palestinian people against the genocidal war waged by the state of Israel, tens of thousands of people, including a large number of young people from popular neighbourhoods, are mobilizing for concrete and political solidarity, becoming politicized by denouncing the responsibilities and complicities of the French government.

Similarly, the mobilizations in support of the resistance of the Ukrainian people against the imperialist war waged by the Russian state, solidarity with the peoples of the Sahel who denounce *Françafrique* and the military interference of the French state, but also with the peoples of the

confetti of empire confronted with French colonial domination, in Kanaky or the Antilles, in particular, are rebuilding a concrete internationalism, in support of popular resistance against all imperialisms. The feminist strike of 8 March 8 was once again this year an opportunity to build a radical, inclusive and decolonial feminism, which tackles patriarchy head-on and promotes all emancipations, inscribed in a feminist and LGBTQI+ movement that today constitutes the broadest and most dynamic of international struggles.

Similarly, the mobilization against the Darmanin law - revealing the structural racism of the French state - conducted by a unitary movement led by those most concerned, and in particular undocumented migrants and other migrants, has allowed the affirmation of a political anti-racism

that promotes all forms of equality and is today the first bulwark against the fascist threat. The farmers' movement has brought to the fore the need for a break with the Common Agricultural Policy and free trade agreements and the confrontation of ideas between its capitalist, reactionary components, sometimes close to the far right (FNSEA, Coordination Rurale and so on) and our anti-capitalist and ecological farming comrades of the Confédération Paysanne. One year after the major mobilizations of spring 2023 in the face of the neoliberal counter-reform of pensions and against the mega-basins in Sainte-Soline, we have not forgotten the encounters, experiences, and solidarity made possible by these struggles, both radical and unitary, which give us all a political direction.

All these struggles in which we participate in France, these social movements and citizen mobilizations, are not only a defensive reaction to the global crisis of the system that feeds the rise of the far right, but they are also where, on the offensive, new activist practices are invented, and a political alternative is emerging.

On a European scale, these struggles and solidarities are not isolated: in other countries there are social, feminist, ecological and anti-racist mobilizations and solidarity with Ukraine and Palestine.

The political left is not up to the task

However, the dynamism, radicalism and diversity of all these movements is not reflected in the electoral process. In the run-up to the European elections, the political left is once again divided and the issues at stake are not clear. Within the ex-NUPES forces, some are trying to detach themselves from the combative dynamic represented by this alliance in 2022, to shift the political cursor to the right to preserve the old institutional left. The others do not want to take on the unavoidable objective of building an ecological, feminist and social alternative, radical and unitary, without concession to the system, and remain closed to an

alliance with anti-capitalist forces.

As for democratic, feminist and egalitarian demands, especially supported by the youngest activists, they continue to be neglected, sometimes despised, further widening the gap with the political culture of self-organization of recent social movements and the aspirations of activists. For things to change, we can only rely on the ability to organize in order to influence the balance of power, to shake up hierarchies and habits, to impose a radical, unitary and popular agenda in the political field.

What can we do? Putting forward clear policy proposals...

The campaign for the European elections must be a moment of political clarification on the left, to put an end to the mistakes and renunciations that have weakened our social camp in recent years.

Our left opposes all imperialisms and colonialisms, without ambiguity or double standards. Support for the resistance of all peoples, for their right to self-determination and for a just and lasting (and therefore decolonial) peace is therefore not an abstract pacifism: we support the right to self-determination everywhere in Europe and in the world, in Palestine, Ukraine, the Sahel and elsewhere, as well as aid to peoples in resistance at the same time as opposition to states which are terrorist (bombing civilian populations) and militarist.

This requires a denunciation of the agreement between the EU and Israel, an uncompromising denunciation of the French state, which politically and through arms sales supports Israel's genocidal war and is the third largest arms exporter in the world, notably to Saudi Arabia (which it also supports militarily in its war against Yemen). The right of peoples to self-determination is also inseparable from the defence of migrants' rights and

the dignified and unconditional welcome of all migrants and refugees, without distinction, against the policies of Fortress Europe, for the freedom of movement and settlement of all.

Our left aspires to be anti-racist and anti-fascist in deeds, not just in words. To fight the far right, it is not effective either to proclaim abstract values or to act as if the neo-fascist vote were a mere expression of anger. We must tackle the problem head-on and, on the ground as well as in the institutions, show that solidarity, respect for diversity and all equality, can and must prevail in the face of hatred and identity-based withdrawal. It is also necessary that the inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods, migrants, and all those who are the first to be affected by racism, stigmatization and exploitation, have equal rights in the areas of life (work, housing, culture, movement and settlement, and so on), and their full place in political institutions, from the municipal councils to the European Parliament.

Our left criticises the capitalist logic of the European and free trade treaties that destroy social rights and organise competition between peoples. At EU level, it opposes the rejection of social and fiscal dumping, the social demands of the working world: higher wages, the extension of social protection and public services, the massive reduction of working hours against unemployment and precariousness, the intransigent defence of pensions and the return in France of retirement at 60. It promotes self-management in the workplace, economic democracy and democratic planning of the ecological bifurcation. To this end, among the necessary means, we put forward in particular the socialization of the big energy companies, arms production and banks, the creation of new political rights for workers to defend their health and that of users, to put an end to extractivism and productivism, to decide on the ends and means of their activities, a massive increase in taxes on large companies and large fortunes, the end of exemptions from social security contributions for companies - which impoverish solidarity funds

(retirement, sickness, unemployment and so on) - as well as the cancellation of illegitimate debts.

Our left resolutely campaigns for real equality between women and men at work and in society, for a guaranteed right to contraception and abortion everywhere in Europe, against discrimination against women and LGBT+.

Our left is working for the ecological and self-managing conversion of the European economy: access to healthy food accessible to all, free and developed public transport, the creation of adequate and affordable housing for as many people as possible, the resolute fight against pollution and pesticides, the protection of common goods such as water.

To convince broadly, we have to be consistent: we have to radically criticise the human, social and ecological damage of the CAP policy, the Dublin II regulation and the violence of Frontex (the agency for the repression of migrants at the EU's borders), the neoliberal budgetary rules of the euro zone, the anti-democratic nature of the European treaties and so on. But this cannot be done in the name of defending the interests of French capitalism as well as the capitalism of any other EU member state: in each country, the capitalists and the political parties at their service have an interest in social breakdown, economic protectionism and productivism.

In the context of these European elections, in the face of Ukraine and Moldova's applications for membership - to protect themselves from Russia - in addition to those of the Western Balkans, we are expressing an internationalism from below that advocates democratic choices among each of the peoples concerned while expressing our criticism of the EU.

And whatever these choices are, we are building transnational links with progressive forces - political, trade union, anti-racist, feminist, LGBTQ+, environmentalist - in each country to fight together for the protection and extension of equal rights and public

services that must be the basis of a European construction other than that of the neoliberal European Union. Therefore, under no circumstances are we defending a "Fortress Europe" against Ukraine's application for membership devastated by an imperialist war; nor should a "Europe of the rich" be defended against the accession of countries impoverished by the neoliberal destruction that has been at work for decades in the EU's periphery. On the contrary, together with the progressive forces of Ukraine, we must seize the opportunity of that country's application for membership to defend egalitarian social rights and relations of solidarity between peoples in Europe and with the peoples of the rest of the world.

Finally, our left promotes democracy in all areas of social life, supports concrete and systemic alternatives to the capitalism defended by the European institutions. These are international solidarities of struggles that are tracing the way to another Europe: that of convergences between environmental movements against climate-killing projects, between post-#MeToo feminist movements that are organizing around the feminist strike of 8 March, between class-conscious trade unions that are fighting against the same neoliberal counter-reforms. It is a different Europe, for example, exemplified by the former GKN workers in Italy who, following their dismissal, have occupied their factory and are carrying out an ecological conversion project involving in particular the construction of cargo bikes for delivery to workers' cooperatives in other European countries. What needs to be brought to the European Parliament is the Europe of struggles and alternatives, not bureaucrats and lobbies, that of environmental activist Greta Thunberg and not of defenders of neoliberal policies like the current President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.

... and building an ecological and

social, radical and unitary alternative

The social and environmental disasters caused by neoliberal policies in Europe and the threat of cataclysms represented by the far right in France and Europe require us to be both radical and unitary. We must aim at all scales and on all occasions for the alliance of the various forces of the anti-neoliberal left to stand up to the fascists and respond to social and ecological issues, in order to make credible an alternative political path to that pursued by the current European institutions. We must build a new political force, stronger and more popular than what our organizations and struggles represent today, capable of constituting within such an alliance an alternative, revolutionary and radically democratic pole. This is what will guide our choices and actions in the coming period, during the European elections and beyond. We can't do otherwise, we have to build the alternative!

Signatories:

Alexis Cukier (Rejoignons-nous and On construit l'alternative),

Béa Whitaker (Rejoignons-nous and On construit l'alternative),

Bruno Dellasudda (activist in Ensemble! and On construit l'alternative),

Catherine Samary (economist, activist in global justice movement and NPA),

Christiane Vollaire (philosopher),

Christine Poupin (NPA spokesperson),

Daria Saburova (European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine),

Fabien Marcot (Rejoignons-nous and On construit l'alternative),

Florence Ciaravola (activist in Ensemble! and On construit l'alternative),

Florence Henry (CGT Educ'Action),

Michael Lowy (sociologist and ecosocialist activist),

Malika Kara-Laouar (Rejoignons-nous and On construit l'alternative),

Mariano Bona (activist in Ensemble! and On construit l'alternative),

Michelle Garcia (feminist, anti-racist and internationalist activist, Rejoignons-nous),

Mornia Labssi CGT and anti-racist activist),

Noufissa Mikou (active in Palestine solidarity and Ensemble!),

Olivier Besancenot (NPA, former presidential candidate),

Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison (academic),

Paul Guillibert (philosopher and ecologist activist),

Omar Slaouti (neighbourhood activist),

Pauline Salingue (NPA spokesperson),

Philippe Poutou (NPA, former presidential candidate),

Stefanie Prezioso (historian and former Swiss federal assembly deputy),

Thomas Coutrot (economist),

Tony Fraquelli (CGT rail workers)

Tuesday 9 April 2024

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Mediapart**.*

A dynastic dictatorship in Togo

12 April 2024, by **Paul Martial**

The country woke up to a new Constitution passed on the night of 25 March by 89 of the 91 members of the Togolese National Assembly.

Not only was there no debate, even though this is a major change for the country, but this new Constitution, which is awaiting promulgation by the President of the Republic, has still not been published. According to the authorities, it will be published when it becomes effective.

The Constitution is changing...

What we do know is that this new text is based on a parliamentary system, since it is the majority party in the Assembly that will appoint the President of the Council of Ministers. This office will concentrate all the powers, in particular that of representing the country abroad and leading the army. It will not be subject to a term limit, unlike that of the President of the Republic, whose main task will be to inaugurate the chrysanthemums.

Faure Gnassingbé did not immediately

promulgate this new Constitution, which was supposed to inaugurate Togo's 5th Republic. He is calling for a new reading in the National Assembly to incorporate improvements to the text from various sectors of society.

... but the régime remains in place

This is one way of responding to the outcry over both the form and the substance of this reform. Many people, not just in the opposition, pointed out that such a major change could not be made without an in-depth debate throughout the country. All the more so as the term of office of the MPs expires at the end of December 2023. What's more, the conditions under which they were elected were highly dubious, which was why the opposition boycotted the election at the time.

There is little doubt as to the purpose of this manoeuvre. Faure Gnassingbé's aim is to perpetuate his power. In 2005, he succeeded his father Eyadema, who ruled the country for 38 years. Since then, he has already

amended the Constitution to allow him to run for a fourth term as President of the Republic, and from now on he will be able to remain in power as President of the Council of Ministers.

Human rights remain at half-mast

Of course, the caciques of power are trying to justify this reform. It would pave the way for more democracy. But at the same time, the press conference held by the opposition on this subject has been banned. As for the press, it is still in the hot seat. Apollinaire Mewenemesse, the 71-year-old editor of the newspaper La Dépêche, was recently imprisoned. Dozens of political prisoners have been languishing in jail for years without trial. It is perhaps no coincidence that the new Constitution has been stripped of a third of its articles relating mainly to human rights... relegated to the appendices.

11 April 2024

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

“Germany Canceled Me for Supporting Palestine”

11 April 2024, by **Nancy Fraser**

Renowned philosopher Nancy Fraser was set to grace the Albertus Magnus professorship at the University of Cologne this May. But at the end of last week, she was abruptly disinvited by the university's rector, Joybrato Mukherjee, for signing a pro-Palestinian solidarity letter last fall.

Hanno Hauenstein: The University of Cologne disinvited you from the Albertus Magnus professorship. What was it supposed to involve?

Nancy Fraser: The professorship involved a visit of several days and public lectures under the auspices of a program supposed to be devoted to open exchange. I decided to give lectures from my current book project on the three faces of labor in capitalist society, a topic that had nothing directly to do with Israel or Palestine. I had gone ahead and worked hard to write these lectures. I also bought an expensive plane ticket, by the way.

Hanno Hauenstein: Can you walk me through how the cancellation unfolded?

Nancy Fraser: A few days ago, I received an email from a professor in Cologne, Andreas Speer, who organizes these events. He told me how he'd just heard from the university rector, who was concerned about the fact that I'd signed the "Philosophy for Palestine" statement back in November and wanted me to clarify my position. I thought, what a nerve! I mean, what's it his business what my views are about the Middle East? I'm a free agent, I'm able to sign whatever I want.

On the other hand, I didn't want to be overly confrontational. So, I wrote back and said, well, of course, there are many different views about Palestine and Israel, and there's a lot of pain on all sides, including pain I

experienced myself as a Jew. But there's one thing on which there can be no disagreement. I quoted a line from a statement the university rector had posted on the university's website, on the importance of open and respectful discussion. So, I told Mr. Speer, please assure the rector that he can absolutely count on me when it comes to an open and respectful discussion.

I thought that might put an end to the matter. But in fact, just one or two days later, I received a direct email from the rector saying that he had no choice but to withdraw the invitation. It's written explicitly, in black and white, that because I signed this letter, and didn't disavow it in our subsequent communication, I am canceled.

Hanno Hauenstein: What was the main point of contention? The use of the wording apartheid and genocide? Or the boycott of Israeli institutions, which the letter invites readers to take part in?

Nancy Fraser: I really don't know because I have not received any further explanation. The rector did offer me a telephone or video chat at which he would further explain his views. I haven't replied to that. This is a public affair. I think we all need to go on the record. So, it'll be up to him to clarify that. There's also a statement on the university's website now. To me, most of this seems like smokescreen. It is a clear violation of the university's own stated policy as well as of the very values they invoke with the name Albertus Magnus.

Those values are precisely values of academic freedom, freedom of opinion, freedom of speech, and open discussion. Whatever complicated rationalizations are being given as to

why this proceeding allegedly doesn't violate those values ring hollow to me. This also sends a very strong signal to all people in the university and scholars around the world: if you dare, say, express certain views on certain political subjects, you will not be welcome here [in Germany]. It has a chilling effect on people's freedom of political speech.

Hanno Hauenstein: When you're saying this is a violation of the university's policies, do you anticipate taking legal action?

Nancy Fraser: I thought about it. It's not my priority. I'm also not ruling it out. But first and foremost, I want to convince people that this is a truly outrageous instance of something many people would argue is a much broader trend in Germany today. People in positions of power at German universities and art institutions and those in the German federal government who may be urging them on in this respect should think twice. They are in clear violation of widely held academic — and, frankly, constitutional — norms about political freedom and freedom of speech. This will do considerable harm to the German academy.

Hanno Hauenstein: Given only the most recent history of public outrage and cancellations in Germany, you seem to be in somewhat good company. There were the cases of Masha Gessen, Ghassan Hage, Judith Butler, and several others. Many of them are, like you yourself, Jewish. Are you worried about this?

Nancy Fraser: Not for myself. I'm sitting in New York and have a huge amount of support, including an extremely strong letter by the president of my own university at the

New School, Donna Shalala, which opens with the great line, “Albertus Magnus would have been appalled!”

She notes that it’s especially concerning for a German institution to cancel a faculty member of the New School, which not only rescued German scholars fleeing fascism as individuals, but also created a space for continuing the body of critical theory that had been wiped out in Germany. The New School has contributed to that body of thought as well as I did personally. So, this is an insult to the New School, as well as to me. But more importantly, it’s a violation of the norms of academic freedom.

Hanno Hauenstein: Do you believe this is a trend?

Nancy Fraser: Yes, and I am very concerned. I think of this as a fever that’s gripping Germany and to a lesser extent, Austria. It is a very harmful thing. I also think that it’s so important that Germans understand something of the complexity and breadth of Judaism, its history, its perspective. They are sort of signing on with this idea of an unconditional pledge of allegiance to Israel, that that’s the German responsibility — unqualified support for the state of Israel.

Given what Israel is currently up to, this is a betrayal of what I would call the most important and weighty aspects of Judaism as a history, a perspective, and a body of thought. I’m talking about the Judaism of Maimonides and of [Baruch] Spinoza, of Sigmund Freud, Heinrich Heine, and Ernst Bloch.

Hanno Hauenstein: Can you specify what you mean by that?

Nancy Fraser: This [other] tradition of Judaism is reducing Judaism to not just nationalism, but an ultranationalism of the sort that’s trampling and basically destroying the Gaza Strip. By the way, I just signed another letter! I’m not repentant. A letter against Israeli “scholasticide,” meaning the destruction of schools and universities in Gaza.

Over a hundred professors have been

killed there. Nine university presidents have been killed. The names of the people that I mentioned to you earlier are just rattled off the top, there are so many more. Just think of Albert Einstein, who was offered the presidency of the state of Israel and refused. These are people whose very Jewishness took them to defend universal rights, not a narrow tribal identity.

Hanno Hauenstein: Some of your critics argued that you haven’t actually been canceled, but simply have been refused a tribute of sorts.

Nancy Fraser: There are Germans who are tempted to hem and haw over this and say it was just an honorary prize. Many Germans, even journalists, have been intimidated into accepting a very distortedly narrow view of what academic freedom actually means. The argument that you could simply take away something because it’s just a prize and not genuinely academic is baloney.

The thing is, it’s a visiting professorship, an academic appointment. Along with all other past holders of this chair, I was selected for my academic work. The idea that what I do otherwise is cause for a disinvitation already says that academic autonomy is being violated. There’s no question about that. I do want to say to these people that you do, indeed, have a responsibility to think deeply about Jews. It’s just that you’re thinking in the wrong way. There’s another way to think about this.

Hanno Hauenstein: Critics like Masha Gessen have argued that Germany’s specific interpretation of “Staatsräson” (raison d’etat) toward Israel in recent years has helped right-wing extremists such as the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). Would you agree?

Nancy Fraser: I can’t comment specifically on the AfD. But I can tell you that in the United States, the Christian evangelical right has its own version of “philosemitic McCarthyism,” to use Susan Neiman’s phrase. And they have a theological rationale that is in and of itself deeply

antisemitic. But the most worrisome thing about Germany to me is not the AfD.

Hanno Hauenstein: What is?

Nancy Fraser: The sort of right-thinking centrism, where the real weight of public opinion lies. It’s so easily swayed by what to me are transparently bogus arguments. Like the one argument that in disinviting me allegedly nobody is violating academic freedom, but simply choose not to honor a person who holds the views they think I hold.

Hanno Hauenstein: You said that there is no deeper connection between the “Philosophy for Palestine” and the lecture series you were supposed to give in Cologne. But would you say there isn’t a connection between the stance you took in the letter and your academic writing?

Nancy Fraser: I wear more than one hat. I do theoretical work. Occasionally I sign letters as a citizen. I don’t feel these must be directly connected. I do, though, occasionally write in a more agitational or propagandistic mode. The best example would be the Feminism for the 99% which I coauthored with Cinzia Arruzza and Tithi Bhattacharya. We took ideas each of us had been developing in her own work and sort of melded them. It’s a manifesto for how to chart a different path for feminist activism that was understood of interest of the 99 percent, of women, and of men and children — as opposed to a certain kind of corporate neoliberal feminism. So, I have tried to popularize my academic ideas, but I’ve never written on the Middle East. I don’t have great expertise, but I am a thinking, reading citizen. And as a Jew, I do feel my special responsibility for the “not in our name” kind of sentiment.

Hanno Hauenstein: Because what is done in Gaza is, to a degree, done in the name of the Jewish people?

Nancy Fraser: Exactly. There’s also no question that there is an instrumentalization, or even a weaponization, of the accusation of

antisemitism that is being applied so wrongly to people who feel that in condemning the current course of the Israeli government, we are arguing for a course correction to improve the situation of Palestinians, as well as of Jewish people everywhere.

Hanno Hauenstein: That sounds like an honorable thing to say. In Germany, however, the Bundestag (parliament) passed a resolution declaring boycotts of Israeli institutions an instance of antisemitism. Many in Germany associate such boycotts with images of historical boycotts against German Jews back in the 1930s.

Nancy Fraser: That is an interesting association. After all, there was no Jewish state back then that was engaging in illegitimate militaristic carnage. A much better parallel would be South Africa, where there was a strong academic boycott, a sports boycott, and a cultural boycott, which had some impact along with the economic boycott in leading to put an end apartheid. By the way, the Germans didn't just boycott Jews. They expelled them, rounded them up, sent them to camps and killed them. None of that is going on here.

Hanno Hauenstein: Are you planning to repeat your Cologne lecture series elsewhere?

Nancy Fraser: I will be doing it elsewhere! It is a new expanded and revised version of some lectures I gave in Berlin two years ago. I now have lots of new material, which I was eager to present. My university, the New School, is organizing an event. It's also been suggested that I lecture elsewhere in Germany under the label: "This is what they didn't want you to hear in Cologne."

Hanno Hauenstein: Some German professors have expressed solidarity with you. Do you believe

people in Germany might be changing their mind on these issues?

Nancy Fraser: I'm not close enough to the ground to have an informed view on that. But I do have the feeling that the fever will break. Whether my case is the precipitating event, or the next case, or the one after that, I'm not in a position to say. There is some growing unease about this. At least people in New York see it this way.

Hanno Hauenstein: Your colleagues look at Germany and ask themselves: What's going on?

Nancy Fraser: Among academics and people in the arts, for sure. Also in journalism, since the Gessen case was so widely reported. And the belated attempt now to strip Butler of the Adorno Prize — all this is very much discussed. At least in the arts, in academia, and in journalism, people are very disturbed, appalled, also outraged. There have been plenty of Palestinians and ethnic Arabs who have been victimized by this, but also prominent Jews. This incites this feeling of, well, who are you to tell us what it means to support the Jewish people?

Hanno Hauenstein: Do you see yourself as a victim of what you described as philosemitic antisemitism earlier?

Nancy Fraser: I suppose so. I'm canceled in the name of the special German responsibility for the Holocaust. I assume that responsibility should entail responsibility to Jews. But of course, it gets narrowed down to the state policies of whatever government happens to be ruling in Israel. For us in the United States, McCarthyism is a powerful word. It's a way of shutting people down under the pretext that you're allegedly for the Jews.

Hanno Hauenstein: Where do you

think this comes from?

Nancy Fraser: It's simply become normalized. People in Germany have come to accept a narrow view of what academic freedom and freedom of speech means and what democratic political freedoms are.

Hanno Hauenstein: The US and Germany have been the two most important suppliers of support and weapons to Israel over the last six months. How does this factor into your view of Germany?

Nancy Fraser: The prime culprit here is the United States. I'm not letting Germany off the hook, but really, if you care about who is funding [Israel's] policies, it's the US. However, for the first time in my life, and I think ever, there is a balanced public discussion on the issue of Palestine. Palestinian voices are in the public sphere. Organizations, including Jewish organizations on the Left that are criticizing Israeli policy are in the public sphere.

[Joe] Biden is under a lot of pressure. He's been talking a tougher talk about conditioning aid and calling for a cease-fire. Whether this will translate into real cutoffs or conditionality of aid, whether Democrats in the Congress will try to force that issue, remains to be seen. But at least our government's open faucet of military aid has become politicized and contested.

I would hope that something like this would develop in Germany as well. That at least it becomes a public issue that you can argue about, without being accused of antisemitism or being canceled.

9 April 2024

Source:

Jacobin-><https://jacobin.com/2024/04/nancy-fraser-germany-palestine-letter>].

Feminist Movements in Pakistan: Challenges

and Struggles

10 April 2024, by **Asma Aamir**

I would like to talk about Pakistan, a country that has not a secular State, like Turkey and others. It is officially the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, run by the federal and provincial governments, following the Constitution of 1973. The Judiciary system is divided into civil courts, criminal courts and the Sharia court, which examine the laws of the country in compliance with the Islamic law and rights.

The Federal Shariat Court is the only authority which holds the constitutional power to prohibit and prevent the enactment of laws which are deemed to be un-Islamic by the parliament of Pakistan. It is predominantly focused on examining new or existing law of Pakistan. If a law violates the Quran, sunnah or hadith, the Shariat Court will prohibit its enactment.

The Constitution of 1973 guarantees, in its article 16, the freedom of assembly; in article 17, the freedom of association; and in article 19, the freedom of speech and expression. All of this should empower every citizen to exercise their fundamental rights, without any discrimination. The absence of these rights is the biggest block for any society to grow. The increasing human rights violations are an open threat to democracy and the work of human rights defenders. The Constitution guarantees these rights, but they are not being exercised in practical life. It is specially violated when it comes to women's rights. There is limited room for freedom of expression, speech, and assembly, specifically, for the women and young girls. Their rights need strict implementation in the country.

During and after the pandemic, the inflation had increased poverty and the multiple socio economic and political challenges with the diverse social fabric of Pakistan. The fast growing population and adverse

impacts on the ethnic and religious minorities result in the increase of the divisions between urban and rural spaces and between big and small cities. All that are contributing factors to the continuous change in the social behaviour of the masses. The pandemic context reduced workforce across all economic sectors and caused the loss of many jobs. The working women, especially the labour class women working in the factories and the domestic workers, suffered more. Teachers were fired from their jobs immediately. And violence against women and girls increased during the pandemic.

Feminism in Pakistan's history

With all these challenges, the insecurity among minorities in Pakistan had increased with the passage of time. In the decade of 1980, during the dictatorial and anti women regime of Zia Uul Haq, the Civic spaces for women were narrowed down. In that period, the State made effective use of the religious political forces to achieve its power. It silenced political parties, clamped the press and academy with censorship and banned students and trade unions movements.

It was this political moment, in the 1980s, when the first feminist movement, the Women's Action Forum, got momentum. The women gathered and repealed the Hudood Ordinances, laws enacted in 1979, which discriminated the non muslim women regarding witness evidence in case of rape or gang rape. That movement organised the rally to protest against the Law of Evidence (which obligates a raped woman to show four witnesses to prove the crime), the Hudood Ordinances and other laws that discriminate against women. The demonstration happened

in The Mall road, in the city of Lahore, where I belong. Despite being a peaceful demonstration, the use of tear gas to disperse crowds and make arrests was not uncommon. The Women's Action Forum was—and still is— a voice against all sorts of injustices, especially against women and minorities. Later, in 2006, the laws were upgraded, and now there is no requirement of four witnesses.

The second popular feminist movement in Pakistan started in 2000, with the name of Alliance Against Sexual Harassment (AASHA), and the motto of stopping sexual harrasment at workplace. The activist and gender expert Fouzia Saeed, along with other sisters, as the World March of Women member Bushra Khaliq, engaged key stakeholders like grassroots women, media, parliamentarians, political parties. With these efforts, in 2010 they luckily succeeded to pass the law of protection against harassment of women at the workplace.

Then, the current grassroots movement titled Aurat March [Women's March, in English] got momentum five years back, in 2018, with the motto of ending patriarchy. The Aurat March is the movement of young feminist girls, with a more inclusive and intergenerational approach. They conduct the Aurat March annually on 8th March, and during the whole year they also do activities such as press releases, small demonstrations and artistic work.

Contemporary challenges

Young feminists face death, rape and acid throwing threats, while they exercise their constitutional right to assembly and right to freedom of speech. Raising a slogan has troubled and distressed the patriarchal mindset in Pakistan.

The social fabric, structure, and practices are against women. The writ of the government is weak to protect women. Women are facing opposition in their homes, streets, and workplaces, but we follow our march on the streets, in connection with the International Women's Struggle Day and other agendas.

Online bashing in comments and inbox messages made many young girls insecure. By consequence, they had to stop posting their participation in public spaces or started ignoring those comments, dealing by themselves with their fear and insecurity. Media and YouTubers' detrimental tactics spoiled the cause of girls and women without investigating the source. Electronic and print media published doctored posters with images of the girls and women, who joined rallies and marches including me.

Social media affects the sociology and psychology of which is communicated, with the help of technology. The growing populism has translated and stamped that the society is still not ready to give and provide bodily rights to girls and women. The slogan "mera jism meri marzi" ("my body, my choice") became a daring and bold expression used by the young feminist to deny the control over women bodies in shape of marital rape and child without choice. Many people disowned this slogan and few owned it.

The space for dissent is rapidly squeezing in the Asia-Pacific region. Similarly, civic spaces and young feminist movements in Pakistan are also at stake.

Life threats to marchers have increased. Women have to deal with cyber harassment, sexual harassment at public places and stigmatisation,

because of fundamentalisms, right-wing sectors and the absence of secularism. All of that are the emerging challenges which are a big ask from State and communities to find their solutions, to consider women as equal citizens of this country, conceive pro-women policies, and ensure civic spaces for women and girls.

Our way forward is mobilising and strengthening the capacities of hundreds of young girls in movement building, under the banner of World March of Women Pakistan. Doing this daily activism, we will continue the struggle for women's rights and structural changes. That is why we say that "we resist to live, we march to transform".

9 February 2024

Source: [Capire](#).

Desire for change in Senegal

9 April 2024, by **Paul Martial**

From prison to the presidential palace, Faye has had a rather unusual journey. He has just won the presidential elections in the first round with over 54% of the vote, a unique event in the history of Senegal.

Political continuity

The country has gone through two major political periods, that of the Socialist Party governments with Senghor and then Abdou Diouf, followed by that of the Liberals with Abdoulaye Wade and Macky Sall. Political labels aside, the policies pursued have been the same. A strong presidency that did not hesitate, during social or political crises, to use violent repression against opponents, resulting in death and imprisonment. Attacks on the press. Corruption that fuelled the clientelism on which successive governments were based, and which also served as a

justification for dismissing political opponents. Which meant a justice system that did its bidding.

Macky Sall's government may have been able to create an illusion with its Senegal Emergent Plan, resulting in the launch of major projects such as the regional express train, the creation of a new international airport and the construction of a new city next to the capital Dakar. But this orgy of concrete has mainly benefited the most affluent and has done nothing to reduce poverty, which affects more than half the population, or to curb endemic youth unemployment.

The limits of a programme

It is precisely these young people, who refuse to accept a future with no prospects other than to embark on a life-threatening immigration, who

rallied for Faye's victory. Along with his mentor Ousmane Sonko, the popularity of their organisation PASTEF (Patriotes africains du Sénégal pour le travail, l'éthique et la fraternité), which was dissolved by Macky Sall, lies in its denunciation of the corruption of the country's elites.

Faye describes himself as an anti-system, breakaway candidate, promoting the country's political and economic sovereignty. Although Bassirou Diomaye Faye's political programme is particularly detailed, it is also highly technocratic and never mentions the need for citizen participation in building the promised new political order. The common thread remains the promotion and development of Senegalese companies, seen as the sources of the country's development. Although the future president has said that he is in favour of Senegal leaving the CFA franc, this measure, like the one he is

proposing, will not be implemented.

The main demands for women's rights were not taken into account, reflecting a conservative vision of society.

The radical left-wing organisations that supported Faye's candidacy can draw on this popular mobilisation to push for a policy that responds to people's aspirations and needs.

4 April 2024

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

Kurds under attack on all fronts

8 April 2024, by **Mireille Court**

Turkish troops, backed by the KDP's (Kurdistan Democratic Party) Pershmerga, are battling the PKK's (Kurdistan Workers' Party) armed wing, the HPG (People's Defence Forces), in the hope of eradicating the PKK's presence in the region. The Baghdad government, under pressure from Turkey, has just banned the PKK in Iraq, without consulting its parliament. A major stake in this attempt to eliminate the Kurdish forces is the pipeline linking the oilfields of Iraqi Kurdistan to Turkey. As the pipeline crosses this region, it is no longer operational and the oil has to be transported by road, which obviously increases costs.

Fierce repression

Western Kurdistan, Rojava, the de facto autonomous region in northern Syria, is under constant attack, with aerial bombardments mainly targeting infrastructure, but also assassinations, targeted by drones, of officers of the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) or leaders of the women's movement. There are constant attacks on the oil wells in the Derik region, and the Deir Ezzor region is under attack both from Iranian militias in the pay of Bashar al-Assad, who is dreaming of getting his hands on this resource that is vital to his economy, and from Daesh, which is

still active in the region that was its last stronghold until the capture of Baghouz.

The Autonomous Federation of Northern and Eastern Syria also has to contend with the resurgence of Daesh, which carries out numerous car bomb attacks, most recently in Raqqa.

In Iran's Kurdistan region, the Rojhilat, repression has been fierce since the riots that followed the death of Jîna Amini; Kurdish activists have been imprisoned and hanged one after the other.

Nationalist pressure against the Kurds

In Bakur, Turkey's Kurdistan region, municipal elections were held on Sunday 31 March, which R.T Erdogan had made a national issue, particularly in Istanbul, his "jewel" as he calls it, a jewel he lost in 2019 with the election of Ekrem Imamoglu, of the nationalist and Kemalist social democratic party, the CHP (Republican People's Party). At the time, the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party), a Kurdish party with a broad far-left base, did not put forward a candidate to help elect

Imamoglu, as part of an "anything but AKP (Justice and Development Party)" campaign. Since then, differences within the HDP (which became the DEM (Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party) following threats of a ban) have changed the position somewhat, with the DEM putting forward candidates, but often in a symbolic manner, as in Ankara. In Ankara, the DEMs fielded the very popular Gültan Kisanak, the mayor of Diyarbakir, who had been removed from office and imprisoned for 17 years by the government for her alleged links with the PKK. Unfortunately, the opposition's victory in the major cities of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir does not mean that nationalist pressure will diminish.

It is against this backdrop of attacks on all fronts by our dear Kurdish allies - so precious when Daesh commandos were attacking the Bataclan, among other places, and whom they alone had stopped by taking Raqqa and paying an enormous human price - that the French government is expelling young Kurdish activists, like Firaz Korkmaz sent back from France to be handed over to his Turkish torturers.

4 April 2024

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

Israeli Attack on World Central Kitchen:

Biden Takes Harder Line, U.S. Support for Israel's War Continues, So Do Protests

7 April 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Netanyahu, who has not apologized for the killing of 200 Palestinian aid workers, or 140 journalists, or 13,800 children, immediately recognized the mistake and said, "Unfortunately, in the last day there was a tragic case of our forces unintentionally hitting innocent people in the Gaza Strip. It happens in war."

The attack on WCK was a gift to Biden who has been under attack from progressive for not restraining Israel. Now he picked up the phone, called Netanyahu and told him that he must protect aid workers, ensure more aid to Palestinians, and urged an immediate ceasefire in exchange for hostages, suggesting he might condition U.S. military aid to Israel. Biden said, "We've gone from a hug, to a handshake, to a slap on the wrist today."

Israel's war on the Palestinians is fought with billions of dollars in U.S. military aid including from the Biden administration. Legally, U.S. military aid cannot go to countries that do not protect civilians and insure humanitarian aid. The president had until now been gently verbally pressuring Netanyahu to change

Israel's strategy vis-à-vis the Palestinians. The Israeli attack on WCK gave Biden an opportunity to look tougher. Nevertheless, anger against Israel and the U.S. continues to grow.

Andrés, the head of WCK, immediately accused Israel of deliberately attacking his organization's aid workers. Following the Israel Defense Force's investigation and disciplining of officers, WCK stated, "the IDF has deployed deadly force without regard to its own protocols, chain of command and rules of engagement." And WCK demanded an independent investigation. A convincing Al Jazeera investigation found that the Israeli military, "methodically and deliberately" attacked the WCK workers. At the end of March, Volker Türk, the UN's top human rights official, stated that there was a "plausible" case that Israel was using starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza. To many of us, this seems not only plausible but obvious. The attack on the WCK led it and other aid organizations to suspend their work, worsening the famine and starvation in Gaza.

The assault on WCK has intensified dissent by some Democratic Party senators and representatives who oppose Biden's continued, and until now, uncritical support for Israel's war. And of course, it has encouraged the continuing protest by those activists calling for a ceasefire that have been taking place at party events, sometimes interrupting Biden himself. Jewish Voice for Peace, an anti-Zionist group, stated on X that Israel's attack on WCK was intentional, writing, "Listen to Palestinians first — and immediately — whenever they endure Israeli genocide and colonization. The Israeli military's killing of anyone in Gaza is conscious and calculated."

The Israeli attack on WCK has inflamed the opposition to Biden on the left, which in the primaries voted "uncommitted" rather than vote for the president. Biden's "slap on the wrist" will not impress them — unless he actually stops military aid to Israel. And that still seems unlikely. Biden's support for Israel could cost him the election. Maybe.

7 April 2024

Political Earthquake: A Double Victory for the Peoples of Turkey

6 April 2024, by **Uraz Aydin**

While all the elections since then have been a kind of plebiscite concerning the "survival" of the regime and participation in the vote count has

been perceived as a civic task in order to curb any attempt at fraud, this election seemed to be marked by the greatest lack of interest.

A historic turning

point for the opposition

Thus, with a lower turnout than the previous votes (78.5% compared to 87% in the 2023 parliamentary elections), the main opposition party, the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP - Republican People's Party, centre-left-republican-secularist) won an unexpected victory by obtaining 37.8% of the vote against 35.5% for Erdogan's party, the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP - Justice and Development Party). The CHP thus obtained nearly 4 million more votes than in the 2023 legislative elections. However, the CHP not only won these elections in terms of the total percentage, but also managed to win the mayoralties, in genuine AKP strongholds, both at the city and district levels.

Istanbul and Ankara, which were the central areas at stake in these elections, were also retained by the opposition. Ekrem Imamoglu won 51.14% in Istanbul, more than ten points more than his AKP opponent, Murat Kurum; while his party won 26 of Istanbul's 39 districts, 12 more than in the previous municipal elections. The outgoing mayor of Ankara Mansur Yavas (a defector from the far right), with 60.5%, won almost 30 points more than the regime's candidate. But at the level of public opinion, Imamoglu is emerging as a political leader who can rally forces beyond the traditional base of the CHP (around 25%) and is already being designated as a potential candidate for the next presidential elections.

Regime's rout

As for the AKP and its far-right ally, the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, (MHP - Nationalist Action Party), they lost a total of more than 6 million votes. Among the factors of this defeat of the AKP, we must count above all inflation and the rise in the cost of living, which has become unbearable for a large majority of the population. But corruption and cronyism within the

AKP is also a major source of the party's loss of legitimacy. With a hyper-centralization of political power through the figure of Erdogan, the party has also lost its ties with its electoral base. However, these results do not mean that Erdogan is no longer the undisputed leader for half of the population. It should be noted that the dynamics of local elections remain quite different from parliamentary and especially presidential elections.

While the fact that some AKP voters did not go to the polls in order to penalize their party is an important element in this setback, it is undeniable that the Islamist, homophobic, anti-vaccine Yeniden Refah Partisi (YRP - New Prosperity Party) has also benefited greatly from the discontent with Erdogan's party and his government. By going from 4% in the 2023 parliamentary elections to 6% (and winning dozens of municipalities including a metropolis, Urfa), the YRP is asserting itself as the pole of protest within the right, while the other conservative-Islamist alternatives are almost reduced to nothing. Refusing to be part of the political bloc built around Erdogan, as was the case in the parliamentary elections, Fatih Erbakan (son of the founder of the Islamic political current in Turkey), leader of the YRP, led a consistent opposition on economic issues (notably the situation of pensioners, which seems to be one of the important factors in the AKP's defeat) and financial agreements with Israel.

Judicial coup in the Kurdish region

As far as the Kurdish movement is concerned, the Halkların Eşitlik ve Demokrasi Partisi (DEM - People's Equality and Democracy Party) with 5.7%, lost 3 points compared to the 2023 parliamentary elections, but it would be wrong to consider this result as a weakening of the party. In the west of the country, the DEM, while fielding its own candidates, hardly campaigned and mostly supported

CHP candidates in order to defeat Erdogan's Islamist-nationalist bloc. Meanwhile, in the Kurdish zone, the DEM once again won the majority of towns despite the fact that its mayors were systematically deposed (and detained), accused of links with "terrorism". This time, the regime first tried to get tens of thousands of soldiers, police and other "transported" voters to vote in Kurdish towns in order to influence the results. But in addition, through a "judicial coup", the electoral commission refused to allow the outgoing mayor of Van, Abdullah Zeydan, to take office by contesting his eligibility (despite this having been validated before the election) and handed the mandate to the AKP candidate who had obtained almost 30 points less than Zeydan. But following mass mobilizations and clashes in several cities, the High Electoral Council finally validated his mandate. This is a second major victory, in which the regime has for the first time in many years backed down in the face of a protest movement. This also testifies to the shift in the balance of power at the moral and political level.

However, this retreat towards the CHP did not benefit the radical left, in particular the Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TIP - Workers' Party of Turkey) which won 1.7% of the vote in the parliamentary elections, a large part of which came from CHP voters. While considering that the party fielded candidates in only 14 cities (apart from Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir), the TIP only managed to get a quarter of its 2023 votes (and two municipalities including Samandağ, the Arab-Alevi district of Hatay, affected by the earthquake).

But in any case, this victory for the opposition clearly opens a significant breach in the hegemony of Erdogan's reactionary regime. The revolutionary left will have to seize this opportunity, mobilize the blossoming hope of millions of workers, rebuild itself in social movements and class struggle in order to conquer not only democracy but also social justice.

4 April 2024

Ecuador's Indigenous movement calls for an international movement against extractive industries

5 April 2024, by Iain Bruce

Over 800 delegates from 77 Indigenous and other organisations from across Ecuador's three regions (Amazonia, Highlands and Coast) registered for the gathering on 22 March. The previous week had seen a new outbreak of police violence and community resistance at Palo Quemado in the central highlands, around a copper mining project being developed by Atico Mining Corporation, based in Canada. At least 20 members of the community were wounded and 70 were indicted, after first a group of paramilitaries and then 500 police shock troops stormed in firing tear gas and grapeshot.

They were trying to stop the community from blocking access for the mining company, which in tandem with the government was planning to hold an "environmental consultation" on 27 March, as a way of clearing the way to beginning work on the mine.

Not surprisingly, this became a central focus of the FNA's meeting, and it added a new note of militancy to the often festive gathering. A series of actions in solidarity with Palo Quemado were among the final resolutions. Three days later, there was a breakthrough. A local judge ordered the environmental consultation to be suspended because, as the community and the Indigenous movement had been arguing, not all the steps required by the Constitution had been completed. He called for a new hearing on the case for 2 April. He also ordered all non-essential military and police forces to be withdrawn from the area. However, at the time of writing there were reports of more soldiers being deployed to Palo

Quemado and a new round of confrontations, with more people wounded.

The central aim of the II National Gathering was to build on the work done over the last three years by the FNA to link the strength of the Indigenous movement to that of other peasant and social movements, in a combined resistance to the destruction wrought on communities and the environment by the oil and mining industries. The immediate target was the new government of President Daniel Noboa, and his not altogether surprising turn to developing copper and gold mining on a mega scale.

Noboa is the son of one of the Ecuador's richest banana magnates. He won the presidential election last year by presenting himself as a young and modern, new face, and at least in part by coming out, just weeks before the poll, in favour of a campaign that was going viral among Ecuadorean youth, to vote yes in a referendum to leave the oil in the ground under the Yasuni National Park. At the time, he already indicated he would develop new mines to make up for the income lost from the Yasuni oil.

The security crisis that erupted in Ecuador at the beginning of the year - after a leading drug lord mysteriously escaped from prison - gave President Noboa the opportunity to declare a state of emergency and thereby justify the use of troops to deal with a range of 'security' issues. Whether or not the crisis itself was manufactured, as some of his critics suggest, the Noboa government has taken advantage of

the situation to push through a series of his core neoliberal reforms, including relaxing labour laws and increasing VAT. He has also put a new emphasis on developing extractive industries, and is looking at ways of by-passing the results of the Yasuni referendum and continuing, 'for the time being', to drill for oil in the national park that is a biodiversity hotspot. Just two weeks before the conflict with Atico Mining in Palo Quemado burst into the headlines, Noboa was with three of his ministers in Canada for the annual meeting of the PDAC mining association, to promote Ecuador as one of the world's most 'attractive' mining destinations.

All of this has led CONAIE and the FNA to conclude that international cooperation in their struggle is more important than ever. Most pressingly, there is a need for immediate expressions of solidarity with Palo Quemado and other communities resisting predatory mining on their land, and facing severe repression as a result. More strategically, as the President of CONAIE, Leonidas Iza explained in the news conference at the end of the II National Gathering, they see the need to develop as soon as possible this international network against mining and extractive industries, that can bring together all those resisting these attacks on their communities and their environment. The details of what and how remain to be thrashed out, But the invitation is now there, from one of the most important social movements on the front lines of the struggle for our future and the planet. It is up to us the take it up, spread it, and look for ways to make it a reality.

France was the “main accelerator of the genocidal process” in Rwanda

4 April 2024, by **Paul Martial**

In 1922, the Belgian settlers found in Rwanda a political system that was highly hierarchical in social terms. The Tutsi dynasties prevailed, unlike in neighbouring Burundi, where power was shared between the Tutsi and Hutu aristocratic lineages. In Rwanda, the Tutsi and Hutu categorization is primarily of a social nature: “Yet there is no ‘Hutu’ without ‘Tutsi’: one cannot go without the other.” Moreover, ‘Hutu’ had a double meaning since it designated the dependent or the inferior in a client or hierarchical relationship, even if the latter was a ‘Tutsi’.” [2]

The settlers took up the theory of the Tutsi, descendants of a Hamite population from Ethiopia invading the country and enslaving the Hutu. This racialization of social domination by a Tutsi elite was part of the racist theories of thinkers such as Gobineau. The Tutsi were seen as closer to the European populations than to the African ones. The Belgian settlers therefore relied on them to govern the country: “The Batutsi were destined to rule, their presence alone already assures them, over the inferior races that surround them, a considerable prestige... It is not surprising that the brave Bahutu, less clever, simpler, more spontaneous and more confident, allowed themselves to be enslaved without ever making a gesture of revolt.” [3]

This ideology spread throughout society. In the schools run by the Order of the White Fathers, priority was given to Tutsi pupils to become civil servants, while Hutu pupils were systematically directed towards manual tasks. The Belgian settlers introduced social segregation based on ethnicity.

The “revolution” of 1959

In 1957, the Bahutu Manifesto was published. It called for social justice and denounced the situation of discrimination experienced by the Hutu. This criticism integrated the colonial and ethnicist view of the Tutsi by denouncing their non-native character. Following this publication, the Parmehutu party was formed, which was supported by the Belgian colonizers. This change was due to their desire to maintain their influence at the time of the country’s independence in 1962. The settlers thus avoided the formation of a coalition of interests between Hutu and Tutsi. Indeed, Kayibanda, the leader of the Parmehutu: “preferred to unite the ‘Hutu’ against the ‘Tutsi,’ rather than unite the poor ‘Hutu’ and the ‘little Tutsi’ against the well-to-do, ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ combined.” [4]

A competition developed between Hutu parties to win leadership, favouring hate speech against the Tutsi. In 1959, what would be called the revolution was nothing more than a huge pogrom over the whole country, pushing tens of thousands of Tutsis into exile.

A racist regime

In 1962, the country gained independence, with strong support from Belgium. Kayibanda was the first president. He wielded increasingly violent power, including against Hutu opponents. During his reign, there were veritable campaigns of ethnic cleansing in schools and administrations against the Tutsi minority. In July 1973, Juvenal Habyarimana seized power in a coup

d’état. At the same time, France, under the impetus of Giscard d’Estaing, gained a foothold in the country and integrated it into its sphere of influence. It provided the government with financial, diplomatic and, above all, military assistance.

In 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), made up of Tutsi refugees in Uganda as well as some Hutu opponents, launched an operation to seize power. The RPF was described by Paris as a Ugandan aggression supported by the Anglo-Saxon world. France was a stakeholder in this war while advocating, at least officially, a diplomatic solution that took shape with the Arusha Accords in 1993. The latter provided for the dismantling of anti-Tutsi apartheid, the sharing of power and, above all, the departure of the French military. This was a slap in the face for the French generals.

Genocide

At least since 1990, extremists who supported “Hutu power” had been preparing for the extermination of the Tutsi. French officials could not have been unaware of this given their strong presence in the Rwandan security apparatus. This is confirmed by General Jean Varret, former head of the Military Cooperation Mission from October 1990 to April 1993. During his testimony to the parliamentary committee, he reported the words of the chief of staff of the Rwandan gendarmerie: “they are very few, we are going to liquidate them.”

Militias and the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) would carry out executions of Tutsis in the presence of the French army. Testimonies mention the support of French soldiers during the roadblocks manned by the militia in 1991: “I realized that among the

soldiers there were French people who also asked for Rwandan identity cards with the words 'Hutu', 'Tutsi' or 'Twa' on them. The Tutsis were taken out of the car and the French soldiers handed them over to the agitated militiamen who cut them with machetes and threw them into a gully on the side of the main asphalt road from Ruhengeri to Kigali." [5]

The attack on the presidential plane, in which Juvenal Habyarimana was killed, was not the cause of the genocide, at most it was the trigger of a process that had been prepared for a long time. On the other hand, this attack marked the beginning of the coup d'état by Hutu extremists. They liquidated the supporters of the Arusha Accords - thus Agathe Uwilingiyimana, the prime minister, and Joseph Kavaruganda, president of the Constitutional Court, and many others, were assassinated - they formed the Rwandan Interim Government (GIR), supported by France. The genocide of the Tutsi began in an orderly manner and under the supervision of FAR units and Interahamwe militias.

France's support

France was the only state to recognize the GIR, not hesitating to receive its members at the Elysée. It was putting all its diplomatic weight at the United Nations into supporting this government of extremists. Roméo Dallaire, the Canadian general in charge of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), was desperately trying to alert the international community to the massacres taking place in the land of a thousand hills. As for the French bank BNP Paribas, it authorised the transfer of money for the purchase of weapons, in the midst of an embargo decreed by the UN.

Rwanda would experience three French military operations. The first, *Norôît*, was officially launched to protect the embassy and French citizens following the RPF offensive in 1990. In fact, the purpose of this operation was to support the FAR against the RPF's offensives. For three years, French soldiers waged war against the RPF. They also

participated in the training of militiamen. [6]

The second was Operation *Amaryllis*, which began two days after the attack on the presidential plane. The aim was to evacuate French nationals. It left behind Tutsis working for the France embassy and other French agencies. Most of them were murdered. The Belgian soldiers of Operation *Silver Back* embarked nearly two hundred Rwandans, mainly Tutsi, who were turned back by the French military while the militiamen surrounded the airport.

Finally, Operation *Turquoise*, composed mainly of former members of *Norôît*, was presented as a humanitarian operation. It was initially used to try to stop the RPF's offensive. This explains the refusal, through this operation, to save the Tutsis on the hill of Bisero, who had been the object of incessant attacks by the *genocidaires* since the beginning. It was only under the joint pressure of the military and journalists that the officers deigned to intervene. *Turquoise* was an opportunity for the *genocidaires* to implement a strategy of exodus of populations that offered them the double advantage of fleeing without difficulty in the face of the arrival of the RPF and of keeping people under control in the refugee camps in Zaire. It was from these camps that militias were organized. They benefited from the transfer of arms organized by the French army. [7]

The presence of the Hutu *genocidaires* has also completely destabilized the eastern region of Zaire, since their armed offshoot, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), were still provoking wars and massacres against the Congolese civilian population.

France's denials

The French authorities repeatedly denied their responsibility. They hid the war they were waging against the RPF during Operation *Norôît*. They then tried to portray the genocide as an inter-ethnic massacre, and when information began to reach France, the authorities spoke of a double

genocide, a way of covering their tracks and hiding their responsibilities in supporting the GIR.

At the legal level, with the help of Juge Bruguière, they tried to give credence to the idea that the attack on the presidential plane was perpetrated by the RPF under the pretext that it considered the Tutsi to be "collaborators of the Habyarimana regime." [8] Do we need to recall that it was the RPF that put an end to the genocide of the Tutsi?

France would drape itself in its role as saviour of human lives with *Turquoise*. This was a way of silencing international critics by using the fact that on 21 April 1994, in the midst of the genocide, the United Nations withdrew its peacekeepers. Except that France also voted for this withdrawal. In order to avoid accountability, manoeuvring in parliament was well underway. At the request of the creation of a parliamentary commission of inquiry by the Communists and the Greens, the socialist leaders fought back by creating an information commission without prerogatives of investigation. This committee would avoid asking embarrassing questions as much as possible. The prosecutor's office also manoeuvred in vain to prevent the trials against French soldiers involved with *Turquoise* for rape, which are still ongoing, thanks to the tenacity of a socialist and humanitarian, Annie Faure.

While in most Western countries, Hutu *genocidaires* have been tried and convicted, in France, the first trial of a man accused of participating in the genocide took place only in 2014. Recall that the wife of Juvenal Habyarimana, one of the fervent supporters of "Hutu power," lives in France. Mitterrand said of her at the time of her evacuation by Operation *Turquoise*: "She has the devil in her body, she wants to make public calls for the continuation of the massacres." This did not prevent the Ministry of Cooperation from paying her 200,000 francs when she moved in, and above all that she was not in any way worried by the law. It would take the actions of the Collective of Civil Parties for Rwanda (CPCR) for *genocidaires* to be unmasked and

finally tried.

Two questions

Why has France been so involved in Rwanda? There is no one-size-fits-all answer. We can mention: the desire to be present in this country as a point of support for the policy of control of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a desire to assert France vis-à-vis its Anglo-Saxon partners following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the lack of knowledge of the country's history. Védérine, secretary general of the Elysée Palace, compared the 1959 pogrom to the French Revolution, speaking of the "Hutu sans-culotte". There is also the need to show the other African dictators in the sphere of influence that France was not abandoning them. And, on a personal level, Mitterrand appreciated Habyarimana for his Francophilia. The sons of the two presidents struck up a friendship, and Jean-Christophe Mitterrand was then the Elysée Palace's Africa adviser.

How could France be complicit in a genocide? France's presence in Africa is taken for granted by the political class. Of course, there are different views, but the prevailing idea is that the shared past with Africa – as a result of colonization – implies a special responsibility, even a common future. It is on this consensual basis that all the excesses of French policy in Africa have been able to prosper. All the more so since beyond this consensus there is no information, as we saw with Operation Noroît in Rwanda, let alone any counter-power. Everything is decided within a circle of a few people at the Elysée Palace.

When Habyarimana went to ask France for help, the French soldiers were drawn into a dynamic of war. From training and supervision, they would quickly be on the front alongside the FAR. The anti-RPF ideology spread among senior French officers. The terms Black Khmer, Ugandan agents or Tutsi were used to refer to the RPF. The DGSE and even

the Directorate of Military Intelligence warned the Élysée Palace of the massacres perpetrated against the Tutsi. But in the tradition of French interventions, human rights abuses are commonplace in support of African dictatorships or coups. Except that here "France integrated itself into the genocidal mechanism because it supported the regime that organized the elimination of the Tutsi minority" and Vincent Duclert, president of the Research Commission on the French archives relating to Rwanda and the genocide of the Tutsi, adds: "this unconditional support for Habyarimana's power was even, I would say, the main accelerator of the genocidal process". [9] This conclusive observation is a powerful condemnation of France's African policy which, despite this tragedy, remains unchanged.

March 2024

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Left advance faces lawfare challenge

3 April 2024, by Antoine Larrache, Lauriane Misandro, Rafael Bernabe

First of all, Rafael, if you could introduce yourself a little bit for us, and then briefly explain the situation.

Of course, yes, I am a member of the Victoria Ciudadana movement, one of Puerto Rico's main political parties, and I am currently a senator. In Puerto Rico, the legislative branch consists of two chambers, the Senate and the House of Representatives. I am a member of the Senate, our party, the Victoria Ciudadana movement, has four legislators.

In the last election, our gubernatorial candidate, the women's candidate, won 14% of the vote. It was the third party that received the most votes in

the last election. It is a left-wing party, resolutely progressive, anti-neoliberal, defending women's rights, workers' rights, the environment...

The situation we're going to talk about now has everything to do with this, doesn't it? That is to say, with the opposition that the parties are facing, precisely, they were opposed in some respects to the more traditional parties, to the neoliberal parties... Can you explain a bit about the context and the current situation?

Sure. In Puerto Rico, there are two political parties that have controlled Puerto Rican electoral politics since the 1960s. For almost 60 years, it has

been two parties. One is called the Parti Popular Democrático (PPD), the other is called the Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP), parties that define themselves as defenders of different options regarding the status of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States, and parties traditionally define themselves in terms of the relationship they want to have, or Puerto Rico wants to have with the United States. The PNP defends the election, wants Puerto Rico to become a state of the United States. The PPD defends the existing status, which is a colonial status, but which has the formal structure, let us say, of a partnership with the United States.

And there is, of course, a pro-independence party that advocates the independence of Puerto Rico.

The two major parties, even if they have differences on the question of status, on the other issues, defend very similar policies, the policies of privatization, the policies of austerity, both against the working class, the policy of reducing employment rights or social rights, the neoliberal agenda that we are all familiar with in many countries.

Since about 2005, Puerto Rico has been going through a very serious economic crisis.

And one of the consequences of this very serious economic crisis has been a decline in the electorate's support for these parties. These parties have been deeply discredited. Historically, these two parties combined have won 97.98% of the vote. There is also a pro-independence party, which got 2% or 3%.

But since 2010, this support for the dominant traditional parties has been in free fall.

In 2016, for example, the candidate who won the governorship received only 42% of the vote. And he couldn't finish his term, because there was a huge rebellion in the streets in 2019 and he was forced to resign. He was unable to complete his term.

In the most recent 2020 election, the winner from the PNP received only 32% of the vote. While the Victoria Ciudadana movement, to which I belong, got 14%. The pro-independence party, which is also a left-wing progressive party, won an additional 14 percent. In other words, the left and progressive forces together got about 28% in an election where the winner got 32%. The situation of the electoral balance of power is this at the moment, interesting, for the left, which has benefited from growing support.

Faced with this situation, the two traditional parties have used all possible manoeuvres to try to stop the advance of the left-wing sectors. It started even before 2016. For example, in Puerto Rico, as in other countries, alliances between parties were traditional and legal, for parties

to reach an electoral agreement and run together for office. In 2011, they banned alliances, they eliminated the possibility of electoral alliances, precisely in an attempt to prevent new forces from allying and gaining power.

In 2020, in the election for the mayor of San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico, on election day, the winner was our candidate, Manuel Natal, from the Victoria Ciudadana movement, won the mayoralty of San Juan - which is the same as, for example, winning the mayoralty of Paris or Mexico City, since it is the largest city and the capital. But through a whole series of electoral traps, they stole this election from us.

And then, more recently, we, despite the fact that they are legally prohibited, have formed an alliance between the pro-independence party and the Victoria Ciudadana movement and in the elections, which will take place in November 2024, we will form an alliance. It is a de facto alliance because it cannot be "official". The alliance ensures, for example, that we do not put forward a candidate for a certain place and that we call for a vote for the candidate of the other party. And in another locality, that this party does not propose a candidate of the Independence Party and calls for a vote for the candidate of our party.

The most recent development is that candidates from other parties, traditional parties, have taken us to court, accusing us of having violated the law in the selection process of our candidates, that is, the candidates of Victoria Ciudadana.

Our two angles of response are these: First, it's not true: we didn't break any "laws." And second, the way we choose our candidates does not affect the other parties in any way. I am in no way affected by the way the PPD chooses its candidates. They choose as they wish. It doesn't hurt me, the way they act.

But they went to court to affirm their version, according to which we did not respect certain provisions of the electoral law. And the trial judge agreed. In this way, he has disqualified for the moment five important national candidates of the

Victoria Ciudadana movement from the positions of Puerto Rico representatives in the United States Congress, without the right to vote, but with one vote to represent us.

A major figure in Puerto Rican politics, a female candidate, was "withdrawn" from the election. And two of our Senate candidates and two others in the House of Representatives, have also been "removed" from the ballots, including myself.

An appeal of this decision is pending before the courts, but we know that the only way to overturn this decision will be a broad mobilization here in Puerto Rico and an international call to uphold the basic rules of democracy, so that each party can choose its candidates and that the electorate decides - at the ballot box - who should occupy the positions, elective positions. We are in the process of carrying out these mobilizations.

And the obvious reason for taking this case to court and trying to exclude these candidates is not that these mainstream party figures are worried about the electoral law or compliance with the rules of the Electoral Commission. It is because they see Victoria Ciudadana and the left-wing alliance as a real threat and want to put an end to this threat.

Last year, for the first time, the business sectors of Puerto Rico were organized, the industrial sectors, the Chamber of Commerce, the construction association, all the major associations of the large business sectors, which have traditionally trusted the PPD and PNP to represent their interests, to defend them in the government. They created a political action committee, to campaign against the alliance, that is, they also perceive the alliance as a threat to their privileges and they are mobilizing.

In the three years that I have been in Parliament, we have introduced bills to raise the minimum wage in Puerto Rico, to protect the environment, to defend women's right to choose, to defend the right to abortion. A whole series of progressive measures that these conservative or privileged sectors want to stop. They fear that an

alliance victory will pave the way for the approval of such measures and want to avoid it at all costs.

Thank you very much for the clarification. Now that we have a somewhat clear picture, perhaps you could present your ongoing petition initiative, which is still circulating and makes this situation possible to report and make visible? We also wanted to come back to your demands, let's say, beyond the dissemination of the petition and the signature, let's say, and any element of visibility of the situation, what are the means by which we can support from other geographies, the current mobilizations in this direction in Puerto Rico.

As you point out, there is a petition on

Change.org that they can sign in support of the Puerto Rican case. The other thing they can do is record short videos to demand respect or simply say, "We are against the disqualification of Victoria Ciudadana de Puerto Rico candidates, push for the rights of Victoria Ciudadana candidates to be respected. Any written or video message in which the person can, if possible, identify themselves, i.e.: "I am speaking from Paris, Germany, Brazil", whether I am a worker, a member of parliament, a feminist, an ecologist, all these messages can be sent to us, for example, on our networks (Facebook, Twitter) Rafael Bernabe @BernabeNBC and those of Movimiento Victoria Ciudadana Puerto Rico.

Whatever mechanism is used to send us support, we will then pass it on to the courts that will review this case or to the Electoral Commission, or any other entity, as relevant. I should have mentioned that what we are experiencing in Puerto Rico is a modality that we know internationally as lawfare, the misuse of the judicial system as a political weapon, in the electoral process. As we say here, what they can't get through the ballot box, they try to get in court, by disqualifying candidates, by discrediting them, by making false accusations that then require a lot of resources to answer. It happened to one of our legislators, so it is an additional modality of this phenomenon observed in many countries, also present in Puerto Rico.

26 March 2024

Earth Day in Palestine

2 April 2024, by **Roseline Vacchetta**

Everywhere, a movement of solidarity and people mobilized with them. This year, of course, we had even more reason to show our support. Settlement has exploded: 144 settler outposts have been created on Palestinian land, 146 new or enlarged settlements have been built, wrested by the army from their rightful owners, making a total of 710,000 settlers in the West Bank and Jerusalem. [10] In Gaza, Netanyahu is pursuing a genocidal policy denounced by the highest international authorities.

"Finish the job", says Netanyahu

Back in 2002, Effi Eitam, leader of the National Religious Party and head of the Yad Vashem memorial, declared when he joined Ariel Sharon's government: "We must make it very clear to the Palestinians that no sovereignty other than Israeli sovereignty will ever exist between

the sea and the Jordan." [11] For a land supposedly without a people, that makes a lot of Israeli attacks and Palestinian resistance on this small territory since 1947!

The current genocidal enterprise is attempting to complete the ethnic cleansing begun with the Nakba in 1948, when 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their land. In fact, it has never ceased until now, when Gaza must be "liberated" from its inhabitants, i.e. killed or expelled! Since October 2023, one million Gazans have been displaced, 32,000 killed, 78,000 wounded and 10,000 missing. Gaza is a vast cemetery and a huge wasteland.

Wrest a definitive ceasefire!

Faced with the scandal of the suffering imposed on the Palestinians, who are deprived of everything that is essential even for survival - water,

healthcare, food and housing - we need to strengthen our solidarity, because Netanyahu and his army will only stop their massacres under pressure from the peoples of Palestine, Israel and the peripheral regions, as well as the imperialist states. While demanding the application of the right of return and the release of all prisoners, it is urgent to win an immediate and total ceasefire, as the risk of the Palestinian people disappearing on their own land is real. Settlements have often led to the brutal destruction of indigenous peoples, or more slowly, in reserves and camps, during past genocides, notably in the United States, Australia and Canada.

In France, we must intensify our boycott of Israeli products (dates, avocados, oranges, etc.) and of companies that set up and grow rich in Israel. Obtaining total military, security, industrial, cultural and sporting (the Olympic Games) divestment from our own imperialism

won't be easy, but many actions are already underway in various cities. Finally, we need to obtain political and financial sanctions against the State of

Israel, in particular by withdrawing the right of association with the EU.

1 April 2024

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Terrorist Attack and Election Pave Way for Putin to Intensify Repression and War

1 April 2024, by **Ashley Smith, Ilya Budraitskis**

Ashley Smith: What happened in the horrific terrorist attack in Moscow? Who is behind it? How have the Russian authorities and Putin responded? How will they use the attack in Russian and in their imperialist war on Ukraine?

Ilya Budraitskis: A group of terrorists entered Crocus City, a concert hall in Moscow, armed with machine guns and explosive devices. They attacked the private security guards, shot people in attendance, and set off their devices, triggering a fire and killing at least 133 people and injuring more than 100.

Russian security forces have arrested 11 people, four of them as they tried to escape the country into either Belarus or Ukraine. These four were migrant workers from Tajikistan, a Central Asian Republic and former Soviet republic, and they have confessed to the attack, claiming they were paid \$5,000 to carry it out.

In the immediate aftermath, without a shred of evidence, Russian officials and news outlets blamed Ukraine and even implied [U.S. involvement](#). Putin delayed making any public address clearly in the hopes of finding or manufacturing evidence to use against Ukraine.

When he did [speak on national television](#) 20 hours later, he claimed Ukraine was trying to help the terrorists escape from Russia. He also denounced all migrant workers from Central Asia as if they all shared some kind of collective guilt for the attack.

None of these charges are credible. Right after the attack, Ukrainian spokespersons denied any involvement and warned that Putin would blame Ukraine and whip up support for his war. Obviously the attack on migrants is just racism and xenophobia.

As for allegations against the U.S., Washington had actually [informed Russia](#) of an impending attack by ISIS-K, a wing of [ISIS based in Afghanistan](#), that has [targeted Russia](#) for decimating its forces in Syria and backing the country's dictator Bashar al-Assad. Since the attack, Washington has blamed ISIS-K for carrying it out.

That group has also [claimed responsibility](#), and they are likely the culprit. ISIS-K could have reached out through Afghanistan into nearby Tajikistan to secure the services of the attackers.

Putin initially dismissed Washington's warnings as disinformation and fearmongering. But his security forces did arrest several people they accused of being agents of ISIS. But clearly they did not take the warning that seriously, did not root out all of its agents in Moscow, and failed to stop the attack.

Nevertheless, Putin has persisted in trying to implicate Ukraine. Clearly he intends to instrumentalize the attack to justify domestic repression and imperialist war in Ukraine.

That is how he has responded to previous terrorist attacks. For instance, when [Chechen militants seized a school in Beslan](#) and took

more than 1,100 hostages, he recklessly raided the school, leading to the death of hundreds, ended democratic elections of regional governors and dramatically escalated the war in Chechnya.

I predict Putin will follow that script today. He will ram through more repressive measures, not just against supposed terrorists but against any dissent against his rule in Russia. Already, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has proposed the restoration of the death penalty.

Putin will likely also whip up patriotic support for a possible new offensive in Ukraine. Thus, he may compound this tragedy with repression at home and death and destruction abroad.

Let's turn to the results of the Russian election. They are, of course, no surprise. Putin won 87 percent and antiwar candidates were banned, how should we understand this result? How much does this reflect popular support for the regime, how much is the result of coerced support and how much of it is the result of passive acquiescence?

The results of the election were indeed unsurprising. They were like all the others in Putin's career; the outcome was preordained and rigged. But there were certain differences this time. He achieved a North Korean level of victory, something he had never done in the past.

In 2000, when he was elected for the first time as president, he won with

only [52 percent](#) of the vote. In other elections, he got less than 70 percent, and in his last election in 2018 he garnered [76 percent](#).

To secure 87 percent of the vote, he abandoned even the pretense of democracy. His regime carried out one of the [most falsified elections in history](#), except regime loyalists and their apologists.

The level of falsification is hard to exaggerate. They falsified the results, reporting numbers that did not correspond with real tallies. To enable this rigging of the election, Putin destroyed the entire infrastructure of independent observers.

For example, the regime banned the nongovernmental organization called [Golos \("Voice"\)](#), which had been the main organization that trained independent election observers. Most of its organizers have been jailed or driven out of the country.

As a result, Putin had a free hand to deliver an electoral result entirely at odds with independent pre-election polls. [According to one of those](#), only 50 percent said they intended to vote for Putin.

Another 40 percent said they were not sure who they would vote for and said they would not like to publicly state their preference. So, clearly he does not have 87 percent support of the Russian population.

The important thing to understand about this so-called election is that it was compulsory and supervised. For instance, bosses, especially in the public sector, not only [required their workers to vote](#), but also required them to share a photo of their ballot.

Obviously, the threat was that if they didn't vote for Putin, they would lose their jobs. The election was thus a product of a dystopian combination of an extreme totalitarian dictatorship and surveillance capitalism.

In that sense, it makes little sense to call it an election. Putin is already using it to consolidate his ideological hold over Russian society, presenting the results as confirmation that everyone is lockstep behind his domestic and imperial project.

In the occupied areas of Ukraine, the election was even more [rigged and bizarre](#). In the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, [95 percent supported Putin](#). The occupying forces [manufactured](#) this result at [gunpoint](#).

In perhaps the least believable of all the results, [Putin "won" the election in Avdiivka](#), a city which was just destroyed by the Russian Army, who drove most of its population out. Nevertheless, Putin secured overwhelming support in the city.

Both in Russia and occupied Ukraine, this election was a sham. The results are a product of coercion and systematic falsification.

In the run up to the election, Putin had Alexi Navalny killed to send a signal to both domestic and international opposition to his regime. Nonetheless, his widow, Yulia Navalnaya, called for protests at the ballot box. How big were they? What is their significance?

Navalnaya's call, which I totally supported, was never designed to influence the outcome of the election, which, as I've said, was entirely predetermined by the regime. Instead, the idea was to take advantage of it to mobilize political opposition.

Remember that all unauthorized public gathering has been banned and any political dissent especially against the war in Ukraine has been met with [brutal repression](#).

The Russian authorities were very afraid of the planned protest. In the days leading up to the election, they required a lot of people to report to police stations and threatened that if they turned out they would be arrested and fined for an illegal mass action.

Moreover, they suppressed information about the call. Remember all opposition websites like [Meduza](#) have been blocked. Nevertheless, according to one independent poll, nearly a quarter of Russians had heard about the action.

Of course, the numbers that did come out were nowhere near that percentage. But the fact that people

did turn out and in significant numbers demonstrates opposition to Putin and his imperialist war in Ukraine.

Putin's regime and Russian capitalism have been surprisingly resilient, despite the war, the attempted coup by Yevgeny Prigozhin and Western sanctions. How do you explain this?

The main reason for Russia's economic stability is its oil industry. It is [not sanctioned](#) and with the price of oil still very high, Russia has been able to maintain economic growth and profitability.

At the same time, the price of the war is very high. Estimates are that the military consumes about [40 percent](#) of the regime's budget. This arms economy can also fuel growth, especially among weapons manufacturers, over the next year or two, but such expenditures are [not sustainable over the long term](#).

This oil and military economy have not changed Putin's neoliberal economic model. There has been some temporary nationalization of companies, but those seized assets have been quickly sold to other owners loyal to the regime.

In that sense, it had nothing to do with nationalization in any traditional sense. It was merely [redistribution of property](#). That has entailed some recomposition of the Russian ruling class, but without changing its highly privatized structure.

Putin has also used the war to secure support from [highly paid professional soldiers](#). They are making far more than regular workers in other public and private sectors.

But this war economy is only sustainable for so long. Eventually its contradictions will undermine its growth and, with that the contradictions of the political system, will reemerge, provoking a new round of instability and crisis.

How will Putin use his rigged electoral victory domestically for his neocolonial war in Ukraine?

Even before the election, Putin

boasted in a speech before Parliament that the absolute majority of Russians [supported](#) his “special military operation.” So, he will interpret the rigged vote as confirmation of his ideological hold on the Russian people.

[But this is hubris](#). There is in fact widespread dissatisfaction with the war continuing for much longer, even among Putin supporters. Many of those voted for him thinking, “He started this war, and he should end it.”

Putin ignored this sentiment. During the campaign, he never mentioned how he was going to restore peace. Instead, he kept repeating the idea that Russia was in an existential war with the West, and that it must continue it and expand it into other countries.

[A minority of Russian society supports that project](#), probably about 10 to 20 percent. But the majority want peace to be restored. Of course, they don’t want Russia to be militarily defeated, but they want this war to end at some point.

These feelings are growing, and they could create a crisis for the regime in the future. But for now, its response is to ignore such feelings or respond to them with campaigns of patriotic indoctrination to whip up support for an expanding war.

Former President Dmitry Medvedev, who is now deputy chairman of the Security Council, made Putin’s aims abundantly clear in a [speech](#) a few days before the election. He declared that Russia aimed to “liberate” Odessa, reclaim it as a Russian city and eliminate Ukraine as a nation state.

He went on to propose his own peace formula as an alternative to the one proposed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. He declared that Ukraine is not a real nation but a territory that should be carved up between Russia, Poland and Romania.

Of course, the only way to carry that out is the total conquest and seizure of Ukraine by Russia. That is the opposite of peace. It is a recipe for

unending imperialist war and colonial occupation.

Many expect an escalation of the war in Ukraine soon. Will that require greater mobilization of Russian troops? How will the Russian population react? Will it spark any resistance?

It’s hard to say whether the Russian authorities will mobilize more Russian troops. Until recently, they have done everything they can to avoid a second wave of mobilization.

Of course, now after the elections, which they claim proved that Russians totally support the war, they may start another mobilization. At the same time, they are smart enough to know that would be very unpopular.

So, for now they are likely to continue paying enormous salaries to so-called volunteer soldiers. But if they intend to carry out a larger-scale offensive, they will have to mobilize conscripts.

They could pair that new mobilization with a promise to bring back those who were drafted in 2022 and deployed to the front lines for the last two years. That might quiet the [growing calls from wives and relatives](#) for those soldiers to come home.

But people will only put up with this war and mobilization for so long. And any returning soldiers will bring with them stories of the slaughterhouse in Ukraine, something destabilizing for the regime.

So, how stable is Putin’s regime and Russian capitalism? What are the system’s problems and fault lines?

There is a deep problem in the very political construction of this regime. In one of his [recent speeches](#), Putin betrayed some awareness of this problem. He declared that the old elite forged through the privatization of the Soviet Union’s state property is outmoded, and that a new elite needed to be established.

He said that a new, true elite should be recruited from the heroes coming from the front lines. In reality, Putin is building a new elite, not from them, but the children of his narrow circle of

friends who control big state corporations and private industry.

Their parents are aging, and Putin knows he faces a problem in the reproduction of a loyal ruling clique and regime. So, he sees their children as his [future loyalists in the state and Russian corporations](#).

That is a sign of a deeply personalistic regime, in which Putin only trusts people he considers friends. But the dictator’s number of friends is limited, so the only way to expand it is through recruiting their loyal children into positions in the government bureaucracy and board rooms.

Putin is also integrating his [personal bodyguards into positions in the state](#). As a result, there are a number of governors in various regions of the country who came from his personal security team.

Such methods of regime expansion and consolidation can backfire, creating serious problems for its continued rule. For example, in this arrangement, if people inside the state apparatus want to advance their careers, they eventually hit a dead end, because at the top of the bureaucracy are Putin loyalists appointed by the dictator.

If you are not in that charmed circle, your career advancement is doomed. That can breed apathy and even discontent in the state apparatus, something that can undermine the regime from within.

Of course, the top layer of the state apparatus will support Putin to the last breath, backing the escalation of his imperialist war. But, underneath them, there are layers among whom discontent and opposition can grow. So, the big question both inside and outside the regime is how long this loyalty not just to Putin, but to the system, can last.

Another problem the regime faces is the contradiction that I’ve described between Putin’s imaginary vision of a loyal Russian society united behind him and the real divisions within it, especially those provoked by the war. That contradiction can only hold for so long.

Finally, many on the left are pushing for Ukraine to engage in peace talks and accept a land-for-peace deal with Putin, something they would never demand of Palestinians. What do you think of that argument? Why is it unrealistic? What should the left say about the war, and what should it demand instead?

We should be clear that Putin took the decision to launch this invasion very seriously and is determined not to stop until he achieves his stated goals — the elimination of Ukraine as an independent nation-state and the imposition of a puppet government in Kyiv. If he does not achieve these goals, he will view it as a defeat, something he is not willing to accept.

He views any continued existence of an independent government in Kyiv as a threat to Russia's national security. So, he will not be satisfied with seizing just parts of Ukraine; he wants to seize the entire country as a first step in rebuilding the old Russian Empire.

He made this clear in a [recent interview](#) on Russian TV in which he was asked about the possibility for peace talks. He bluntly stated that he was not interested in any such talks, that they are motivated only because Ukraine has a lack of arms.

He would only welcome peace talks that secure the imperialist goals of conquest and regime that are the goals of his "special military operation." So, at this point, he will reject any talks and instead likely escalate the war.

Faced with this unending imperialist war, the left should stand with Ukraine and its struggle for liberation. If Putin succeeds in conquering Ukraine, it will set a precedent for other imperialist powers and states to launch similar wars of colonial conquest.

The international left should defend the right of oppressed nations to self-determination without exception and defend their right to secure arms to defend themselves. Only such solidarity from below can stop the drive toward more and more imperialist war.

25 March 2024

Source: [Truthout](#). Note: This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.