



IV593 - June 2024

Biden Failure in Debate Leads to Crisis in Democratic Party, Pressure for a New Candidate

30 June 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

During the debate, seen by 51.3 million viewers, Democrats watched in anguish as the 81-year-old Biden, speaking in a voice that was sometimes just a loud whisper, appeared to be weak, halting, and sometimes confused. In one rambling incoherent response Biden ended by saying “we finally beat Medicare,” a government health program that he has fought to defend and expand.

There was immediate panic in the party. Some Democratic Party leaders and financial donors have suggested that the party may need to find a new candidate. The New York Times, the country’s premier newspaper, ran an editorial entitled: “To Serve His Country, President Biden Should Leave the Race.” The Democratic Party National Convention, which will take place from August 19-22 in Chicago, ultimately chooses the party’s candidate and if Biden is willing to step aside, could select someone to replace Biden. Biden himself has said that he is staying the course.

Trump won the debate in terms of performance, appearing to be strong in his typical style of bombast, braggadocio, and belligerence. He repeatedly called Biden the “worst

president,” “the worst commander-in-chief,” a president who had created the “worst border,” “the worst situation with China.” He claimed falsely to have had during his presidency the best economy, the best environmental situation, the best programs to deal with COVID. He repeatedly returned to attacking Biden’s border and immigration policies, saying Biden “...allowed millions of people to come in here from prisons, jails and mental institutions to come into our country and destroy our country.”

Trump continued to stir up resentment against immigrants. He made preposterous accusations against Biden: “He’s the one that killed people with the bad border, including hundreds of thousands of people dying, and also killing our citizens when they come in. We - we are living right now in a rat’s nest. They’re killing our people in New York, in California, in every state in the union, because we don’t have borders anymore.” The best debater would have been challenged to respond to Trump’s attacks and lies, and Biden was far from his best.

In any case, Biden failed to counter voters’ concerns that he is too old for

another term as president and the question is, what happens in the next couple of weeks? Can the party’s leaders—Barack Obama, former speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, current speaker Hakim Jeffries, Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer—and Biden’s wife Jill, be persuaded to ask him to step aside?

Who might be alternative Democratic Party candidates? Several names have been mentioned. First, Vice-President Kamala Harris, though she is not seen as effective or popular, and as a Black woman might have the most difficulty in winning an election. Among the other possibilities are: California Governor Gavin Newsome, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Governor J.B. Pritzker of Illinois, Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio. If Biden were to step down, the 5,500 delegates from all 50 states and several territories (like Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico) would choose the new candidate. Some 15% are superdelegates—former presidents, congressional leaders, big donors, longtime party functionaries, and some labor officials. There has been concern recently that the convention delegates do not adequately represent Blacks and Latinos. The progressive delegates, such as Alexandria Ocasio-

Cortez, will have little influence on choosing the party's candidate.

Will the Democrats stick with Biden? We should know in a couple of weeks.

30 June 2024

In Portugal, the right-wing party confirms its majority

29 June 2024, by **Daniel Borges**

In fact, the Socialist Party managed to hold on to a 0.97-point lead over the Democratic Alliance (AD), the right-wing coalition (PSD/CDS) which formed a minority government in March and sent the Socialists back into opposition after almost ten years in power.

No hegemonic party°

The Socialist euphoria, with a decimal point victory, conceals the reality observed in the legislative elections of 10 March and confirmed by the European elections: neither the Socialist Party nor the Democratic Alliance occupy a hegemonic position in Portuguese politics. The shift to the right in March continues and is causing general unease in the political centre. At the same time, popular apprehension grew in the face of the rise of the far right in the parliamentary elections (18%), despite its fall two months later in the European elections (9%).

The parties to the left of the Socialists have not yet been able to recover from the defeats of recent years, but they have managed to stabilise the vote they won in last March's parliamentary elections, and must now look to move forward to regain the ground they lost. The parties to the right of the DA continue to gain ground, nipping at the heels of the traditional right, which is struggling to hold on to its slender advantage (at the general election, it had less than a one-point lead over the Socialist Party).

The Democratic Alliance imposes austerity and privatisation

The minority government of the DA is unstable, but will have to approve a state budget in October. It is announcing sectoral programmes on immigration, health and housing to condition both the PS and the far right to European and social policies. Unfortunately, we already know what this means: changes initiated by the right without going through Parliament always become difficult to reverse later on. In the space of three months, the government has already imposed high barriers to the regularisation of illegal immigrant workers, repealed the fragile socialist measure that put an end to the "golden visa" - after ten years under pressure from the social movement - is preparing to privatise health structures and is trying to solve the shortage of teachers by inviting retired people in, which will have little effect. It's all about pragmatism and speed, because the Prime Minister has turned the government into an election committee.

The PS is betting on achieving the status of "leading force in the country" in order to accentuate the government's wear and tear. But the fact is that the PS, which formed a government with an absolute majority, resigned on its own initiative and then lost 42 seats in March (there are 230 MEPs in Parliament), does not represent an alternative to right-wing

governance.

Government by decree

For the time being, the Right is ignoring Parliament and governing by decree, in an attempt to repeat Cavaco Silva's experience of the 1980s, when a minority PSD government overthrown in Parliament succeeded in imposing a lasting and comfortable majority. If it fails to do so, it will try to join forces with the ultra-liberal IL party and the far right (Chega) to govern, as it will have no other choice.

The Socialist Party is in the same situation: even if a parliamentary rejection of the state budget led to elections in the short term and the SP got ahead of the AD, it would hardly have a majority to govern. The only proposal that the SP seems to be promoting is a return to the neoliberal consensus that it used with its former absolute majority.

The problem for the left is different. With a total of just over 10%, all the parties that represent this area - the Left Bloc, the PC and the Livre (Greens) - have lost ground since 2022. However, the Left Bloc has recovered somewhat and stabilised its vote in 2024 at 4.3%. In the huge demonstrations marking the 50th anniversary of 25 April and those organised by social movements, particularly in the fight for housing, feminism, anti-racism and LGBT, there is a demand for unity that constitutes an alternative to the right and the threat of the far right.

EU Parliamentary elections show reactionary thrust and nuclei of resistance

29 June 2024, by Léon Crémieux

European parliamentary elections remain a marginal event in the political life of member states, as evidenced by the low average turnout. Between 1979 and 1989, turnout was between 62% and 59% in the Europe of 15 member states. The 2004 enlargement to include ten Central European countries brought this figure down to less than 45%. It has tended to rise slightly to 51% in recent elections, thanks in particular to the higher turnout in four Central European countries (Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where it has risen from 7% to 16%), while it has stagnated or fallen in the countries of Western Europe. There was a slight erosion in the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) group, which lost three seats with 136 MEPs, and a slight increase of 2 seats for the Left Group (formerly the GUE) with 39 MEPs.

Overall, these results do not call into question the existing consensus at the head of the EU with an alliance of EPP, S&D and Renew. The Union's main places of executive and legislative power - the European Commission (chaired since 2019 by Ursula von der Leyen) and the EU Council of Ministers - will therefore continue to be dominated by this alliance, not forgetting the European Central Bank (ECB). The top posts are appointed by the Council of EU heads of state. This alliance will ensure that the re-election of Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission, decided by the Council, is ratified by the Parliament. Similarly, Antonio Costa, a Portuguese member of the S&D group, will be appointed President of the European Council. But the margin of this alliance is becoming less clear-cut with the crisis

of the Renew liberals and an anti-Von der Leyen protest within the EPP, targeting in particular the 2019 Green Pact, which sets itself the objective of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, without, moreover, providing itself with financial resources on the scale of this objective.

In addition, since Covid, lobbies from the automotive, chemical and plastics industries have been lobbying the EPP to call into question the objectives of this pact. They have also been joined by agribusiness lobbies. Manfred Weber, President of the EPP and Ursula von der Leyen's rival, acted as spokesman for this front, pushing for a shift towards the climate sceptics and Eurosceptics of the ECR group. Although von der Leyen was the target of this pressure, she herself made many overtures towards Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni, notably by collaborating with the leader of Fratelli d'Italia on the EU's anti-immigrant measures. The shift towards the extreme right has therefore been temporarily halted in Brussels, but the trend is there and EU policy, even without a direct alliance with the extreme right, cultivates an ultra-neoliberal orientation, in line with the authoritarian policies that are developing in Europe.

Moreover, in line with EU policies, the far right leads two governments in the EU: in Hungary, Viktor Orban's Fidesz government, in power since 2010, and that of Giorgia Meloni since 2022 (with Fratelli d'Italia in alliance with Matteo Salvini's Lega, affiliated to ID in the European Parliament, and Forza Italia, the party created by Berlusconi, affiliated to the EPP). And in recent years, other coalitions

including the far right have been formed: in Finland, since 2023, the government led by the National Coalition Party (KOK, conservative, affiliated to the EPP) includes a coalition with the Finns' Party (PS, far right, affiliated to the ECR group), the People's Party (SFP, affiliated to Renew) and the Christian Democrats (KD). The PS has the post of deputy prime minister and finance minister.

In the Netherlands, a coalition led by Geert Wilders' PVV (affiliated to ID), with the NSC and BBB (affiliated to the EPP) and the VVD (affiliated to Renew) has been in place since May. The prime minister is a senior civil servant and was a member of the PvdA, the old social democratic party, until 2021. Geert Wilders has been appointed immigration minister. In Sweden, in 2022, the Moderaterna party (affiliated to the EPP) formed a coalition with the Christian Democratic KD (affiliated to the EPP), the affiliated to ECR) and the Liberals (affiliated to Renew) with the non-participating support of the far-right Sweden Democrats (SD,) who led the other right parties with over 20% of the vote. In Croatia, the HDZ party (affiliated to the EPP), while not declaring itself far-right, has a radical Christian Democrat slant, suggesting the rehabilitation of the Ustasha movement that imposed its criminal dictatorship in the 1940s.

Thus, beyond the declarations of EPP and Renew representatives affirming their rejection of alliances with the far right, in several countries the corresponding parties are finding common ground on ultra-neoliberal, often nationalist and anti-immigration policies. The social attacks, accentuated by the management of

Covid, the high inflation of recent years, the impoverishment and precariousness of the working classes and disillusionment with the EU, particularly in Central Europe, have resulted in the emergence of far-right parties that exalt both nationalist withdrawal and exaltation of national identity.

The EPP is the largest group in the European Parliament, with 189 seats. It is dominated by Germany's CDU/CSU (22 seats), from which Ursula von den Leyen hails. Next come Spain's PP (22 seats) and Poland's KO (21 seats), which in Poland took first place from Jarosław Kaczyński's PIS (ECR 20 seats). But this should not hide the fact that the far-right Konfederacja party won 12.08% of the vote and 6 seats, giving the far right almost 50%. The bulk of the gains came from the Spanish PP, which won 10 seats, the Polish parties KO and Trzecia Droga, which won 10 seats, and the Hungarian Tizra with seven seats, coming from a more Europhile split from Orban's Fidesz, which itself left the EPP in 2021.

The S&D

The social democratic group with its 136 seats lost 3 seats. Its main parties are the Italian PD (21 seats), the Spanish PSOE (20 seats), the German SPD (14 seats) and the French PS (13 seats). Its main gains come from France with 7 additional seats, Italy and Romania (plus 3), which mitigate the erosions in Germany (2 seats), Hungary and Bulgaria (6 seats). All in all, however, there was little movement.

Renew

By dropping from 102 seats to 74, the liberal group becomes the fourth largest group behind the extreme right-wing ECR. This is mainly due to the crisis of the French delegation led by Renaissance, Macron's party, which lost ten seats, collapsing to 13 MEPs, as well as the disappearance of Ciudadanos and its seven seats, five seats for ANO2011 in the Czech Republic, a party which has left the group (for the time being as a non-attached party), and two seats for

Momentum in Hungary. This was offset by Fianna Fail's gain of 3 seats in Ireland. In Portugal, the emergence of Iniciativa Liberal brings two seats for a party that explicitly competes with the far-right Chega party on the authoritarian and neoliberal terrain.

This quick scan shows just how porous European parties can be between affiliation with Renew, the EPP or even far-right groups.

The Greens

The Greens/EFA group fell from 71 to 54 seats. The biggest losses were in Germany, where the Grünen, accountable for the government coalition's policies, lost nine seats. The French Green party EELV also suffered a heavy loss of eight seats, failing to repeat its very good result of 2019. The Belgian Ecolo party, also a member of the liberal coalition of the De Croo government, lost more than half its votes and one of its two seats, while also losing more than half its seats in the Walloon and Brussels-Capital Region parliaments. On the other hand, the party came out on top with four elected members in the Flemish-speaking college of Brussels, where it was not in government. In Denmark, SF, the Socialistisk Folkeparti, having refused in 2022 to support the government bloc built behind Mette Frederiksen's Social Democratic Party, allied with the Moderates and the Liberal Party, took first place in the European elections, with over 17% of the vote, overtaking the coalition parties and rising from 2 to 3 seats.

The Left

The Left/La Gauche group (GUE/NGL) maintained its position, gaining two seats. The biggest gains were for France insoumise (nine seats, a gain of three MEPs) and Finland, where the Left Alliance came second, taking three seats and 17.3% of the vote, tripling its votes and seats against the parties in the right-far-right coalition government. In Belgium, the PVDA/PTB moved up from one to two seats, in line with its steady rise in Belgian elections since 2019. In Italy, the Verdi e Sinistra alliance, inspired

by the French NUPES, made a significant gain of its two components with six seats, including two MEPs affiliated to the GUE group. These gains offset the decline of Die Linke in Germany (three seats), Sumar and Podemos in Spain (three and two seats) and the BE and PCP in Portugal (two seats in total instead of four). In Greece, Plefsi Eleftherias, a non-affiliated party founded by Zoe Konstantopoulou, won a seat.

The future of BSW (six elected members), the party founded in Germany by Sarah Wagenknecht, a split from Die Linke - on an anti-austerity stance but with several positions against aid to migrants and blocking asylum seekers outside EU borders - remains uncertain. Its leader in Brussels, Fabio De Mais, has stated that there will be no affiliation to the GUE, but rather the creation of a new European group.

ECR, ID and other far-right parties

The ECR/RCE, European Conservatives and Reformists (83 seats), was created for the 2009 European elections by David Cameron's British Conservative Party, the Czech ODS and the Polish PIS, bringing together a number of parties from the former Union for Europe of the Nations group. At the time it had 55 MEPs, now it has 83, having won 14 seats in the last elections. The two pivotal parties are Fratelli d'Italia (Giorgia Meloni) with 24 seats and the Polish PIS with 20 seats. There is a presence in 16 other countries, including 6 seats for Vox in Spain. ID, Identity and Democracy (58 seats), was created on the eve of the 2019 European elections around the Italian Lega, the German AfD, the Austrian FPÖ, the French Rassemblement National, Vlaams Belang and Geert Wilders' PVV.

The two groups have 141 seats in the Parliament, and several other non-registered parties are also clearly on the far right. In a number of countries, their weight is now significant and, at European level, the pressure is clearly going to be on for even more reactionary policies.

In Italy, Fratelli d'Italia, affiliated to ECR (Giorgia Meloni), reversed the balance of power with the Lega, going from five to 24 seats, while Salvini's party went from 28 to eight, giving 32 far-right MPs, allied in government with Forza Italia.

In France, the RN (affiliated to ID) topped the elections by a large margin, rising from 23 to 30 MEPs, to which must be added the five elected MEPs from Reconquête and, no doubt, half of the six MEPs from the Republicans, who, with Eric Ciotti, entered into an alliance with the RN. In Germany, the AfD gained six seats,

increasing its number of MEPs from nine to 15, but it has been excluded from the ID group for the time being. In Austria, the FPÖ, affiliated to ID, doubled its number of seats from three to six, winning 25% of the vote. In Belgium, Vlaams Belang in Flanders and the N-VA in Wallonia accounted for 28% of the vote. In Hungary, Viktor Orban's Fidesz took 45% of the vote, with his party and its 11 MEPs currently not affiliated. And behind it, Tizra, Peter Magyar's party (affiliated to the EPP), is directly descended from Fidesz, being pro-European but just as reactionary. Not to mention the installation of Vox and Chega in Spain

and Portugal. The kaleidoscope of the far right reflects disagreements over integration into the EU and relations with Russia, particularly following the invasion of Ukraine, but as with Viktor Orban, there is a wide range of agreement between all these parties on security and anti-immigrant policies.

There will be a lot at stake if the left in Europe is to revive its momentum, fight the extreme right and unite social and political forces around social and democratic demands.

27 June 2024

Stopping Le Pen with the New Popular Front

27 June 2024, by **Dave Kellaway**

Starmer promises an end to chaos and proposes minor changes but above all stability for the capitalists. Macron has opened up a period of deep political instability that has already unsettled the financial markets. Some French bosses are even considering dealing with Le Pen.

The Left's Response

The French president already had no clear majority in the French parliament and relies on day-to-day agreements between his Ensemble (Together) movement and mainstream right-of-centre Republicans (LR). Maybe he thought the threat of Le Pen winning a parliamentary majority would once again save him and his party as the mainstream right and left parties combine to stop Le Pen. Perhaps he thought a Le Pen majority cohabiting with his presidency might actually weaken RN over the three years leading up to the next Presidential elections. Or did he think that despite the decline in his personal ratings, his movement could win back voters?

No doubt he saw the break-up of the

New Popular Union (NUPES) comprising Jean-Luc Mélenchon's France Unbowed (LFI), the Socialist Party (PS), the Ecologists, and the Communist Party (PCF) as a sign that the Left would not be a problem for him. Despite the NUPES success in destroying Macron's parliamentary majority in 2022, these currents had been at one another's throats particularly over Gaza, Ukraine, and how to relate to France's ethnic minority groups. The PS had been fighting the LFI to regain the leadership of the broad left, tacking even more to the moderate centre to achieve this.

The New Popular Front

Instead of splitting further apart, the different currents of the left have come together in the New Popular Front (NPF). It deliberately evokes the historic 1936 Popular Front that, through struggles and strikes, and not just with an electoral pact, won historic gains like paid holidays for the working class. Le Pen becoming the biggest party in the Euro Elections with 33% really shook the left up.

Within a day or so, there was an agreement about a radical left social democratic programme and an agreement to set up a single candidate in each constituency.

Elections are not based on fair proportional representation but take place over two rounds if nobody wins 50% plus one on the first round. The top two candidates go through, and anyone else who has won 12.5% of registered voters. Having competing left candidates in the first round would make it easier for the RN to win.

All the current polls are showing the NPF between about 3 and 8 points behind the RN, with Macron over ten points further back. The Left could still pull off a dramatic win, and with less than a week remaining, there is all to play for. But if we believe the polls, Macron looks at the moment like he will face either an RN overall majority or a parliament with no majority but with the RN as the biggest party.

Already RN is the biggest party, but these polls show a considerable increase in its numbers. One problem with the national polls is how they translate into the hundreds of key

local contests. For example, will all the left currents in the NPF step down in the second round, or will they argue they have a chance in what are called triangular contests? The leaders of the Ecologists and the PS have already said they will stand down their candidates in favour of the biggest non-RN party. Some LFI leaders have suggested they will do the same but have not specified whether this includes contests where their candidates have got 12.5% or more and could therefore compete in a second-round triangular contest.

Further complications have arisen in five seats when Jean-Luc Mélenchon—who is a centralist leader who does not tolerate much dissent—decided to drop well-known LFI dissidents from the slate. A number of the dissidents are going to stand anyway, and in some cases are being supported by the local CP and SP branches, and other NPF parties. This has led to LFI retaliation as they put up candidates against CP or SP candidates in neighbouring seats.

The revolutionary group, the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA), immediately responded positively to the call for the NPF. It has been assigned a candidate in the area near Carcassonne in the Aude area. Philippe Poutou, ex-car worker and currently a councillor in Bordeaux, is standing. However, since the moderate PS has condemned the NPA's principled position on Palestine solidarity, it is putting up one of their local people against Poutou. A report in the Mediapart newsletter said that Poutou had received a favourable response from the local activists of the other NPF parties. The NPA recognises in any case that the electoral campaign is also about building and preparing a network of activists for the struggles and challenges following the election.

Internal Tensions

Another source of tension inside the front—which is obviously fanned by Macron and the mainstream media—is the discussion of who would be the NPF nomination for prime minister. Normally you would expect this to be a leader from the current within the

NPF which scored the highest percentage vote. This might well be the LFI, which is currently the left party with the most MPs and so could be Jean-Luc Mélenchon (JLM). The latter says he does not want to impose himself but neither sees why he should exclude himself.

All the other main currents are critical of JLM becoming the premier. They say he is divisive with his criticisms of the police, of Israel, and his rather campist line on Ukraine. According to them, he loses votes in the centre even if he can galvanise the ethnic minority and working class in the big cities. His critics use the polls generated by the mainstream media 'proving' he is not a unifier and that he antagonises people. Ageing big beasts from the SP, like ex-prime minister Lionel Jospin and ex-president François Hollande (who directly opened the door to Macron), have both been wheeled out of retirement to join this anti-JLM chorus.

The main line of Macron echoes the PS. He rails against the two 'extremes' of Le Pen and LFI. His people even go so far as to say they both feed off each other. Macron melodramatically said yesterday that this could lead to civil war. He hopes to recreate a centre that his own divisive policies on increasing the pension age and cutting public spending have destroyed. It will be difficult for Macron to simultaneously call for people from the 'left family' to rally around him while eviscerating the NPF's social and economic programme.

On the mainstream right, Macron's bomb fragmented rather than brought together the different tendencies. The Republicans (LR) leader, Ciotti, unilaterally declared for an alliance with the post-fascist Le Pen. His action led to an internal rebellion which descended into farce as he locked himself in his HQ offices to prevent the Political Bureau majority coming in to vote him out. The end result is there will be dozens of constituencies where the RN and Ciotti's remaining supporters will be standing on one slate. Consequently, Macron's hope for a stronger score from potential coalition supporters among the LR mainstream right wing has been quashed. We should also not

exclude a further splintering of the LR if the RN do well in the election – an Italian solution with a coalition between the so-called mainstream right and the post-fascists could still be an option. Certain sectors of the French establishment are already tempted to throw their lot in with Le Pen – bringing some or all of the LR in would help this process.

Even further right than Le Pen, we have the neo-fascist Zemmour, Reconquete (Reconquest) current, which got 5.5% in the Euro elections. Head of their slate was Marion Maréchal, a niece of Le Pen, who ran back to Auntie, assuming that the far-right would have a united slate in the parliamentary elections (if you added their Euro scores we are at 37%). Zemmour has rebuffed this plan, but it looks likely that whatever he says, his votes will go over to Le Pen.

Jordan Bardella, who successfully led the RN to 31% and victory in the Euro elections, is heading up the RN parliamentary election campaign as the presumptive PM if they win. Only 28 years old, he represents the success of Le Pen's long-term work to remodel her political current. Smartly dressed, a smooth communicator, and up-to-date on social media, Bardella is the modern face of post-fascist authoritarianism. Le Pen has gained support among younger voters. He is the epitome of what the French call dédiablement – de-demonization. She wants to make it more difficult for Macron to wave the scarecrow of her anti-republican and fascist values each time he wants to get elected.

Listening to Bardella outline the manifesto yesterday, you can see how on a lot of economic policies the RN are not so different to Macron. They no longer shout against the EU. On the pension issue, they reject the Macron reform but support a return to 60 years only if you start work at 20 and have 40 years of contributions; otherwise, it is 62 with 42 years of contributions. He also put forward, like Farage, plans to take lower-paid workers out of taxation altogether. The RN has to manage its base that includes many workers, particularly in ex-industrial zones, the smaller towns, and rural areas. There are plenty of anti-migrant measures built around

the ideology of 'la priorité nationale' (French people first). Thirty-five anti-poverty organisations have denounced this and vowed to reject any sort of categorisation like that in their work.

Following this logic, he said people with dual nationality would be barred from a number of sensitive posts in the state sector. There are 3.5 million people with dual nationality in France and commentators assumed that even street cleaners might be affected. Le Pen stepped in to clarify, talking about security and defence posts. But the overall mood music basically turns French citizens into first and second class categories. Repressive legislation to ban radical groups of 'left and right' was also put forward. Already the NPA has been legally accused by the government of covering for terrorism for its principled position of critical but unconditional support for the Palestinian resistance. Ironically, for a group set up by a known antisemite Jean-Marie Le Pen, Bardella fiercely defended the Zionist state, saying that to recognise Palestine would be to recognise terrorism.

On the other hand, the NPF has a programme of action that would defend working living standards and provide a stimulus to further action and mobilisation. Over three years it has a spending budget of 108 billion euros which highlights how limited the Labour budget for change is. Someone has forgotten to tell the French Left that tax and spend is so old hat, so last year, and not a means to change. The position on both Gaza and Ukraine is good - it condemns the Russian invasion and supports the Ukrainian

resistance, including sending arms. LGBT+ rights are defended and extended. Macron has criticised its positive policy towards trans people - 'the left are saying you can drop into your local town hall and change your sex'. SOS Homophobie has responded by saying that Macron is stirring up transphobia in order to attack the programmes of his political opponents. His strategy is to opportunistically use attacks on minorities in order to cling on to power. Mélenchon stated that Macron's comments were 'unworthy' of a serious politician.

Unsurprisingly, the MEDEF - the French bosses association - has condemned the NPF economic programme but for some sort of balance also criticised the RN. It raises the usual spectre of capitalist investors leaving France and taxes going up.

On the Saturday following the formation of the NPF, over 250,000 people, according to official estimates, demonstrated across France in its support. The main trade union confederation, the CGT, has called for a vote for the NPF - a rare occurrence in France. Well-known Black footballers like attacker Thuram, currently playing at the Euros for France, have called for a vote against the RN. Mbappé has supported Thuram too, although he talked of rejecting the 'extremes' rather than identifying the RN.

Certain radical left groups like Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Fight) and a sectarian split from the NPA, NPA-R, have refused to support the NPF and are standing candidates. They denounce the alliance as reformist and

repeat the need to build the revolutionary party today through independent electoral intervention. They only look at one side of the 1936 Popular Front claiming its moderation led the way to fascism. Given the dynamic of the situation and the serious consequences of an RN victory, they appear not to grasp the stakes involved in the current situation. They minimise the demoralisation caused by the defeats suffered by the labour movement and overestimate the potential for spontaneous struggles today outside the framework of the traditional workers' organisations.

The NPF does not just have an electoral dimension as the street demonstrations show. Leading members of the NPF like the Green, Sandrine Rousseau, have stated that if the RN win then the NPF should continue to build resistance at every level of society. Inside the NPF, it has been perfectly possible for the NPA to raise its anti-capitalist programme as well as building united actions in the communities and workplaces. By setting themselves apart from the current of unity against the RN, they are marginalising themselves from the most advanced and militant sections of the class. Putting up separate candidates to help their particular party-building project is getting things entirely the wrong way round. Above all, it minimises the political consequences of an RN victory on the very workplace and street struggles it so extolls.

25 June 2024

Source: [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#).

The far right on the rise, the PSOE left in retreat

26 June 2024, by **Jaime Pastor**

With a turnout of 49.2% (in 2019 it was 60.7%), the moderate upward

trend of the Spanish right was confirmed: PP (34.2% and 34 seats),

Vox (9.6% and 6 seats), now joined by a new political player, Alvise (which,

presenting itself as the extreme expression of punitivist populism under the slogan "The party is over!", won 4.6% of the vote and 3 seats). On the other hand, Sumar and Podemos obtained 4.7% (3 seats) and 3.3% (2 seats) of the vote respectively, below the 10.1% obtained by Podemos alone in the 2019 European elections. The PSOE, with 30.2% of the vote and 32 seats, lost 2 seats compared to the last European elections, but managed to halt the decline predicted by most polls due to the erosion caused by the approval of the amnesty law for hundreds of activists who participated in the pro-Catalan process that culminated in the referendum of 1 October 2017. Lastly, non-state political forces, on both the right and the left, lost votes but maintained their presence in the European Parliament and reasserted themselves as necessary political players in the breakdown of equality between the two main blocs for the governability of the monarchical regime.

Political instability

In this context, where the cycle that began with 15M and the rise of Podemos is definitively closed, the radicalisation of the right in its questioning of the legitimacy of the coalition government - demanding early general elections - will continue alongside the leading role of the judiciary in its belligerence against the application of the amnesty law and against any concession that, in its view, threatens the "unity of Spain".

It is therefore foreseeable that political instability will continue, conditioned also by the difficulties that the Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSC) will encounter in forming a government with the support of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) and the Comuns, despite being the political force that won the regional elections on 12 May. The internal crisis that ERC is experiencing after its notable electoral setback and its overtaking by Junts (the political formation led by Carles Puigdemont) makes it unlikely that it will support the PSC candidate without significant political

concessions from Pedro Sánchez, particularly with regard to a new regional funding model. It is therefore not out of the question that elections will be called again in Catalonia next October.

A turn to the left

On the left of the PSOE, Sumar's electoral setback has already led to the resignation of Labour Minister Yolanda Díaz as the party's general coordinator, and to an open debate that will probably lead to its new configuration as a coalition of parties, in which Izquierda Unida will probably play a more important role. All in all, a strategic debate is already opening up within the PSOE on what position to maintain within the PSOE government under less favourable conditions than in the past, and bearing in mind that they will also be under pressure from Podemos, which is now determined to turn left once it has left government.

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

Is the drumbeat of war on the Israel/Lebanon front a prelude to all-out war?

25 June 2024, by **Gilbert Achcar**

However, while Israeli army sources assert that it is fully prepared to wage this war, these assertions are contradicted by the ongoing efforts to increase the number of mobilized reservists from 300,000 to 350,000 by raising the age of exit from the reserve (from 40 to 41 for soldiers, 45 to 46 for officers and 49 to 50 for specialists such as doctors and aircrew members).

Moreover, these efforts continue to clash with the insistence of the Zionist military command on the need to end the exemption from conscription for ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students, which would increase the number of soldiers without increasing the burden

on the families and jobs of the current recruits and hence on the country's economy. Thus, while efforts to increase mobilization certainly indicate the determination of the military leadership to complete preparations for an all-out war on Lebanon, they indicate at the same time that the escalation of threats from the Israeli side does not reflect a real intention to launch a full-scale war on Lebanon in the current circumstances, especially since everyone realizes that the cost of such a war for the Zionist state will be much higher than the cost of invading Gaza, both in terms of human cost (even if the Zionist army refrains from invading Lebanese territory and limit

itself to intensive bombardment, as is likely, the number of bombing casualties inside the State of Israel will inevitably be greater than in the war on Gaza), military cost (the type of equipment the Zionist army will need to use against Hezbollah), or economic cost.

This reality creates a serious problem for Israel, as it cannot wage an all-out war on Lebanon without massive increase in aid from the United States compared to the already great aid provided by Washington in the genocidal war waged on Gaza. Moreover, since Hezbollah is organically linked to Tehran, an all-out war by Zionist forces against Lebanon

could expand to include Iran, which could fire rockets and drones into the State of Israel, as it did last April. In light of this dependence of the Israeli attack on US aid, Netanyahu's sudden escalation of rhetoric against the Biden administration in recent days is further evidence of the Zionist government's unwillingness to launch an all-out war on Lebanon in the current circumstances, as Netanyahu's behaviour towards Washington contradicts his army's need for even more American support than it has received so far.

It has thus become clear that Netanyahu is betting on Donald Trump's winning a second term in the US elections scheduled for early November. He is acting like a gambler who decided to throw everything he had on the table playing double or quits. Besides, Netanyahu is politically benefiting from the escalation of tensions between him and the Biden administration, which increases his

popularity by portraying him as a Zionist ruler who stands up to external pressures even in the most difficult circumstances. He is preparing for a new round of this political game by showing the significant political support that he enjoys in the US Congress against the Biden administration when he goes to Washington to deliver his fourth speech to a joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate on July 24.

If Trump wins the election, Netanyahu will be looking for a support free from the kind of limitation and pressure that the Biden administration has recently tried to impose on him. If Trump fails to win, Netanyahu is likely to negotiate with the Biden administration and the Zionist opposition to obtain guarantees enabling him to break his reliance on the Zionist far right in his government and form a "national unity" cabinet that he would head until the next

elections in 2026. The opposition, for its part, will certainly try to get rid of him, by splitting the coalition on which his current government is based in the Knesset and forcing early elections.

Do not think however that the political struggle within the Zionist political elite is between hawks and doves: it is rather between hawks and vultures. Both sides, Netanyahu and the opposition, believe that there is no third option on their northern front but for Hezbollah to acquiesce and accept to withdraw north in implementation of Resolution 1701 adopted by the UN Security Council following the 33-day war in 2006, or for them to wage a fierce war against Hezbollah at a high cost, which they all see as necessary in order to reinforce their state's deterrent capacity, significantly diminished on the Lebanese front since 7 October.

25 June 2024

Souce Gilbert Achcar's [blog](#).

A People's Peace, not an Imperial Peace

24 June 2024, by **Collective, Sotsialnyi Rukh**

The Swiss government will hold an international conference for a peace process in Ukraine on 15 and 16 June 2024 on the mountain Bürgenstock, close to Lucerne. The Ukrainian government supports this conference.

This conference is taking place in a decisive phase of the war. For months, the Russian invasion forces have been hitting gaps in the Ukrainian defences and pushing them back, with heavy losses of their own. The Russian leadership has announced a major offensive and is attacking the people in Kharkiv, a city of millions.

We support all steps towards a peace that enables the Ukrainian people to rebuild the country in a self-determined manner. Peace requires the complete withdrawal of the Russian occupying forces from the entire territory of Ukraine. With this

in mind, we hope that the peace conference in Switzerland will contribute to the restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty.

The conditions for this are extremely difficult. The representatives of the Putin regime regularly declare that they do not recognise an independent Ukraine and deny the existence of the Ukrainian people. The Putin regime pursues a Great Russian project, subjugates the people in the occupied territories with terror and aims to eradicate the Ukrainian culture. The ruling regime in Russia regularly commits war crimes against the Ukraine population.

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, launched on 24 February 2022, not only calls Ukraine's independence into question. It also encourages other authoritarian

regimes to threaten neighbouring populations, occupy territories and massively expel people. In order to avoid resistance at home, the Russian army is now also recruiting people from neighbouring countries and the Global South to serve as cannon fodder.

Due to the massive – and surprising – resistance of the Ukrainian population, the governments of Europe and North America began to support the Ukrainian army in its defence against the Russian occupying forces. However, they are backing Ukraine to assert their own interests in the global imperialist rivalry. The US aim to weaken its Russian counterpart while showing strength against rising China and setting the pace for the European powers which are both partners and rivals. But despite the US Congress finally approving a com-

prehensive aid package for Ukraine on 20 April 2024, which had been blocked by the Republican Party for nine months, the support for Ukraine has always remained selective and insufficient.

Similarly, the economic sanctions that have been imposed by the EU and US governments against Russia and the exponents of the Putin regime are selective, inadequately targeted, and insufficient. They do not prevent Russia from continuing to export oil and gas, along with other strategically important raw materials, to fill its war chest. Some European countries have even significantly increased their imports of LNG from Russia since the start of the war. Others, such as Austria, obtain over 90% of their natural gas imports from Russia. The governments of these countries are forcing gas consumers to finance Putin's war against the Ukrainian population.

The Swiss government, the host of the peace conference, has not only been giving tax breaks to Russian oligarchs for decades, it has also refused to confiscate the assets of these oligarchs since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion. As a major hub of international commodities trading, Switzerland has offered Russian capital excellent opportunities to acquire wealth for many years. Many bourgeois politicians have gladly welcomed these businesses in Switzerland. Through the sale of dual-use products, Switzerland contributes to equipping the Russian war machine. And finally, the Swiss financial sector facilitates the trade of Russian oil.

Both in the US and in Europe, there is a growing number of voices in the political and economic establishment who want to tie their support for Ukraine to certain conditions. They aim to pressure Ukraine to cede large territories and several million people to the Putin regime. Such a peace, enforced by major imperial powers, would strengthen the Putin regime and fail to provide a basis for a lasting democratic reconstruction of Ukraine.

We need a peace that is based on, as well as supported by, the interests of the people and of workers in Ukraine

and Russia. Such a perspective can only succeed if trade unions, women's organisations, environmental initiatives and various civil society organisations from both Ukraine and Russia play a leading role in the peace talks.

Occupation is a crime! We are guided by the principles of self-liberation, emancipation, and self-determination of working-class and all oppressed peoples beyond geopolitical considerations. In this sense, we also stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people, who have been fighting for their self-determination for decades. Likewise, we support the Kurdish and Armenian peoples and all other peoples threatened by occupation, national and cultural oppression.

Based on our positioning, supporting the Ukrainian resistance against the Russian occupation, we want to contribute to developing a common European perspective for radical socio-ecological reforms and ultimately for an ecosocialist transformation of the entire European continent in global solidarity.

By submitting this declaration for discussion, we want to contribute to a transnational process of understanding and political clarification among those left-wing forces throughout Europe and beyond that share these important convictions. 2

12 Principles for a Just Peace in Ukraine within a Europe based on Solidarity and Ecology

We, the undersigned organisations and initiatives, want to promote a peace process that adheres to the following 12 principles.

1. Achieving a socially just and ecologically sustainable peace requires the unconditional and complete withdrawal of Russian occupying forces from Ukraine, returning the entire territory to its internationally recognized borders.

2. Russia is systematically destroying cities, infrastructure, and the environment to demoralise the population and trigger a large wave of refugees. Against this daily terror, we

demand that the "Western" governments support Ukraine in protecting its population and infrastructure against the bombing and missile attacks of the Russian occupying power. We are in favour of massive humanitarian, economic and military support for Ukraine from the rich states in Europe. The Ukrainian population urgently needs protection from Russian bombs and rockets.

3. We oppose attempts by "Western" governments, NATO and EU exponents to pressure Ukraine into making massive concessions to the Russian occupying power. We oppose the idea that Ukraine must cede several million people to the Putin regime. It is only up to the Ukrainian people to decide how to confront this atrocious situation of ongoing and possibly increasing occupation. We support the armed and unarmed resistance of Ukrainians against the Russian occupying power.

4. We demand that all Russians who refuse military service be granted secure residence status in the countries of Europe and North America. Mass desertion is important to weaken the Russian war machine.

5. We support the political struggle of Ukrainian trade unions, women's organisations, and environmental initiatives against the neoliberal anti-labour policies of the government under President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. These policies undermine Ukraine's socially broad-based defence against Russian occupation and render a socially just and ecologically sustainable reconstruction impossible.

6. We stand in solidarity with the anti-war movement, democratic opposition, and independent labour struggles in Russia. We also stand in solidarity with the oppressed nationalities in Russia who suffer particularly badly from the war and fight for their self-determination. It is their youth that is being exploited as cannon fodder by the Putin regime. These movements are a key factor for achieving a just peace and a democratic Russia.

7. Russia has imprisoned numerous people from Ukraine as political prisoners. Many have been sentenced

to decades in prison and penal camps. We demand their unconditional release. We demand that the International Red Cross be allowed to maintain regular contact with all prisoners of war. The exchange and release of prisoners of war is a prerequisite for any just peace.

8. Russia must pay reparations to the Ukrainian people. The oligarchs of Russia and Ukraine must be expropriated. Their

assets must be made available to the reconstruction of Ukraine and, once the Putin regime falls to the democratic development of Russia.

9. We demand that the “Western” governments immediately cancel Ukraine’s debts. This is a crucial condition for the sovereign reconstruction of the country. The rich states of Europe and North America must set up comprehensive and broad-based support programmes for the Ukrainian people and the reconstruction of the country. This reconstruction must take place under the democratic control of the population, trade unions, environmental initiatives, feminist organisations and organized neighbourhoods in the cities and villages.

10. We oppose all projects of the European and Northern American governments, as well as international organisations, to impose a neoliberal economic agenda on the Ukrainian people. This would prolong and deepen poverty and suffering. We also

denounce all efforts to sell off the property and assets of the Ukrainian population to foreign corporations. The recovery and reorganisation of agriculture, industry, energy systems and the entire social infrastructure must serve the socio-ecological transformation of Ukraine, not the supply of cheap labour, grain and hydrogen to Western European countries.

11. An effective military support of Ukraine does not require a new wave of armaments. We oppose NATO’s rearmament programmes and weapon exports to third countries. Instead, the countries of Europe and North America must provide the weapons from their existing, huge arsenals that will help Ukraine to defend itself effectively. In this sense, we demand that the arms industry should not serve the profit interests of capital – to the contrary, we want to work towards the social appropriation of the arms industry. This industry should serve the immediate interests of Ukraine. At the same time, for social and urgent ecological reasons, we underline the imperative of democratically converting the arms industry into socially useful production on a global scale.

12. We want to initiate a debate on a radical reorganisation of Europe. We want to contribute to developing a common European perspective for radical socio-ecological reforms, and ultimately for a fundamental ecosocialist transformation of the entire European continent in global solidarity. Within this framework, we

support the will of the Ukrainian people to join the EU, even though we reject the EU’s neoliberal foundations that impoverish millions of people and promote unequal development in Europe. We take the perspective of an accession of several countries in Eastern Europe and South-East Europe as an opportunity to reflect together on how such a radical socio-ecological change can be initiated throughout Europe, including a common energy strategy, ecological industrial conversion, pay-as-you-go pension systems, social labour regulation, solidarity-based migration policy, interregional transfer payments, and military security along with the conversion of the armaments industry. Trade union, feminist, ecological, anti-authoritarian left and socialist forces in Eastern Europe should play an important role in this debate.

This declaration has been launched jointly by Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement) in Ukraine, Posle Media Collective in Russia, Bewegung für den Sozialismus / Mouvement pour le Socialisme and solidarités – mouvement anticapitaliste, féministe, écosocialiste in Switzerland, emanzipation – Zeitschrift für ökosozialistische Strategie (DE, AT, CH).

We invite all interested organisations, groups, initiatives, and media collectives to spread and sign this declaration by 14 June. Please send confirmations of your signing to: Joao_Woyzeck@proton.me and redaktion@emanzipation.org

Breaking with labor, Teamster Leader O’Brien Accepts Trump’s Invitation to Speak at Republican Convention

23 June 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

His decision to speak at the convention constitutes a tacit endorsement of the far-right

Republican billionaire candidate whose attitudes and policies are racist, xenophobic, misogynistic, and

homophobic and whose party is anti-union. It represents a break with the rest of the U.S. labor movement as

most unions have historically supported the Democratic Party and have endorsed President Joe Biden.

"Our GREAT convention will unify Americans and demonstrate to the nation's working families they come first," Trump wrote on Truth Social, announcing O'Brien's acceptance. "When I am back in the White House, the hardworking Teamsters, and all working Americans, will once again have a country they can afford to live in and be respected around the world."

O'Brien has given a big boost to Trump. The Teamster leader said he would also like to speak at the Democratic Party convention in August, but having attended the Republican's he may not be welcome.

The Teamsters, with 1.5 million members, is the country's fourth largest union and the biggest private sector union. O'Brien had just announced that the small Amazon Labor Union would affiliate with the Teamsters, and he promised that the Teamster would organize the company's 1,525,000 workers. A development that raised workers' hope.

O'Brien's agreement to speak was a political shock, it was not a surprise. In early January O'Brien went to have dinner with Trump at the former president's mansion at Mar-a-Lago, Florida. At that time, John Palmer, the Teamsters international vice president at-large denounced Trump as "a known union buster, scab, and insurrectionist." Later that month the Teamsters broke with decades of loyalty to the Democrats and gave a \$45,000 donation to the RNC and also has given money to Republican candidates.

Trump's announcement that O'Brien would speak at the Republican Convention coincided with announcements that Timothy Mellon, heir of the \$1.4 billion Mellon family fortune, had given \$50 million to a political action committee supporting Trump. And at the same time Trump, in an appeal to his Evangelical and white Christian nationalist supporters, came out in favor of a new Louisiana state law that requires the Ten Commandments be posted in every classroom. And most important in terms of timing, the announcement comes on the eve of the U.S.

presidential debates and will be a talking point for Trump who will use O'Brien's support as proof that he is the candidate of working people. O'Brien's implicit endorsement of Trump is a betrayal of the labor movement's value of democracy, equality, and justice.

No doubt O'Brien's alignment with Trump will be most disappointing to the young leftist labor activists who supported him. Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) invited O'Brien to speak at its convention and endorsed him for president of the Teamsters while the progressive labor education center Labor Notes also touted him. TDU and Labor Notes brought young union activists from the Democratic Socialist of America into both O'Brien's campaign for Teamster president and into the Teamsters UPS contract campaign.

TDU's leaders believed that after 45 years of organizing—all but five spent in the opposition— by allying with O'Brien, they were finally on the inside and could be more successful organizing the ranks. Maybe so. But at what cost?

23 June 2024

Rightwing alliance strengthened in Italy

22 June 2024, by **Hélène Marra**

Italy has become a textbook case of this: under the effect of abstention, Meloni's right-wing remains hegemonic; it shows itself to be "respectable", institutional, Atlanticist, philoliberal and Europeanist. It is increasingly reassuring the bourgeoisie and the world of finance, who are ready for new alliances with the post-fascists to respond to the crisis of capital and increase exploitation.

Record abstentions, climate inaction and a climate of war

Italy also went to the polls with a record abstention rate: 6 percentage points lower than in 2019, with peaks

in the south and on the islands, where only 37% of voters turned out. Like other European countries, Italy is totally powerless to respond to the conflicts and multiple crises that are sweeping across the continent. Italy's leaders are in denial about the ecological disaster, turning their backs on the new generations and sinking into a climate of war and repression of the most essential humanist values.

The vote

strengthens Meloni's far right

The other essential element is the crystallisation of the vote around two poles: that of Meloni, which remains stable (28.8%), and that of Elly Schlein's Democratic Party, which, with 24% of the vote, presents itself as the most structured opposition and manages to polarise the vote of the soft anti-Meloni left. The PD was the leading party in large cities such as Turin and Milan, and emerged stronger than in the last political elections. With a meagre 10%, the

Five Star Movement, now normalised, has collapsed. Its political ambiguities and weaknesses mean that it can no longer embody the protest vote against the Italian party system. Matteo Salvini's League remains below 10%, while the Berlusconi right-wing Forza Italia, with 9.6%, is recovering slightly.

Building a strong social opposition

A fairly positive result (6.8%) was also achieved by the Greens and Left alliance (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra), thanks in particular to two symbolic candidates: Ilaria Salis, the teacher imprisoned in Hungary for taking part in an anti-fascist demonstration, and Mimmo Lucano, known for his commitment to welcoming exiles, who was also reconfirmed as mayor of the town of Riace. The brains behind the list, the Bonelli-Fratoianni duo, have already shown an openness to collaboration with the PD.

The first task is certainly to create the conditions for building a strong social opposition to the right-wing government, while at the same time encouraging the aggregation of anti-capitalist forces, drawn from social movements and young people, breaking with the current economic system. From this perspective, simply building a new alliance with the social democrats is neither sufficient nor desirable.

20 June 2024

Down with the Government of National Unity; Unite and Defend Workers and the Poor

21 June 2024, by Zabalaza for Socialism (ZASO)

The GNU represents the political consummation of the convergence of neoliberal forces that have since the late 1990s driven pro-market policies. While it is possible that this dream outcome for capital may result in short-term gains, including some capital investment and a more efficient government, these will not alter the fundamental trajectory of the new government: austerity on steroids within a stagnant and deindustrialising economy.

Public services are likely to be subjected to an onslaught of austerity and privatisation, with the generation and distribution of electricity and freight transport being primary targets. The much-vaunted and necessary NHI will probably be stalled and withered down to protect the private health sector. Already plans are emerging of extending the GNU to municipal level, leaving no part of the state safe from the tentacles of capital.

At this critical juncture, the progressive movements are weak and fragmented. Waiting in the wings to opportunistically carry the mantle of the left are the Radical Economic

Transformation (RET) forces, now in the form of the uMkhonto Party (MKP), which have demonstrated repeatedly that their only interests are political power and self-enrichment.

The EFF-led progressive caucus represents a potpourri of disgruntled parties with very little progressive, never mind left, politics. A convergence between MKP and EFF would establish a formidable political bloc, albeit riddled with contradictions, and would further complicate a process of uniting the socialist left. The GNU also represents an existential crisis for the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) project, especially for the SACP and COSATU. They will have to decide whether to remain in the ANC-led alliance and continue to provide a left fig-leaf for the government's neoliberal programme or finally to break away and work with others to reconstitute the left.

Amidst these political convulsions, the forces of the left - trade unions, popular movements and various socialists - remain weak. The Working Class Summit has the possibility of becoming a

national movement to mobilise grassroots struggles and to rebuild the forces of the left. However, the ultra-left sects are a stumbling block in the path of left renewal. Their insistence immediately to launch a mass workers' party is delusional and adventurist. Operating in their own ideological echo chambers, they are unable to analyse the conjuncture, not least the state of movements.

There is much work to do and difficulties to navigate. The capitalist forces will be emboldened by the GNU and will accelerate their attacks on the poor majority. The MKP-RET-EFF will attempt to position themselves as the authentic representatives of the black majority and will probably find fertile ground for their rhetoric. There is therefore an urgent need to act decisively but to avoid the pitfalls of sectarianism. More than ever, we need to muster our forces, stand with the workers and the poor to resist austerity and privatisation.

We must fight for a meaningful Basic Income Grant to cushion the unemployed and the poor from the rising cost of living. We must stand in solidarity with workers and their unions to fight retrenchments and

stand shoulder to shoulder with the women, LGBTI+ people and foreign nationals who bear the brunt of violence, misogyny, homophobia and xenophobia.

We must continue engaging politically, clarify our analyses of the conjuncture and develop a shared vision of political conscientisation, mass mobilisation and organisation.

An Injury to one is an injury to all!

*Issued by the ZASO Secretariat
17 June 2024*

On the elections in India

20 June 2024, by Radical Socialist

The election results were a considerable blow to the media-created aura of invincibility that Modi paraded. The BJP ([Bharatiya Janata Party](#)), far from getting close to 350 seats, was cut to 240, and the NDA ([National Democratic Alliance](#)) as a whole went down to 293 seats.

The biggest shock came from Uttar Pradesh. In 2019 the BJP and its allies had won 64 seats, the [Bahujan Samaj Party](#) won 10 seats, the [Samajwadi Party](#) won 5 (these two and the RLD had been in an alliance) and the [Congress](#) had won just 1 seat. In 2024, the BJP got 33 and its allies 3 seats, the SP got 37, the Congress 6, and the independently contesting [Azad Samaj Party](#) leader Chandrashekhkar Azad won with over 51% of the votes cast in the Nagina constituency in Bijnore, UP. c.

In Maharashtra, the manipulative politics failed to pay dividends, and the Congress-[Nationalist Congress Party-Sharad Pawar—Shiv Sena-Uddhav Thackeray](#) bloc got 30 out of 48 seats.

In West Bengal, the [TMC](#) got 29 seats, with the Congress-Left alliance getting only one seat for the Congress but pulling away a large part of the anti-incumbency votes to itself rather than all of it going to the BJP. Voting figures suggest that in about a dozen seats, the left vote increase actually saved the TMC. The BJP did manage to steamroller the opposition alliance and any other party in MP, in Odisha, in Gujarat (where however Congress won one seat after two terms).

We can say that Narendra Modi as BJP leader and the BJP as a key element in

the [RSS combine](#) had the following agenda.

1. Establish the ideological dominance of Hindutva. Regardless of whether one calls it fascist, fascist type, or post fascist with a strong kinship with Zionism, this means a deeply right-wing nationalism based on hatred directed at certain Others, and a homogeneous "nation". This also involves the imposition of a firm control over education and the mass media, and institutionalizing the ideological arguments of Hindutva.

2. Destroy where possible all political parties and bring under control where destruction is impossible.

3. Control and subvert the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the military and others. Empty the content of democracy and federalism while claiming to uphold the constitution.

4. Push ahead with the RSS agenda in civil society and use systematic violence against Muslims, but also against atheists and rationalists. Selective assaults on Christians (as in Manipur) and stronger assaults on Christian institutions working for Adivasis.

The election results have demonstrated the limits of the second item. The INDIA ([Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance](#)) bloc has been able to severely shake the apparently unchallengeable power of BJP and of Modi personally. Electorally speaking, it was able to shift the conversation to the constitution and to aspects of the economy, thereby weakening the appeal of the BJP.

The project of further destroying what remains of the federal structure has to be put on hold, or may even be slightly rolled back. Economic hardships have grown, and this election saw economic issues become much more important, despite Modi's recurrent attempts to communalize them. Socially, the Hindutva project repeatedly hits an internal contradiction. While it wants to show the Muslims above all as the Other, it is also a dominant caste project. Given the substantial degree of overlap between oppressed caste identity and exploited class identity, a kind of class based electoral political move could be seen.

But the repressive machinery is not going to slow down. As the move against author Arundhati Roy in a UAPA case shows, keeping the Home Ministry with Amit Shah was not just a gesture of defiance to the allies. It had the goal of pursuing repression more aggressively.

Hollowing out the institutions of democracy and silencing civil liberties have met with only sporadic resistance from the parties of opposition. The Supreme Court has over the decade bent quite a bit in the saffron direction, including in its Ram Mandir Babri Masjid judgements. The Election Commission has become blatantly partisan.

New Criminal Laws that make India more and more of a police state are coming into force from July next month. They will not be opposed by the new partners of the BJP. We will have to wait and see if the INDIA bloc led by the Congress will try and launch mass mobilizations and public resistance against them.

The election results have punctured Modi's aura of invincibility. They have opened up a space, and it is for independent mass mobilisations that will show far we can resist BJP now?

The Left faces a complex challenge now

The great temptation before the left is to go for a stable bloc with the so-called Centre-Left parties. In the first place, this is perennially a drive when the FPTP system in particular throws up a strong right-wing party or alliance. But the Congress, and several other parties that are currently in or supporting the INDIA bloc are far from even being centrist. The Radical Socialist election stand had explained: 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 partially successful. This was where the BJP, in the second Modi government, made the decisive push.

A bloc where the focus will be on removing the BJP 'at any cost', while 'other things' come later, will be a bloc that silences or marginalises the demands of workers, peasants, various oppressed groups, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender-sexual minorities.

While the politics of such a bloc moves in a rightward direction, the definition of a "realist" left will correspondingly shift, in order to increase by a few the

meagre tally of the left parties. Yet, even with bloc formation, it is significant that out of the 9 MPs of the left parties, 7 come from areas where the left has fought on its own for years.

Should the Left prioritise popular front politics, this independent mass struggle will be subordinated to bourgeois parliamentarism, with a long-term aim of moving to a stable two-bloc system, where the deepening of the extreme right will mean that mere palliatives will be given exaggerated importance. Instead, combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means, the left has to try and push back harder. It is the expansion and success of struggles outside parliament that will be key in the effort to progressively erode Hindutva.

18 June 2024

A victory for "progressivism" in Mexico - what now?

19 June 2024, by Fabrice Thomas

In the presidential elections, it was Claudia Sheinbaum who presented herself as the heir and successor of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), supported by his party, MORENA (National Regeneration Movement), who won hands down, against her competitor, the candidate of the coalition of three right-wing parties (PRI, PAN, PRD). With 60 per cent of the votes cast, she crushed the right-wing candidate, who although heavily supported by the vast majority of the media, obtained barely 30 per cent of the votes. In the legislative elections, MORENA's coalition won 365 seats out of 500 and will have a qualified majority making it possible for constitutional laws to be passed, which was not the case under AMLO's presidency.

Popular rejection of policies

These results first of all confirm the deep rejection by a large majority of the Mexican people of the parties which dominated and locked down political life for decades. Already in 2018, AMLO's victory had shaken the corrupt regime established by the PRI, relayed by the PAN. The dominant parties hoped that economic and social difficulties would quickly wear down Lopez Obrador's government and ceaselessly tried to destabilize it throughout the six years of his presidential mandate (non-renewable in Mexico). But despite the profound limitations of his policies, the economic and social measures taken in favour of the most disadvantaged sectors of the population and the

curbs placed on the most violent policies and practices of neoliberalism ensured that his government had broad majority support among the population.

This popularity was transferred to his candidate whose former mandate at the head of the municipality of Mexico City and feminist positions also counted in her large victory.

End of the "perfect dictatorship"

We must take stock of what this electoral triumph means. The regime that prevailed in Mexico for almost a century ("the perfect dictatorship"), where one party, the PRI, concentrated all powers, managed a system corrupted to the core,

controlled all mass organizations, including unions, won all the elections, rigging them when necessary, in a formally democratic framework, seems to have suffered a mortal blow. After having had to share part of government power at the beginning of the 2000s with a right-wing party, the PAN, and a split from its own ranks, the PRD, the PRI now only has 10 per cent of the votes and, with its allies, finds itself in the minority in parliament and in state governments.

The electoral campaign was marked by deep polarization. To the most delusional accusations from the right and the media against Lopez Obrador and his candidate, they responded with massive popular mobilizations. This resulted in strong politicization among the popular classes and an

unusually high turnout, 60 per cent as in 2018, during the election of AMLO as president.

The broad credit of Claudia Sheinbaum

The confirmed rejection of the parties of the old system does not guarantee real and profound change for the working classes. The outgoing president's policy was based on a personalist mode of government, very ambiguous relationships with social movements, and an economy that was certainly partly redistributive, but always based on extractivism. AMLO also failed to reduce the widespread

influence of drug traffickers and the endemic violence, particularly against women. Claudia Sheinbaum benefits from a credit which today exceeds that of her predecessor, and she has a parliamentary majority which initially gives her additional means to promote radical reforms. Will she want to? Will she be able to?

The fact that among the newly elected representatives of her MORENA party, a large number are defectors from the old parties of the system and that none come from the left of the party, is not a good sign in this sense. But the pressure of popular intervention and of the social movements that mobilized in the campaign can push her in another direction.

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

Facing the future rightwing coalition, for a social and unitive response!

19 June 2024, by Gauche anticapitaliste/SAP Antikapitalisten

If the results of the Flemish far right are not as high as expected, Flanders is nevertheless facing a new progression of Vlaams Belang, the worst enemy of social movements, women, LGBT people, racialized people, and of the working class in general. These results are also the result of the normalization of its ideas, through other parties, notably the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) and the Reformist Movement (MR) but also others like Vooruit (Forward) and its campaign dripping with racism which aimed to prepare a coalition with the N-VA.

In Wallonia and Brussels, it is a real slap in the face for the government left, for the Socialist Party and especially for Ecolo, sanctioned for its policy of compromise. The PTB-PVDA (Workers' Party of Belgium - radical left) is progressing in Brussels and

Flanders but shows a slight decline in Wallonia. This demonstrates both an aspiration for another policy, but at the same time highlights the limits of a logic of self-construction based on an electoral strategy, which leads to the adoption of very minimalist lines of rupture.

All this portends very right-wing governments, with the N-VA in Flanders and at the federal level and with the MR and Les Engagés who now play a central role on the French-speaking side, with more than likely a two-party coalition in Wallonia.

These electoral results come in a context where capitalists are increasingly choosing the most reactionary policies in an attempt to overcome their crisis and their own inability to govern. This is what we are witnessing with the rise of the far

right elsewhere in Europe, and this is what is concretely happening before our eyes with Macron's choice to accept the far right's demand to dissolve the National Assembly, even though the National Rally (RN) obtained more than 30% per cent in the European election in France. Faced with this, the Anti-capitalist Left expresses its most total solidarity with the French comrades who will have to lead a battle whose stakes are crucial, not only for them, but also for the European balance of power, or even beyond.

50,758 anti-capitalist votes

In this gloomy panorama, the results of the Anti-capitalist list in the European elections are unexpected.

With almost 2 per cent of the votes (1.97% per cent exactly) in the French-speaking electoral college, 50,758 people gave us their vote! We would like to thank everyone who supported us and took part in the campaign in one way or another. This shows us that against the tide of this reactionary wave, there are real aspirations for something else, for an emancipated society, free from capitalist exploitation and all other forms of oppression. This is the message that we carried throughout the campaign and the one that we will continue to carry.

Our observation is that anti-capitalism is much more widely shared in society than what would have us believe the right, the government left (which has continued since Sunday to deplore "the rise of extremes", shamefully putting an equal sign between the far right and the radical left) and the media, whose editorial choices have shown us how difficult it is to obtain fair treatment and media visibility in comparison with the established parties.

The Anti-capitalist Left would also like to thank the comrades of the NPA-

L'Anticapitaliste, with whom we collaborated and who supported us through the presence of Philippe Poutou on our list, thus allowing us on a few rare occasions to open a breach in the media apathy around our candidacy.

Unite and fight!

Obviously, in the coming years we will find ourselves facing reactionary governments. We will therefore have to organize ourselves to fight against the attacks they are preparing against our social conquests (30 billion euros in "savings" announced in the state budget) and against an increasingly threatening far right.

On our level, the encouraging results of the Anti-capitalist list put us on the road to continue our combat. We commit ourselves to carry forward, with others, the construction of a red-green front, an eco-socialist and anti-capitalist front, which we need in order to resist in the face of the rise of the reactionary rights and the far right that the policy of the "lesser evil", conducted by the government left and

supported by a union bureaucracy, has not succeeded in containing. This strategy from above paralyzes the struggles by making them dependent on the apparatuses of these organizations. The only response to the fascist threat is a massive and democratic struggle, which brings together activists from all walks of life: anti-capitalists, environmentalists, trade unionists, anti-racists, anti-imperialists, feminists, LGBTI ...

The Anti-capitalist Left invites you right away, this Sunday, June 16, to take to the streets with the Anti-fascist Coordination of Belgium (CAB) against the far right and to reaffirm our rejection of its nauseating ideas and its racist and anti-social policies. This is an important initiative which must constitute a first step in the construction of this front.

Let's learn to strike together - our future and the interests of our class depend on it.

11 June 2024

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

A Socialist Congressman Fights for His Political Life in New York

17 June 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

While attention in the coming November 5 election is naturally focused on the U.S. presidency, the nation's most powerful office, contested by incumbent Democratic president Joe Biden and former president Donald J. Trump, in addition all 435 Representatives in the House and 34 senators are also up for election. At present the Senate is divided. Democrats have a 51-49 majority in the Senate (including independents Bernie Sanders, Kyrsten Sinema, Angus King, and Joe Manchin). But a lot of attention is being given to Bowman's race in the

Democratic Party primary election in the 16th Democratic Congressional District, partly in the north Bronx, a borough of New York City, and partly in the wealthier suburb of Westchester because of its importance for the left.

Bowman, a black educator, first won election as an advocate of the Blacks and Latinos in his district in 2020 and was reelected in 2022, but today he faces fierce opposition because of his support for a ceasefire. He claims that 69% of the people in his district support a ceasefire, and he holds a demonstration for a ceasefire every

Tuesday.

The district has a population of 756,711 that is 39% white, 29% Latino, 19% Black, and 3.2% Asian, and 11% of the district is Jewish. Historically most New York Jews were liberals. When Barack Obama ran for president in 2008, he received 90% of votes cast in the 16th district, more than in any other in the country. Many Jews voted for Bowman in his previous elections, but since the Gaza War broke out last Oct. 7, a majority of Jews appear to have abandoned him.

Bowman's opponent Latimer, who is of Irish and Italian descent, has spent 35 years in local government and is the chief executive of Westchester County. He is center-left Democrat, though he calls himself a progressive, who has won the support of dozens of local mayors and other local elected officials. The progressive group Indivisible split over the Bowman-Latimer contest. AIPIC has given \$600,000 to the Latimer campaign and has spent \$12 million on attack ads targeting Bowman. At one point, Latimer claimed that Bowman's campaign funds came "from Hamas." Latimer also has suggested that Bowman has ignored the Latino, Asian, and white members of his

district.

While AIPAC, many of whose donors are wealthy Republicans, supports Latimer, Bowman has the backing of Democrats like Senator Bernie Sanders and fellow representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Bowman, who was initially put forward by the Justice Democrats, later joined DSA, but has had a rocky relationship with the group. In 2021, Bowman voted for funds for Israel's "iron dome" anti-missile system and then joined a trip to visit Israel organized by J Street, the liberal Jewish lobbying group that supports U.S. military aid to Israel and opposes the Palestinian right of return. DSA debated then whether or

not to expel Bowman and Bowman said he would not pay dues to the group, but he was not expelled and did not quit, and today DSA is supporting him again because of his advocacy of a ceasefire.

If Latimer wins the June 25 primary he will win the election, and he could be relied upon to vote with the Democrats, but Bowman's defeat would weaken the nine-member Squad of progressive Democrats in the House, and it will be a defeat for DSA which has just five members there. Recent polls show Latimer in the lead—but the election isn't over yet.

16 June 2024

Systemic Poverty is a Huge Hindrance to China's Economy

16 June 2024, by **Tommy Wei**

The second encounter was in a southern city in the summer. I found a "watchtower" built by villagers about a hundred years ago in a village that had become part of the city. This tower-like structure was used as a defence against bandits, made of reinforced concrete, with only a small space on each floor and narrow shooting windows on all sides. There was no restriction on access to this historic building, so I began my climb. As I entered one of the floors via a steep narrow iron step ladder, I suddenly noticed a wooden board in the corner with a mosquito net stretched over it, in which two ragged toddlers were staring wide-eyed at me, the uninvited guest. It turned out that this abandoned building with no electricity or water, full of mosquitoes and dust, was the "home" of a family in the city.

Such pictures of poverty can be found in any country, perhaps due to unemployment caused by the overall sluggishness of the national economy, or due to personal trauma and drug addiction. However, China has its own

special feature: systemic "working" poverty in the midst of rapid economic development. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the average weekly working hours of the country's employed workers in December 2023 was 49 hours, a new record high in modern China and one of the highest in the world. Despite this, the average annual wage income of the country's residents in 2023 was only 22,053 yuan (about 2,800 euros).

Systemic "working" poverty persists

The documentary "Eighteen-year-olds on the Assembly Line," released in 2016, vividly records this situation. The director spent three years in Dongguan's industrial zones, showing viewers that even the world's hardest workers struggle to escape poverty in China's factories. The hourly wage can be as low as 10 yuan (about 1.3 euros) for a 12-hour day; ordinary

entertainment in metropolises quickly drains paychecks; and the money needed for marriage and homeownership remains a distant goal.

In 2022, a TikToker filmed a wedding banquet in the Daliang Mountain region and was summoned by the police because the widely circulated video revealed the shocking aspects of poverty in rural China: the wedding room was in disrepair, with few usable tables, chairs, or electrical appliances. Guests squatted on the floor to enjoy the only dish at the wedding banquet—pickled bok choy and tofu soup. This explains why many young Chinese are still willing to work in sweatshops.

Xi Jinping solemnly declared on February 25, 2021, that China's "campaign against poverty has achieved a comprehensive victory ... and created another human miracle that will be remembered throughout history!" Some sarcastically comment that perhaps the economic downturn during the epidemic left relatively

wealthy urban residents in dire straits, thus lowering the bar for “poverty”.

The proliferation of smartphones, short videos, and self-publishing media has made encounters and accounts of poverty ubiquitous on the Internet. While these images and texts cannot replace rigorous economic data, they challenge the government’s narrative of a good economic situation.

Even with strict censorship, I still found a pathetic news story about poverty in *South Reviews*, a mainstream magazine in China. Zhao was a 19-year-old young man who died before the spring of 2024. During the eight months before his death, he had sold his plasma 16 times, earning 200-400 yuan (about 25-50 euros) and a meal each time. Zhao had a job as an Internet café steward and led a modest lifestyle. He seldom went out with friends and couldn’t afford an electric bicycle for transportation. His biggest expense before his death was a smartphone he bought for his father in December last year. His home had no computer, TV, or sofa, and he didn’t turn on the lights at dusk to save on electricity. His mother couldn’t work due to illness, and his father was a migrant worker. The blood station where he sold blood belongs to a large-scale bio-enterprise. This company’s annual report for 2023 shows it had 79 operating blood stations, collecting a total of 2,415 tons of plasma that year.

After three years of strict quarantine, China’s economy didn’t rebound as hoped in 2023. Now in 2024, the hot topic is “overcapacity”—the European Union and America are planning to increase tariff rates on electric cars made in China. In the face of Western boycotts of Chinese products, Xi’s latest solution is to let the Chinese people absorb the “surplus capacity”. In March, the State Council issued an action plan for promoting large-scale equipment renewal and consumer goods trade-in; in April, the Ministry of Commerce and 14 other ministries jointly issued another action plan, organizing a nationwide campaign of trade-ins of cars and home appliances and ‘renewal’ of home furnishings.

The trade-in policy mentioned in the

action plan includes ‘giving preferential treatment to consumers who trade in their old appliances for energy-saving appliances’ and “encouraging resourceful regions to subsidize consumers to buy green and smart home appliances”. For families living in abandoned buildings or for villagers in Daliang Mountain who hardly own any appliances, such a policy can only be said to be better than nothing.

This reminds me of a British “joke” I heard in my childhood: “Mommy, why is our house so cold?” “Because we can’t afford coal, darling.” “Why can’t we afford coal?” “Because your dad lost his job.” “Why did dad lose his job?” “Because there’s too much coal.”

According to researchers Wan Haiyuan and Meng Fanqiang from the Institute of Income Distribution of China at Beijing Normal University, the number of people in China earning less than 2,000 yuan (about 250 euros) per month reached 964 million, accounting for about 69 percent of the total population; as much as 95 percent of the population earns less than 5,000 yuan (about 637 euros) per month. Expecting such a population to absorb the products of export manufacturing industries established to meet the needs of developed countries is tantamount to fantasy.

Maybe the target group of this “brilliant plan” is the so-called “middle class”. However, data for the first quarter of 2023 shows that China’s mortgage balance was 38.94 trillion yuan (about 5 trillion euros). Much of this debt is carried by higher-income urban residents, so how much incentive does this class have to buy new electric cars or smart refrigerators?

The causes of China’s systemic poverty are not only low wages and awful working conditions, as shown in Dongguan’s electronics factories, but also prohibitively expensive housing, education, healthcare, childcare, and senior care industries. These sectors allow the business class and the government to extract high profits and taxes. While consumer goods like cell phones and cars may be more affordable than they were 30 years ago, ordinary food and drinking water

free of excessive pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and heavy metals have become luxuries. Few Chinese have truly “overcome” poverty when their lives are measured against a standard of decency, health, and relaxation with a promising future.

The causes of China’s systemic poverty

The repercussions of poverty are visible: the rich are constantly looking for ways to move their assets overseas to escape devaluation; tens of thousands of workers and even some middle-class people are traveling through the dangerous rainforests of Central America to flee to the US in order to sell their labor at a better price; more and more young people are losing hope in accumulating wealth and moving up the social ladder, so they refuse to work hard and choose to live with low aspirations; and some desperate people are choosing to end their own lives or harm others out of frustration.

So, why didn’t China’s rulers allow ordinary people to have more “dividends” during the past decades of economic prosperity? For example, universal unemployment insurance; decent pensions for all elderly people; adequate allowances for students; higher minimum wage; a more inclusive public housing system. Currently, the average pension in rural China is only about 204 yuan per month (about 26 euros), according to a 2023 report by *Farmers’ Daily*. University students need a certificate of poverty to apply for small state subsidies of 1,000 to 3,000 yuan per year (about 127-382 euros). Government low-cost housing requires a local hukou and a per capita household income of less than 960 yuan per month (about 122 euros), excluding most rural migrant workers.

An interesting explanation for this comes from the “Book of Lord Shang,” a classical writing from the Qin Dynasty (221BC). It suggests that ‘the way to rule the country is to weaken the people,’ keeping them poor so they depend on the state and cannot

confront it. This technique helped establish the first united empire in Chinese history. Some indications suggest that Xi admires the Qin system, such as the heavily funded state television drama "The Fugue of Great Qin," which aired after Xi established himself as ruler for life.

Systemic poverty

will be a stumbling block

While these 2,000-year-old "arts of ruling" are primitive and absurd from the perspective of modern statecraft and capitalist economics, Xi Jinping's style of rule in the last decade or so has given us the impression that anything is possible. Whether it is a

byproduct of failed economic policies or an intentionally designed way of harnessing the people, systemic poverty will be a stumbling block rather than an enabler for China's rise.

12 June 2024

First published: [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#).

Five Takeaways from the Recent Elections in Ireland

15 June 2024, by **Diarmuid Flood, Paul Murphy**

However, what we saw in the five weeks of the election campaign did not come from nowhere. The election catalysed and accelerated existing processes. In the absence of major progressive social struggles, with the exception of the Palestine solidarity movement, the political terrain has undoubtedly shifted rightwards. Ireland has caught up with most of the rest of Europe and the Global North, with the emergence of a reactionary social movement in opposition to asylum seekers and the growth of a racist, climate denialist, anti-LGBTQ, and sexist far-right.

Both have fed off the failure of the government to address the housing crisis and the failure of the left to build a mass housing movement. All that has happened in a country that is getting wealthier and wealthier but where precious little is "trickling down" to working class people hammered by the rising cost of living. These are precisely the conditions that breed anger and resentment - which the far right has consciously worked to direct downwards to refugees and other oppressed groups rather than upwards to landlords, bosses, and the government.

Sinn Féin has paid a heavy price for both its attempt to position itself as a responsible party ready for capitalist

governance and its major blunders on migration. Meanwhile the so-called 'political centre' has displayed a cynical willingness to weaponise migration to bolster its own position, regardless of the legitimisation of the arguments of the far-right. In light of this, the modest gains made by the socialist left on local councils in these difficult circumstances is a bright spot.

Government parties successfully played the immigration card

In a reversal of fortune, the main two government parties Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael stabilised their support. Even though their respective vote shares are down by 4% and 2% respectively since 2019, and they lost 41 Council seats between them in their worst ever local election, they are eager to portray this election as a victory. Their representatives, boosted by the media, have run a celebration lap, proclaiming that 'the centre is holding'. Importantly for them, they are now trending positively and will be licking their lips looking at Sinn Féin's

results. Rumours are starting to spread that the emboldened coalition may look to capitalise on this situation and call a General Election in November.

This moderate turnaround can largely be attributed to the government's successful use of the manufactured panic around immigration. While directly responsible for the record breaking levels of homelessness and the disgraceful conditions migrants and refugees have found themselves in, many establishment politicians have at the same time postured about immigration concerns.

The two months before the election saw a new measure of performative cruelty announced almost every week. Cuts were made to accommodation and supports for Ukrainian refugees (overwhelmingly women and children). Means tests for asylum seekers (which would cost more money to implement than they would save) were announced. Men seeking asylum were left homeless on the streets as a policy choice was made to deny them accommodation. Repeatedly the government then destroyed their tents and closed off areas of Dublin City beside the canal to prevent them from coming back. All of this was designed to centre the issue of migration while at the same

time posing the government as the most hardline in terms of response.

Cynically, while themselves centring the issue of migration, they have also sought to capitalise on fear of the far right by continuing to present themselves as progressive opponents of the 'barbarians at the gates' of both far right and far left. Some portion of their recovery can be put down to people voting for what they perceive as stability. In classic 'divide and conquer' terms the government has shifted the blame for their own failures onto the most marginalised in society.

Sinn Féin has paid the price for moving to the right

The most striking outcome of this election has been the collapse of Sinn Féin's vote to under 12%. This is in stark contrast to the polls, which had them in the mid-30s from 2022 when it seemed likely they would cruise into councils and ultimately government. Instead of building on the anti-establishment mood which catapulted them to the top of the polls, Sinn Féin have moved to establish themselves as a 'safe' replacement for Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. Leading party reps have reassured big business, investors, and vulture funds that Sinn Féin 'won't go after them' and that they have 'nothing to fear'. They initially resisted the call for the Israeli ambassador to be expelled from Ireland and then shook the hand of Joe Biden in the White House, despite his support for the genocide of Palestinians.

The rise of racist ideas and fear of asylum seekers presented Sinn Féin with an undoubted challenge. They were consciously and effectively targeted by a far-right smear campaign on social media, intent on posing them as 'traitors to Ireland'. No matter what they did, they likely would have lost some support. However, how they responded led to a deepening collapse of their vote as the election went on.

When the government consciously moved to make migration the central issue of the campaign, through their repeated implementation of new policies of cruelty that would not improve the lives of anybody (Irish or not), Sinn Féin should have stood against it. They should have pointed back to the government's responsibility for all of the crises facing working class people and rejected their divide and rule tactics. They would have undoubtedly lost some support, but by holding the line they could have maintained their focus on the government and fought the election on the grounds of housing, health, and the cost of living.

Instead, they welcomed each and every new measure of performative cruelty. Not only that, each time they promised that Sinn Féin would go even further - seeking to appear even harder against asylum seekers than the government. In line with the speeches of their TDs, their election material prominently featured a section highlighting their 'opposition to open borders'. In some instances they went further - Martin Browne, Sinn Féin TD for Tipperary, addressed an anti-migrant protest in Roscrea.

This was not only morally and politically wrong, it was a strategic disaster. It not only meant that migration became a key issue in the election, but that Sinn Féin could be portrayed and understood as 'turncoats' and 'flip-floppers'. For those that viewed opposition to immigration as a key issue, they would not trust Sinn Féin in any case because of the party's relatively proud history of opposition to racism. Its acceptance of immigration as a major problem simply accelerated the ebbing of some of its support towards independents and others who were putting forward an anti-immigration viewpoint. It also resulted in Sinn Féin losing some support from progressive people who were appalled at their new positioning.

They hoped that the mere mention of 'change' would allow them to sail into government. The reality is that Sinn Féin's failure to mobilise their supporters for this change or to even outline what an alternative to FF-FG would look like has squandered their

momentum and left them in a blind alley. The party failed to build on the anti-establishment energy that emerged in 2020 and is now paying the price for it.

But it's not too late. Sinn Féin still maintains a strong base of support in communities across the country. If Sinn Féin, in combination with the trade union movement, put conscious effort into building a movement for housing and against the government they would increase the chance of reigniting the anti-establishment mood of 2020. Of course many of their more craven representatives will be calling for the party to take a further step to the right.

The far-right has taken a concerning step forward

In the aftermath of the election, there has been much media commentary suggesting that the far-right has not made a significant breakthrough. However, while they may not have achieved their own bloated expectations, they have taken a major step forward. In the European Elections across the country, 91,000 people (or 5%) cast their first preference vote for a candidate of the far-right, while an additional 196,000 (11%) voted for populist right candidates (including Aontú and Independent Ireland). The same sort of results are seen in local elections across the country. That is a remarkable breakthrough for political forces which were previously almost non-existent in Ireland.

In the run up to the election, and after months of far-right agitation and a simultaneous media circus, 'immigration' polled as the second highest concern among voters in multiple samples, trailing behind 'housing'. If you canvassed enough doors during the election you were sure to be asked about immigration at least a handful of times. Sometimes as a question of what all the fuss was about and more often as a concern. It is only thanks to the far-right's own fractured nature and incompetence, with multiple far-right candidates

competing in various local election wards, that they have not turned those votes into more seats.

In total those parties and independents which can be considered 'far-right' took five seats. This breaks down to one seat for the Irish Freedom Party (IFP) in Palmerstown-Fonthill, one seat for the outrightly fascist National Party (NP) in Blanchardstown-Mulhuddart, and one seat each for anti-immigration campaigners Malachy Steenson in Dublin North Inner City, Gavin Pepper in Ballymun-Finglas, and Tom McDonnell in Kildare. In contrast with these parties, the more amorphous and right-populist 'Independent Ireland' fared significantly better, securing 23 seats and an MEP position. Their European election candidate for Midlands North West, Ciarán Mullooly, was elected on the final count beating the Sinn Féin candidate Michelle Gildernew. Their other MEP candidate for Dublin, Niall Boylan, also polled concerningly well but narrowly missed out in the final stages. Independent Ireland entered the election with thirteen councillors and finished with twenty three. This represents 40% of the total number of candidates they ran. While Independent Ireland is less politically coherent than the forces to their right, the party's success is concerning. In contrast to this, Aontú slightly underperformed expectations, ending up with only eight seats, perhaps due to not dog whistling quite loudly enough.

Equally concerning are the many thousands of votes received by many far right candidates and individuals who failed to get elected. In many scenarios far right candidates were close to winning seats and in a handful of cases this was despite the fact that there were multiple far right candidates running in the same ward. Most strikingly, candidates from the Hitler-quoting National Party got hundreds of first preference votes in multiple different wards. In the European Elections Derek Blighe, leader of 'Ireland First', secured 25,000 first preference votes representing 3.6% of the vote in Ireland South. When combined with the three other far right candidates their collective vote share was 8%. In

Midlands North West, the Independent Ireland candidate Ciarán Mullooly received nearly 58,000 first preference votes, securing 8.4%. Again this was achieved with five other far right candidates on the ballot.

While the far right did not make the gains they would have hoped for, they are now discussing the need for greater collaboration and could present a more significant threat in the next elections. A clear takeaway is anti-racist and anti-fascist forces must get serious before they do.

The socialist left found relative success in difficult circumstances

In the context of a rightwing social movement against immigration and a media-circus parroting the same narrative, it was an uphill battle for the socialist left, centrally People Before Profit (PBP) and Solidarity (electoral group of the Socialist Party - ISA), to gain from this election. However in key areas PBP has managed to make important gains picking up four extra council seats for a total of ten. Solidarity has made a return of three council seats, losing one overall. In total this will amount to thirteen seats for the collective grouping of People Before Profit-Solidarity.

PBP ran campaigns across the country calling to 'evict Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael' and to 'put campaigners on the council'. Particular focus was given to the housing crisis with emphasis on the massive amount of derelict and vacant homes that have been neglected by establishment-dominated councils. It was pointed out that far from Ireland being 'full' there are more than enough houses lying empty. This messaging was consistently combined with anti-racist arguments. In the context of relatively low levels of class struggle nationally, local community campaigns for housing, amenities, and resources assumed an important role in boosting the profile of our candidates as proven fighters

for working people. In Dublin South West, we had impactful campaigns to save the Tallaght Post Office, for funding to Kiltalown Park, and for zebra crossings in Kingswood. All of them played an important role in demonstrating the impact that PBP could have at a local level.

While there were important victories in Carlow, Sligo, and Cork, it should be noted that the vast majority of seats were won in Dublin. It remains a vital task for the socialist left to lay down roots in the other key urban areas as a stepping stone to becoming a truly national force. The experience in Dublin shows that where there is consistent community-based campaigning, we can carve out support for socialist ideas, and help to resist the rise of the far right in working-class areas. It should also be noted that across the country a number of left independents and other small left parties managed to retain seats. Unfortunately, in a loss for the anti-war and Palestine solidarity movements, Clare Daly lost her MEP seat after a vicious campaign in the media to portray her as 'Putin's puppet'.

In the context of a difficult period, this election can be considered a relative success for the socialist left. With manufactured panic around immigration, and the momentum behind the far right, these modest gains represent an important achievement. The many socialist and left candidates played a vital role in cutting across the immigration narrative with anti-establishment and anti-racist messaging. The collapse of the Sinn Féin vote may make it easier for our TD seats to be defended, but it is still undoubtedly the case that we will enter the next General Election in a broadly defensive posture. We need now to work to convince many of those who supported People Before Profit to join it and to build it as a significant eco-socialist force with roots in working class communities.

There is a lot more to be done

After weeks and months of campaigning it's important for all

those who have been active in campaigns to take a breather, reflect on the election itself, and prepare to continue building. However, we will not have long before another general election is upon us. Three things are vital:

We urgently need to mobilise people on the issue of housing, pointing people's anger towards the corporate landlords, developers, and the government which allows them to grow rich off people's misery. Pressure should be placed on Sinn Féin to drop their dead-end slide to the right and recommit to mobilising their supporters against the government. Together with the trade union movement, left parties, and grassroots housing activists, we should seek to organise a major

protest before October's budget seeking massive investment in social and genuinely affordable housing, rent controls that actually reduce rents, and a state construction company. This could serve to raise people's sights again and give people hope.

The electoral breakthroughs of the far and populist right will have alarmed many. All anti-racist and anti-fascist forces now need to be organised in a real united front rooted in working class communities. A grassroots social media operation is needed to counter the lies and hatred spouted by the right's outlets and redirect working class anger away from migrants and refugees.

PBP should champion a left alliance or a "vote left, transfer left" pact for the next elections. If a fundamental

change of government is on offer, many more people can be mobilised to vote than in these local elections which saw the lowest turnout ever. In order for this not to lead to more betrayal and disappointment it must be based on a commitment not to go into government with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael (a commitment that unfortunately Sinn Féin and the Social Democrats refuse to give), agreement to oppose the scapegoating of asylum seekers for the failure of the government, as well as a combative programme of taking on the capitalist elite responsible for the crises in housing, health, and climate.

15 June 2024

This is a slightly enlarged version of the article in [Rupture](#) published on 14 June 2024.

Historic Defeat of the Mexican Right

14 June 2024, by **José Luis Hernández Ayala**

Beyond the purely electoral effects—winning the presidency of the Republic, seven of nine state governorships and a qualified majority to approve constitutional reforms in the Legislative Branch—the effects of the electoral defeat on the right-wing parties, despite all their impudence, dirty war and the shameless support of the forces of the international right, has opened the way to promote deeper changes that imply the definitive liquidation of the old PRI regime of domination and neoliberalism along with the search for a more just country, free and democratic.

The progressive candidate for the presidency of the Republic, Clara Sheinbaum Pardo, from the Morena party (Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional or National Regeneration Movement), in alliance with the Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVE or Green Ecologist Party) and Partido del Trabajo (PT or Labour Party), obtained around 60% of the vote (36 million votes). The right-wing candidate, Xóchitl Gálvez,

representing the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN or National Action Party), the PRI and the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD or Party of the Democratic Revolution) obtained 27.5% (16.5 million votes), while the candidate of the centre-right Movimiento Ciudadano (MC or Citizens' Movement), José Álvarez Máynez obtained 10.3% of the votes.

The result for progressivism is notably higher than that obtained in 2018 by Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), when he won with 53% of the vote (30 million votes). Initially this is a ratification of his government's policy as well as confidence in its continuity. On the other hand, the right lost 6 million votes compared to 2018.

Participation in the electoral process amounted to 60% of the total population (59,307,000 voters), but in Mexico City and other constituencies it reached 70%. Due to problems with security 99.9% of the ballot boxes (170,159 out of a total of 170,192)

were installed. On the other hand, the vote of Mexicans abroad grew exponentially reaching 76% participation, that is, 170,192 voters voted out of a total of 197,203 registered (in 2018 only 98,420 voters had exercised their right to vote, 54% of the total).

Beyond the Numbers

Although the cold electoral statistics show a clear, forceful and unobjectionable political defeat of the traditional right-wing parties - which makes any questioning or judicialisation of the electoral process unfeasible - they never manage to accurately reflect the enthusiastic popular participation that was seen in this electoral mobilisation.

The growing politicisation of a people eager to rid themselves of an old despotic, authoritarian, corrupt, racist and classist political class; the popular

fatigue with the right-wing parties (PRI, PAN and PRD), which are seen as guilty of more than three decades of low wages, unemployment, corruption, privatisation of public companies, job insecurity and all the other evils of the neoliberal era, were present on election day. Thousands of videos have circulated on social networks with testimonies from people expressing their repudiation of the right-wing candidate and sympathy with the current government and its candidate, Claudia Sheinbaum.

The overwhelmingly belligerent campaign of hate, falsifications and lies by almost all national and even foreign media, conservative intellectuals and artists, important figures of the Catholic clergy combined with the intervention of personalities of the international right against President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (including against his family) and Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, consisted of accusations of being "communists" and accomplices of drug traffickers. This smear campaign had the opposite of its intended effect, as it galvanised the people and led them to turn a deaf ear to everything that the right and its mouth pieces said.

The crushing electoral defeat of the right plunged it into a state of shock, disbelief and tears, with the sudden awareness that they were living outside of reality, and rage against those who, from their own ranks, have recognised the triumph of Claudia Sheinbaum, reproaching each other for their unexpected defeat. Accustomed as they are to the efficacy of the manipulative power of their media, the possibility of a defeat, much less one of such magnitude, did not enter their heads. It is very illustrative, and even gratifying after having suffered so many grievances, to watch the videos of the different commentators on the right, observing how their state of mind is reflected in their body language.

"It's the Economy, stupid"

It is worth returning to this expression to objectively explain one of the main

reasons for Claudia Sheinbaum's triumph. This does not mean that we leave aside the media effectiveness of López Obrador's daily press conferences (the so-called "mornings"), where he used each question to wage a cultural battle against the right, utilising the history of Mexico to explain the counterrevolutionary and sell-out role of conservatism as he denounced the factional and coup-mongering nature of his adversaries whilst defending his governments policies and even called for mass mobilisation when the situation required it. His lectures have a huge audience in Mexico and even resonate throughout Latin America.

However, none of this would have been of any use if it had not been accompanied by a palpable improvement in the standard of living of the working class and the economy in general. This is the core of the explanation.

From the beginning of his mandate, AMLO waged a tough fight against corruption. He began by eliminating fuel theft in the PEMEX (Petróleos Mexicanos) gas pipelines, which meant a saving of 1.3 billion pesos throughout the six-year period. Large companies were charged taxes retroactively and forced to pay their tax obligations on time (since, resorting to accounting manoeuvres, they paid practically no taxes). Between 2018 and 2022, business tax collection increased by 40.23%, reaching 1,136 trillion pesos. Even so, in this six-year term, business owners have seen their profits increase like never before, clearly justifying the urgency of a progressive tax reform.

Another important success of the Obrador policy was the rescue of PEMEX and CFE (Federal Electricity Commission), which were transferred to the private sector and were on the verge of bankruptcy. Additionally important was recovering energy sovereignty which was on the verge of falling under the control of transnational companies such as Iberdrola and Repsol. This prevented energy prices from falling prey to speculation with prices increasing exorbitantly during the pandemic, as happened in other areas, with great impact on consumers and the economy

in general. Throughout the six-year period, the cost of fuel has remained stable (it barely rises in line with annual inflation), ensuring supply to the entire population and serving as a brake on inflation.

Finally, although there are other progressive measures that have been beneficial for economic stability, it is necessary to highlight the importance of social programmes. This is an area misunderstood by the Mexican ultra-left, which disdainfully refers to them as "clientels", but which instead have been shown to have great civilising relevance and to be an important factor in strengthening the internal market.

I refer mainly to the universal pension for adults over 65 years of age (there are other scholarship programmes for students or the disabled), which now amounts to 3 thousand pesos per month (USD180). This universal pension enables, at least, the food security of 12,101,111 people and equates to an expense, for this year, of 465,049 million pesos. Although, more than just an "expense", socialists must defend this programme as a part of the human right to a dignified old age and, it must be therefore, increased annually to fully meet its objective. This pension also means relief to many families who previously provided solidarity support from within the family for their elderly adults. Furthermore, most of this money is dedicated to the personal expenses of the beneficiaries, which results in a strengthening of the internal market.

The minimum wage has increased by almost 300%. Although this is not much for one of the most depressed salaries in the world, it has served as a reference to push up contractual salaries and reduce extreme poverty which, between 2018 and 2022, went from 14% to 12.1% of the population.

This policy as a whole explains macroeconomic stability: in 2023, GDP grew by 3.2%, inflation was reduced to 3.8% annually, the unemployment rate reached 2.4% in the first quarter of this year and, in an unusual phenomenon in our history, the Mexican peso has appreciated 13% against the dollar.

The recovery of the State's management in energy matters, the generation of jobs in emblematic works - such as the Isthmus and Maya trains -, the construction of 100 new hospitals and the new airport for Mexico City, the advances in democratic life and a modest improvement in the standard of living outweighs the major problems that remain to be solved (including security), and are the factors that explain the electoral earthquake that benefited Claudia Sheinbaum's candidacy.

Despite all this, we cannot fail to point out that Obradorist progressivism suffers from severe limits, contradictions and inconsistencies in various political and social aspects, especially in its relationship with the working class. Let us note the lack of a solution to the mining strikes in Cananea, Sombrerete and Taxco (which have already been going on for 18 years); the labour reintegration of the workers of the Mexican Union of Electricians (with 15 years of resistance), where even their union autonomy was violated by encouraging a right-wing opposition to try to impose a docile leadership; the total cancellation of the neoliberal educational reform for education workers; the abrogation of the private pension system and the return to the solidarity system; the condescending treatment towards the government appointed union bureaucracy and the disdain towards democratic unionism and the maintenance of salary caps for workers under a collective contract. We will expand on this topic in another article.

A New Type of Political Regime

The defeat of the neoliberal right is more than a purely electoral phenomenon. It is destabilising the

right-wing parties and will force them to reinvent themselves if they are to continue to exist as a political alternative. The old PRI regime of domination, along with its political parties, is mortally wounded and something new is being born. It is not a finished model, nor is it what we as socialists would like, but, for the moment, it contains some interesting elements.

In the last 30 years, the different governments have been mere instruments for executing the dictates of an all-powerful oligarchy. There is now relative federal government autonomy with respect to the various power elites for the benefit of the capitalist system as a whole. Its class character continues to be bourgeois, but with the capacity to implement policies that go against neoliberal orthodoxy.

The new party in power does not rely on corporate control of social organisations (even if, in the case of Obrador, it is rather hostile towards any process of self-organisation of the masses). Its social relationship is reduced to considering the movements as simply voters, in an individualised manner. Consequently, Morena is not a political party in strict terms: it is a mere apparatus for electoral participation. It does not have a territorial structure for the organisation and discussion of its hundreds of thousands of members; it is controlled vertically by a bureaucratic caste that defines the appointment of its leaders and their candidacies, and now it is the refuge of thousands of turncoats (chapulines or grasshoppers) from right-wing parties.

But the above does not mean that Morena is hopeless. A latent conflict exists between sectors of the left - which still weigh in and hope to make Morena a democratic party,

committed to social struggles and led by those who represent the original libertarian ideology - and a right-wing bureaucracy that seeks to maintain control of the apparatus and subject it to the designs of the governments in power. This conflict currently exists in a truce due to the electoral process. We will see how this conflict is resolved.

Unlike other countries in Latin America, where the emergence of progressive governments was a product of the push of social movements, in Mexico social movements are very weakened. They suffered various defeats and setbacks that left them divided and unable to be subjects with their own weight in the current process of change. Despite various attempts, to date we have not been able to build an alternative social pole. However, we have made modest progress with the recovery of various unions in the automotive and maquila industries [1] and the dozens of strikes which have broken out to achieve better wages and working conditions. That's all, or almost all.

However, it is important to point out that there is no Chinese wall between the irruption of the masses in the electoral field to oust the bosses' parties from power and taking advantage of the new political scenario to build authentic unions, promote the fight in defense of water, the land and the environment, achieve food sovereignty and reactivate the countryside as a producer of organic foods without agROTOXINS. After all, these are two versions of the same subject, which presents itself as a citizen or as a social class. The task of Mexican socialists is to build a bridge between the two.

8 June 2024

*Translated by David Fagan for
International Viewpoint from
Jacobin America Latina.*

Social mobilization in Nigeria

13 June 2024, by Paul Martial

A year after being elected, with one of the lowest scores in the country's history, Bola Tinubu embarked on a particularly violent austerity policy against the population. These measures were applauded by the international financial institutions, despite their deleterious consequences.

Liberal credo

In response to years of economic crisis, Tinubu is taking a hard line. The first measure was to end fuel subsidies. As a result, the price of petrol tripled, driving up transport costs. Another measure is to stop supporting the national currency, the naira. The naira has fallen by 70% in the last year, fuelling inflation. Almost all foodstuffs and medicines are imported, as a result of the decision by successive elites to bet everything on oil exploitation.

Inflation has risen by 35% and by much more for certain products. A derika (measuring bowl) of rice, for example, used to cost 500 naira; it is

now worth 1,200 naira. Poor people now eat just one meal a day. As for social support measures for the poorest, such as the payment of allowances or foodstuffs, they remain insufficient and do not necessarily reach the target populations because of corruption.

The 'truth in pricing' policy, which is supposed to attract capital from foreign investors, is far from being a success. Multinationals such as Procter & Gamble (USA), GSK (UK) and Bayer (Germany) are leaving the country.

Obviously, the efforts required do not apply to everyone. Nigerians were surprised to learn that President Tinubu, who is urging his compatriots to make an effort, has approved a budget supplement allowing the purchase of a presidential yacht and a luxury car for each senator.

Negotiation phase

Faced with such attacks, the two trade union organizations, the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress, called an unlimited general

strike from Monday 3 June.

The country came to a standstill, forcing the government to open continuous negotiations for a week and to undertake not to punish any strikers. The unions suspended the strike during the talks. The government is proposing to double the minimum wage to 60,000 naira (€35), while the unions are demanding 494,000 naira (€300).

This struggle could significantly improve the balance of power in favour of the people, as the Socialist Workers League points out: 'At this pivotal moment, we also call on civil society organisations, students, community groups and all progressive forces to support the NLC and the TUC. Let's stand together, because our collective strength lies in our unity. Together, we can build a society that guarantees social and economic justice for all.'

12 June 2024

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

Who sows far right policies ... reaps the far right

12 June 2024, by Miguel Urbán Crespo

Perhaps the most notable headline of this electoral call is the growth of the extreme right, a growth that consolidates a right-wing of the EU that has been brewing for some time. The current dispersion of the extreme right, into three groups in the European Parliament, blurs the image of its electoral result, but it cannot be ignored that it has been the second most voted force in Europe with just over 20% of the votes ahead of the social democrats. In this way, the

extreme right has managed to become the first force in Italy, France, Hungary, Belgium, Austria and Poland, and the second force in Germany and the Netherlands, while the European Socialist Party has only managed to win in Sweden, Romania, Malta and in Portugal it tied with the right.

Le Pen's party, National Rally (RN), has managed not only to win again in France for the third consecutive time

in a European election, with twice as many votes as the governing party but also to be the party with the most deputies in the European Parliament, a good example of the strength of the European extreme right. This result has generated a real earthquake in France, where Macron has been forced to call emergency legislative elections.

In fact, the extreme right has not stopped growing in Europe since the

beginning of the century, from barely getting enough deputies to form a group in the European Chamber to being the second most voted force in these elections. In a decade they have doubled their support and are emerging as a force that will be able to determine parliamentary majorities in the next legislature. The Eurocratic bureaucracy in Brussels considers this possibility very seriously and, to this end, has begun an entire campaign to differentiate between a good extreme right and a bad extreme right; that is, between that extreme right that unequivocally assumes neoliberal economic policy, remilitarisation and geostrategic subordination to the European elites and NATO, and that other that still questions them, although increasingly timidly.

In the electoral campaign itself, Ursula von der Leyen, the European Peoples Party incumbent President of the European Commission, has opened the door wide open to an agreement with a part of the extreme right represented by Meloni, the "good extreme right". In this sense, the president of the European People's Party (EPP), the German Manfred Weber, was already in favour of reaching agreements with the extreme right after a meeting with the Italian president Giorgia Meloni last year. These approaches contribute to normalising the extreme right as an acceptable partner, legitimising not only its political space, but also its hate policies and speeches that are increasingly gaining a greater audience among the European electorate. This is a good example of the leading role that is predicted for the extreme right in this coming legislature, in which they will play a key role in obtaining parliamentary majorities.

In this sense, it seems that Le Pen does not want to be left out of this facelifting surgery again, she is aware that she has to finish concluding her particular process of de-demonisation, not only to represent something in the next European Parliament, but also above all to have a chance in the French presidential elections next year. In this way, the French far-right has knocked on Meloni's door to try to join forces and become the second political force in the European

chamber. In the next three weeks, a period in which the political groups in the European Parliament have to be formed, we will decipher the mystery of who Meloni has opted for. For the siren songs of the Popular group or for leading a large group of the extreme right: Jorge Buxadé (Vox) himself reminded Alberto Núñez Feijóo during the campaign: "Don't get excited because Giorgia Meloni is one of ours." It seems that interesting and complex weeks are predicted within the framework of the right and the extreme right to see how the political groups are finally configured in the European chamber.

Perhaps another of the headlines that these elections leave us with is the trend of erosion of the European two-party system, as since 2019, for the first time in the history of the European Parliament, the Popular Party (PPE) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) failed to gain an absolute majority. In these elections, five years later, the socialists are no longer the second most voted force, being relegated by the extreme right to a historic third place. They increasingly need to expand the so-called grand coalition that until now has governed Europe, with new forces.

In fact, as already seen in the last legislature, the liberals of Renew Europe and on some occasions the Greens, have been fundamental in establishing majorities in parliament and approving major measures of this legislature (Green Pact, European remilitarisation, Migration Pact and Asylum, etc.) It has been precisely these two groups, both Renew Europe and the Greens, that have suffered the strongest electoral erosion in these elections, losing 20 and 18 seats respectively. If in 2019 they grew, to a certain extent, as renewing and modernising forces of an outdated bipartisan governance, not having met expectations led them to pay a high electoral cost. Despite this, they appear to be two fundamental forces to ensure the majorities of the grand coalition.

Perhaps the clearest example of the erosion of the Renew Europe political formula is embodied by Emanuel Macron in France, where his party has

not even achieved 15% of the voting total. Macron represents a type of empty political figure, the standard bearer of an exit from the power bloc to its own crisis of representation and corruption of the big parties, and which was sold as a formula that condensed the extreme center into a single party. A political model coming from the world of business management and perceived, precisely, as a manager of the diffuse "civil society" but guarantor of neoliberal (dis)order. In short: a kind of outsider to maintain the status quo.

In fact, Macron joins a global trend of emergence of authoritarian neoliberal populist leaders who from the business/financial world have stopped trusting professional politicians to lead their interests themselves as an elite from the front line of politics. These elections have not only marked the decline of Macronism as the prince of neoliberal Europeanism that came to replace the grand coalition, but have also opened an uncertain scenario for the electoral advance of the legislative elections (June) and for the French presidential elections. In this sense, those who tried to present themselves as the representatives of Hispanic Macronism, Ciudadanos (Citizens), have definitely ended up dying in these elections, going from eight MEPs to none.

It seems that we may have a new group in the European Parliament around the Italians of Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S or Five Star Movement) and the Germans of the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance. This represents a poorly defined political space built on parties that have in common their difficult fit into any of the other groups constituted in parliament, whether due to political differences or vetoes from other forces, as has historically been the case with M5S. A group similar to that of Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) in the 2014/2019 legislature. Although it remains to be seen whether they can find allies to comply with the parliamentary rule of a minimum of 25 deputies from at least seven different EU countries.

More than one hundred elected deputies do not have a clear group in the European Parliament, a good

example of the weight that the anti-political protest vote, outside the groups established in the European Parliament, has had in these elections. A good example of this phenomenon is Fidiás Panayiotou, a 24-year-old Cypriot tiktoker, who has become the second force, winning two seats in the European Parliament with more than 20% of the votes, and Alvis Pérez, the candidate of *Se Acabó La Fiesta* (The Party is Over), one of the surprises of election day in Spain, which has obtained three MEPs with 800,000 votes.

This is a protest vote mobilised to "recover the democracy kidnapped" by the corrupt political oligarchy, traditionally called "partyocracy", by the extreme right and with the consequent defense of a kind of anti-politics. The electoral success behind a banner that aspires to rescue a democracy kidnapped by the elites cannot be understood without assessing the democratic deficit of the societies in which it arises. In this sense, it is no coincidence that it is expressed especially in the European elections; of the systemic transformation of a globalised society; and the delegitimisation of politics and of the politics that have occurred within it due to the devaluation of ideologies. Within the framework inside and outside the system, the outside continues to recruit more and more political weight in the European Parliament.

The left may continue to occupy the last place in the European Parliament while waiting for the creation of a new group, but, unlike in 2019, it has managed to mitigate its fall and may

even grow slightly in number, when the vote is confirmed in the coming weeks with the distribution of new deputies not registered in any group. Especially relevant have been the results in Finland as a second force; Italy, where the left regains representation; and that of France *Insoumise* (FI), which provides the largest group of deputies for the left.

These elections have once again shown the growing loss of legitimacy by the EU among social sectors throughout Europe; abstention is once again winning in almost all countries. It is increasingly difficult for the EU to be associated with those supposed "European values" such as democracy, progress, well-being or human rights. An organic crisis in the full Gramscian sense of the term, the result and deepening of the crisis of the post-Maastricht model of European capitalism that has meant a true neoliberal straitjacket, with a lethal combination of austerity, free trade, predatory debt and precarious and poorly paid work, the DNA of current financialised capitalism.

This crisis of legitimacy and institutionality not only sees community decisions trying to avoid national parliaments at all costs, but also means that any referendum or consultation of citizens that directly or indirectly concerns European issues is viewed with suspicion and fear. Every day more people wake up from the European dream and find themselves adrift between a neoliberal and militaristic Europeanism championed by the EU elites and an exclusionary nationalism on the rise at the state level. An organic crisis of the EU

project that generates voids conducive to mutations, readjustments, recompositions, and above all the monsters that we have seen in these elections.

Elections that confirm: Europe's turn to the right, where the extreme right no longer appears as Euro-sceptic but as Euro-reformist, reserving a seat in EU governance; the bankruptcy of the old majorities of the grand coalition; the end of Macronism and its attempt at a great extreme European centre; the increase in outsider options for anti-system and anti-policy protest; and the growth of abstention and European disenchantment with the EU machinery. All this in a context in which the drums of war do not stop resounding in the chancelleries, bringing us dangerously close to the scene of a new confrontation of global war, against the backdrop of the climate emergency and the dismantling of multilateral governance and international law that has governed the world since the Second World War.

A dangerous cocktail that augurs new conflicts, a recomposition of actors, an expansion of the battlefield and, above all, an acceleration of new and old trends. Although one lesson stands out above the rest in these European elections: when you sow far-right policies - the Migration Pact has been one of many examples - you reap... the far-right.

10 June 2024

*Translated by David Fagan for
International Viewpoint from
[Publico.es](https://publico.es).*

After the European elections: reassembling an ecosocialist project

11 June 2024, by **Anticapitalistas**

These European elections have been marked by the rise of militarism and the EU's support for genocide in

Palestine. Undoubtedly, there have been strong mobilizations in support of the resistance of the Palestinian

people. These are encouraging, but what predominates politically is the re-articulation of a strong neo-colonial

consciousness.

The extreme right is growing on the basis of the policies of closed borders, racism that divide the working class from above, unifying the identity-based reaction in Europe. Between the war in the East and the fear of what comes from the South, Europe is retreating into a second-class imperialist policy and the constant degradation of living conditions and partial freedoms within the states. This preventive counter-revolution is the product of the failure of the left forces, which set the dynamic in the previous cycle. Let us not forget this: if we forget it, we will believe that this situation is inevitable. It is a difficult situation, but it is a product of politics: it is not magic.

The Spanish state is no stranger to this dynamic, albeit with a number of particularities. On the one hand, the restoration of the two-party system "with crutches" on the right and left is confirmed: the hegemony of the PSOE on the left, the consolidation of the PP on the right. Vox remains, but it has competition on its right, the platform "Se acabó la fiesta" of Alvin, a small neo-fascist gremlin, capable of combining hatred of migrants and misogyny, with the cult of figures like little Nicolás.

The left, subordinate to the PSOE but not part of it, lost hundreds of thousands of votes: Sumar won three seats and Podemos won two, albeit with percentages that a few years ago would have been considered, by those who celebrate them today, as synonymous with marginality.

Having briefly outlined the map, we at Anticapitalistas would like to raise some questions for debate:

- The rise of the extreme right is resisted by fighting the material, cultural and political factors that make it possible for these ideas to spread, not by adapting to them. But ideas are not fought with ideas alone: they are fought with social force. In these elections, the abstention rate was 50%, which partly indicates the disaffection of an important sector of the population with the political system. It is not a question of measuring everything in electoral

terms: it is the absence of the most exploited and oppressed sectors from the political scene, including people of migrant origin, that determines this situation. Without "depassivising" the political situation and generating organizations that serve as fertile soil to seed a new situation, the far right will continue to use the systemic interstices to advance.

- The extreme right does not propose a change of political model, a break with the liberal regime, but rather the radicalization of its most harmful features for the popular classes. In this sense, the extreme right-extreme centre binomial feeds this dynamic in which the middle classes and their moral panics impose a political dynamic based on the downward defence of their relative positions in the world system in crisis. However monstrous and eccentric its ideological forms may be, this is at the heart of all reactionary politics.

- Social democracy, in the Spanish state, but also in other countries where it governs such as Germany, has encouraged, like most others, the war and border regime in which we are immersed. Without a real redistributive policy or major reforms to offer, its formal defence of liberties proves impotent or complicit in the face of fundamental democratic and social setbacks. In the Spanish state we know this well, first with the PSOE-Unidas Podemos government, now with Sumar: they have not been able to repeal the gag law, the racist policy continues, the legal and defensive frameworks of the working class have not been strengthened, public money is transferred to big business, relations with the genocidal state of Israel have not been broken.

- The big absentee in the public debate in these elections, at the programmatic level, has been the question of the destructive exhaustion of the capitalist system expressed through the ecological crisis. Green reformism seems exhausted, both in its alleged aesthetic freshness and at the ideological level, since its main task is to mediate between civil society and business in the field of capital accumulation. The left that denounces the most harmful effects of capitalism does so with the

superficiality of those who refuse to explain the root causes of the enormous crisis underway. The construction of an ecosocialist political force is an imperative necessity in order to have an in-depth programme that denounces war, colonialism and the degradation of liberal "democracies" and, at the same time, allows us to provide ourselves with an alternative to the whole system, even if it is a minority today.

- The so-called Spanish left has disappointed many people with its results. From our point of view, electoral results are important, but they are not the central issue. The point is that they no longer represent any focus for radical change and transformation, they are groups whose methods, programmes and interests are alien to any proposal for profound change. Without a militant proposal aimed at building struggles and structures of popular organisation, they limit themselves to being propagandists for their electoral apparatuses, with the sole aim of governing with the PSOE. Without a programmatic horizon aiming at the ultimate goal of systemic change, their reformism is impotent and sterile. Without the honesty to engage in self-criticism, the effects of its policies are the spread of cynicism, sectarianism and weariness. And it burns many honest people who see them as a lesser evil and live trapped in the despair and impotence of politics without a horizon.

- Our priority is to continue and deepen the work of militant recomposition, implementation and promotion of struggles, reassembling our political project from an ecosocialist perspective, always open to collaboration with other sectors or sensibilities with which we share perspectives and objectives. Of course, from our point of view, elections are an important moment of political struggle and it is a real problem that there are no electoral options linked to forces that aspire to be revolutionary, internationalist, ecosocialist, feminist and anti-capitalist. We will not give up on tackling this task if the conditions are right. That said, in the short and medium term, we take on a series of tasks for the next phase, linked to

further strengthening our organisation and popular movements.

- In the short term, it is necessary to continue to keep alive the pro-Palestinian mobilization, which has been on the streets for months with demonstrations, encampments, actions, etc. Because an electoralist and opportunist left, which only uses tragedies for election campaigns but does not commit itself in a militant way, building and sustaining broad movements, can get a few MPs, but will never be able to contribute decisively to the liberation of the working class and the oppressed. Palestine must remain our priority.

- Continue to work to build a big movement against war and capitalist austerity, putting militarization, colonialism and border closures at the centre of public debate. We seek to bind ourselves to the task of rebuilding grassroots movements, breaking with electoral parasitism and

the logic of delegation, seeking the broadest unity in the field of trade union, neighbourhood and territorial struggle, from political independence, but without sectarianism of any kind, maintaining the balance between the firmness of principles and openness towards our class and its real expressions, seeking partial victories but fighting with the horizon of the ecosocialist revolution always present.

- Our aim is to build an ecosocialist and confederalist force capable of tackling the electoral question, and we believe that territorial experiences must be strengthened in this sense. No more big speeches about "winning", we refuse to do it through personalist models or grandiloquent speeches without ambition, which only feed our own interests. We are in a moment of fight back and we must be able to nurture programmatic clarity and firmness. Projects that can be minority projects (although now, despite their self-promotion, the whole

of the left to the left of the PSOE is also a minority), that are not subject to electoralist logic, totally independent of the official left, but open to people who want to fight a on all terrains against the ideology and programme of capital and that address the whole of the working classes. They should be a focus of resistance to a system guilty of genocide, misery and fear, whose only way out is to maintain itself on ecological disaster, authoritarianism and war.

Despite the current impasse, the global eco-social crisis will continue; to group together and fight, to discuss strategically, not to give in. That is why our analysis ends with Gramsci's well-known, but no less necessary, phrase: "Organize yourselves because we'll need all your strength."

11 June 2024

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Anticapitalistas](#).

European elections - far right surge but centre holds on

10 June 2024, by **Dave Kellaway**

EU votes can seem tangential to national politics. When Britain was still in the EU, Farage's virulently anti-EU party won 28% of the vote and dozens of seats in 2014, yet never won a national MP standing as UKIP. The Greens also won more seats than their solitary Westminster MP. A democratic, proportional representation system in European elections can magnify differences between national first-past-the-post or two-round systems and European votes. While European votes are more like opinion surveys, they can indicate discontent or crisis in national governments. UKIP's victory in 2014 possibly influenced Cameron's decision to call the EU membership referendum.

Today, the press is full of French

President Macron's decision to dissolve the National Assembly and call elections in three weeks. The largest party in the assembly, the post-fascist Rassemblement Nationale (RN) with 33%, doubled Macron's Renaissance party's score. Including Eric Zemmour's far-right Reconquete party, the far right reaches nearly 40%. Why has Macron made this dramatic move?

It is less of a gamble than it seems. Without a working majority in Parliament, Macron has used a presidential mechanism to push legislation through. He sees nothing to lose in trying to develop a new majority through a new election. In France, if no majority is achieved in a seat, a second round of voting occurs a week later, usually depending on

support from eliminated candidates. Le Pen's RN lacks allies, unlike Meloni in Italy, and Macron assumes another 'Republican front' against the far right will help him, as it did in his two presidential victories.

The weakness of the left means there is little risk of a strong left opposition majority in parliament. Yesterday's results show the social liberal Socialist Party re-establishing itself as the biggest party on the left, with 14% compared to 9% for Melenchon's La France Insoumise (LFI). The NUPES left coalition, successful in the last parliamentary elections, is defunct, with both the SP and the Communists breaking from Melenchon. There are divisions over Gaza, Ukraine, and Europe. To its credit, the LFI raised the Palestinian banner during the

campaign and increased its European vote.

Macron may calculate that even if the RN won a majority, he could manage (cohabitation) for the remaining three years of his presidency. An RN government might lose support for the far right if it had to manage capital's crises, making a Le Pen presidential victory less likely. This dangerous game could, however, propel Le Pen to the presidency next time. Sectors of French capital might even start to consider a Le Pen alternative if Macron is no longer viable.

The far right advanced in Europe but did not displace the right-of-centre majority in the European parliament. The latter benefits from support on many issues from the left-of-centre group. The hard right is divided over European powers and other issues; Meloni and Le Pen MEPs sit in different groups. Having more MEPs helps the far right develop its forces, providing money, resources, and institutional access. Revolutionary MEPs like Miguel Urban from the Spanish Anti-capitalists show the advantage of a European seat. The far right's international coordination, demonstrated by a recent well-publicised conference in Madrid, often surpasses the left's, with larger groups helping

Despite negative publicity about the Nazi sympathies of some leaders and plans to deport all migrants, Germany's AfD (Alternative for Germany) progressed by three points. Austria's far-right Freedom Party

topped the polls with 25.7%. Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia improved by two points to 28% but missed the 30% target, a worrying sign given her two years in power and the ongoing cost of living crisis. Salvini's Lega, her main competitor in the right-wing coalition, performed poorly, strengthening her position. Elsewhere, Spain's neo-fascist Vox (Voice) group rose by 3.5 points to nearly 10%, winning two more seats. The anti-corruption, conspiracy-focused group Se acaba la Fiesta (The party's over) got three seats and nearly 5%. Low turnout in Spain may explain the success of extremist right parties. In Portugal, Chega (Enough) advanced to nearly 10% and two seats. In Holland, the far-right Freedom Party took 17%, but the left-of-centre current beat them.

Green parties suffered setbacks in these elections. The right-wing offensive, seen with the Tories on net zero costs amid the cost of living crisis, is taking a toll. Germany's Greens slumped nine points, possibly due to their coalition with Scholz's social liberal SPD. France's Greens also lost nine points. In Italy, the alliance with Sinistra e Verdi (Left and Green) reached nearly 7%, surpassing the threshold for seats. The alliance's lead candidate, Italian anti-fascist Ilaria Sallis, currently detained under house arrest in Budapest following a protest against Orban, caused a political furore in Italy. Overall, the Green group lost 20 seats in the EU parliament.

The left-of-social-liberal, ex-social-

democrat parties held up, losing one seat. Melenchon's LFI increased its share from 6% in 2019 to over 9%, still below its presidential and parliamentary election scores. Portugal's Left Bloc and CP held their seats with around 4.5%. In Italy, an anti-war left slate led by journalist Michele Santoro failed to reach the threshold. Germany's Die Linke (the Left) won three seats, losing two, falling to 2.7%. The red/brown split of Sahra Wagenknecht's party, which won six seats and 6% on its first electoral outing, has hurt it. This party, similar to Galloway's Workers Party, combines traditional left economic policies, 'campist' foreign policy, workerist anti-identity politics, and anti-migrant adaptations. We must reflect on why parties to the left of traditional reformist parties failed to make a bigger impact amid economic, social, and ecological crises.

Overall, European politics is still dominated by right-of-centre parties adapting to the reactionary, racist positions of a growing post-fascist far right. Labour will join Sanchez's PSOE government next month as one of the few left-of-centre governments. It is unlikely to provide a way forward out of the continent's crises. The caution and moderation of a Starmer government could lead to an opposition increasingly dominated by far-right, racist forces, as seen in these EU elections.

10 June 2024

Source: [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#).

Contradictions of Biden's Foreign Policy Abroad and at Home

9 June 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Palestinians and their allies circled the White House with a list of the names of thousands of Palestinians killed by the iron fist in Gaza. The names were

written on a red banner to symbolize Biden's red lines that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continued to ignore and to cross. Protestors' picket signs said, "Biden's

red line was a lie!"

The contradiction between Biden's claim on the one hand that the United States is still the leader of a free and

democratic world that is galvanizing America's European allies to stand against a dictator bent on conquest and, on the other hand, the fact that the United States supports Israel which is carrying out a genocidal war against the Palestinian people is a wedge dividing Democratic voters as we face a momentous election.

Republican candidate Donald Trump has united his party and its base around his charismatic and authoritarian personality and his reactionary program that threatens to undermine and perhaps destroy American Democracy. Biden's campaign is in large part based on the promise to defend democracy and freedom: the freedom for women to choose abortion, the freedom to vote, the freedom to organize a labor union or a civil rights protest, all of which are threatened by a Trump victory.

At all levels, the Democratic Party is under tremendous stress, largely because of Biden's support for Israel. The Progressive caucus has pressured Biden to restrain Israel and bring

about a ceasefire, but the caucus itself has also split over the issues. The nine-member leftist Squad, four of whom are members of the Democratic Socialist of America, has taken the most critical positions on Biden's policy of support for Israel—though they are loath to criticize the president too strongly fearing it could endanger his reelection. On the other hand, some representatives have quit the Progressive Caucus because they feel it is too critical of Israel.

One finds another deep contradiction between rhetoric and policy in Biden's immigration policy. In a recent speech on migration policy Biden said, to distinguish himself from Trump,

I will never demonize immigrants. I will never refer to immigrants as "poisoning the blood" of a country. I'll never separate children from their families at the border. I will not ban people from this country because of their religious beliefs. I

will not use the U.S. military to pull millions of people out of their homes and away from their families to put them in detention camps while awaiting deportation, as my predecessor says he will do if he to- — occupies this office again.

These words were spoken in Biden's announcement that he was adopting a policy of more severe restrictions on migrants seeking asylum at the Mexican border, a policy much like Trump's. When the level of 2,500 undocumented migrants per day is reached, which happens almost every day, the border will be completely closed to them.

Just 150 days from the election, Republicans unite around Trump, despite his recent felony conviction, as Democrats fragment because of the lack of political and moral consistency from Biden.

9 June 2024

After Roe, the Anti-Abortion Deluge

8 June 2024, by **Dianne Feeley**

Along with the legislation, anti-abortion activists have mobilized at clinics where most abortions are performed. They have attempted to shut them down, intimidating clinic personnel, and even murdering doctors.

But the most important institution the right wing set up are 2000 crisis pregnancy centers that attract the unsuspecting by offering free services including pregnancy testing and ultrasounds.

This year 16 states are slated to provide \$250 million in taxpayer dollars to these largely unregulated centers, often sponsored by churches where religious staff seek to persuade women to continue their pregnancy. They claim that abortion leads to

depression or breast cancer, suggest adoption as an alternative and offer free diapers.

After the stunning 2022 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that those wanting to terminate their pregnancies had no right to do so under the U.S. Constitution, the expectation was that the struggle would move to the various states. Subsequently 15 states have banned abortion and seven more have placed restrictions on the procedure — for example, banning abortions after six weeks — that would have been illegal under *Roe v. Wade*.

The latest ruling is the Arizona Supreme Court decision, reinstating a strict anti-abortion law passed well before statehood! Interestingly enough, both the state's governor and

attorney general oppose the law.

At least 60 clinics providing abortions have closed since June 2022. In some states, where clinics have remained open to provide other pregnancy-related services, laws forbid staff from providing so much as a reference to those seeking abortion.

The truth is that the fight for reproductive justice continues at both federal and state levels. What the right wing desires is a federal Life at Conception Act that would confer personhood on fertilized eggs. Two years ago, there were 167 Republicans in the House of Representatives who co-sponsored the bill. However, given that in vitro fertilization (IVF), a widely-supported procedure, involves fertilized eggs, the

bill's passage is a problem for hardline anti-abortionists. Witness how fast the Alabama legislature rushed through a bill insuring that IVF clinics would not be affected by their strict anti-abortion measures!

A more pragmatic bill would be a federal ban on abortions after 15 weeks. Although Donald Trump stepped back from supporting further federal anti-abortion legislation, should he be elected president once again these forces hope he might sign such a bill.

This article will deal with federal legislation that currently hinders the right to bodily autonomy, which is a central issue for LGBTQ+ rights as well. A separate article, "Abortion Rights After Dobbs: The State of the Struggle" by Johanna Brenner, on the ATC website, concentrates on state-level legislation and court rulings. Hypocritical "Hippocratic Medicine"

Shortly after the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, a group of anti-abortion doctors belonging to the Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine, looked for a judge they considered sympathetic to their cause. The well-known anti-abortion federal judge, U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, was their choice. They asked the court to ban mifepristone, one of the two drugs used in at least 63% of all U.S. abortions.

Their case maintained mifepristone was unsafe and led to incomplete pregnancies, submitting several studies to back up their claim. This then condemned them to complete a procedure they found morally wrong.

Judge Kacsmaryk dutifully ruled in their favor. He accepted as valid both the cited studies, which have subsequently been found invalid, and the argument that they had standing in the case because they would be the ones to complete the procedure.

When the outrageous and far-reaching decision was brought to the conservative Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the Justices accepted the doctors' arguments as well. However they did not rule that the drug should be banned, merely rolled back to its initial 2000 approval. Then the FDA

required that the drugs be prescribed in person. (The motto of the right wing is if you can't stop the procedure, at least try to make it more expensive, and therefore harder to access.)

The two-drug procedure, which is FDA approved for the first trimester of pregnancy, consists of mifepristone (that blocks the progesterone hormone necessary for a pregnancy to continue) followed by misoprostol (that causes the uterus to empty).

Clinics — 760 of whom exclusively provide medication abortions — have reported more than four million have used medication abortion to terminate their pregnancies. Since these drugs are also safe when individually ordered over a website and self-administered, their usage is undoubtedly much higher. Clearly hospitals have not been inundated with incomplete abortions.

Scientific studies concluded that more than 99% of all medication abortions have did not require hospitalization. On that basis, the FDA updated its procedures in 2016 and 2021, allowing patients to receive the drugs through telemedicine or mail.

The U.S. Supreme Court stayed the District Court's order and accepted the case. On March 26 it heard the oral arguments; a decision is expected in June. At the hearing the majority of the Justices were skeptical of the anti-abortion doctors' standing, so the question remains: Why did they bother taking up the case? Even a ruling that opened a middle path — between forbidding the use of mifepristone and the current FDA ruling that allows proscribed pills to be sent by mail — would mean that courts were challenging the FDA's authority.

Ignoring scientific studies and rolling back the FDA's protocols to 2000 would swamp the judicial system with cases challenging the FDA's decisions not just on mifepristone but on other food and drug safety regulations. Certainly, the right wing might welcome a move to weaken regulations, but the Court may shrink from unleashing such chaos.

The target in this case is mifepristone, not the second drug, misoprostol.

Mifepristone is also used for medical management of miscarriages while misoprostol is used to treat gastric ulcers and post-partum bleeding.

If the FDA were forced to withdraw mifepristone, misoprostol taken by itself will result in a safe abortion, especially during the earliest stages of pregnancy. In fact, many countries use misoprostol alone, which makes the abortion a bit more painful but is only slightly less effective.

During Judge Kacsmaryk's hearing, he repeatedly raised the Comstock Act, passed in 1873, as a possible avenue for stopping the mail distribution of mifepristone. The act was originally passed to prevent the mailing of "obscene" material. It was also used to prosecute those who ran abortion ads in 19th century newspapers.

But it also functioned to prevent doctors and nurses from learning about distributing birth control information. The act was repeatedly contested by the birth control movement in early 20th century America.

In 1936 the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled that the law did not apply to physicians; it fell into disuse but was never repealed. (See the "Strange Career of the Comstock Law").

The reality is that laws banning or blocking access to abortion do not stamp out the practice. In fact, last year the U.S. health care system reported slightly more than one million abortions. Despite all the restrictions passed since the *Dobbs* decision, 2023 had the highest number of abortions recorded since 2011 — a full 10% increase over 2020.

Now the right wing dreams of taking the Comstock Act out of mothballs and adding it to the arsenal of federal anti-abortion measures used to block the fight for bodily autonomy. But of all those laws probably the most important is the Hyde Amendment. First passed in 1977, it prevents the use of federal Medicaid money for abortion services. Whether a Republican- or Democratic-dominated Congress, the amendment is renewed annually. Only 16 states and currently

allot Medicaid funds for abortion.

Sadly, even after reproductive freedom was added to the Michigan Constitution, the legislature failed to restore state Medicaid for abortion. Seemingly a neutral law, it discriminates against poor women and disproportionately targets women of color. It is justified as being fiscally prudent, papering over the reality that we need quality and universal health care. The fact that the overarching Hyde Amendment is a federal provision provides state legislators with cover.

Another federal law prohibits a particular procedure for terminating late-stage pregnancies. Passed in 2003, the so-called “Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act” prohibits doctors from intentionally using “intact dilatation and extraction” surgery.

Five years later the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the law constitutional. Although this procedure was used in less than one percent of all abortions, the ban was a triumph for the right wing because it focused on the possibility of a live fetus being extracted.

Before its passage, testimony from women who had undergone this procedure spoke about the severe fetal abnormalities that led to their decision to abort so late in their pregnancy. Many spoke of the trauma they faced as they chose to terminate the pregnancy rather than suffer severe health problems or deliver a stillbirth.

The Discussion Since Dobbs

Hospital consolidation and lack of comprehensive medical care also blocks access to reproductive care. More than half of all rural hospitals have closed their maternity units, forcing people to travel longer distances for prenatal, childbirth, postnatal or abortion care. This may be an annoyance for a “typical” pregnancy, but when serious complications arise, it is a critical factor.

These maternity care deserts are unprepared for complications — yet maternity and infant mortality rates are high and getting higher. In 2018

the maternal mortality rate was 17.4 per 100,000 live births but rose to 32.9 deaths three years later.

Of course, Black and Indigenous women have rates two to four times higher than white women. Add to these figures the growing number of high-risk pregnancies, and it is clear that U.S. health is headed in the wrong direction.

While the Biden administration claims that the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act should protect hospitals and doctors terminating a pregnancy under emergency circumstances, states such as Texas and Idaho are battling against that interpretation.

The recent actions of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton show just how the state can use its power to try to stop an individual from obtaining the help they need when a pregnancy becomes complicated.

Knowing she was carrying a non-viable fetus, and returning to emergency care for cramping and fluid leakage, Texas resident Kate Cox requested the right to an abortion because of her health.

While Travis County District Judge Maya Guerra Gamble ruled in her favor, Paxton appealed the decision to the Texas Supreme Court. He also wrote to the hospitals where Cox’s doctor had admitting privileges, claiming they could face prosecution if they allowed the abortion, Paxton dismissed Gamble’s ruling, saying she was not medically qualified, as if any judge or lawyer is!

Cox, already more than 20 weeks pregnant, decided to seek an abortion in New Mexico rather than wait for the ruling. In the end the Texas Supreme Court overturned Gamble’s ruling, citing that Cox’s life was not threatened, only her health.

The struggle for bodily autonomy means removing restrictions that impede people’s decisions and providing institutional support for them. Instead we have the horrendous stories of Kate Cox and Brittany Watts.

Brittany Watts was 21 weeks pregnant

when her water broke and she went to a hospital in Warren, Ohio for help. The Catholic hospital was aware that the fetus was non-viable and convened its ethics committee — but failed to inform Watts about their process. Hospital records show that when first admitted she was bleeding, had a premature rupture of her membrane and an elevated white blood cell count.

After eight hours of waiting, and against medical advice, Watts decided to go home. Returning the following day, she waited 11 more hours for treatment, then checked herself out a second time. That night she miscarried in her bathroom, returning to the hospital for medical care the next day.

The hospital called the police, who went to her home to locate the fetus. She was subsequently charged with abuse of a corpse — a felony dismissed only when the grand jury refused to indict her.

While the hospital staff, police and prosecutor believed they were doing their job, most people who learn about the case are shocked at the inhuman treatment of an African-American woman who sought help.

Fortunately, Watts didn’t hemorrhage or develop sepsis and die but defended herself against their stupidity and brutality. All the institutions and people staffing them failed her. That includes the ethics committee, who was so afraid of misjudging the law and might face criminal charges themselves that they didn’t even bother to talk to her.

Brittany Watts, who was humiliated and criminalized by the state for seeking medical care, asserted the right to control her own body. While the right wing seeks to outlaw all abortion by telling lies about how dangerous and immoral the procedure is, the stories of Kate Cox and Brittany Watts reveal the need to end the practice of judging medical decisions other people make.

These stories illustrate how the fight for abortion isn’t disconnected from a whole range of issues that connect human beings to one another. There is

no need to create hundreds of laws governing abortion — just access to

good medical care. As the slogan reminds us: “Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide.”

May-June 2024 [ATC 230](#).

Successful campaign meetings of Gauche Anticapitaliste

7 June 2024, by **Laure Horlait, Mélodie Vandelook**

The meetings began in Wallonia in the cities of Liège, Mons and Namur, and ended on Saturday 1 June in Brussels. They all succeeded in motivating a large, enthusiastic and curious public, who were carried away by our message. In each city, a spokesperson and/or local candidates and Philippe Poutou took the floor.

A radical programme

The comrades defended the relevance of an anti-capitalist voice in the current electoral period, highlighting the danger of the rise of the far right, Fortress Europe and the capitalist parties. We are the project of a left that defends the need to socialise the energy, banking and insurance sectors, that makes the regularisation of all illegal immigrants, the abolition

of Frontex and freedom of movement and residence for all a central plank of its programme, which demands the right of women to control their own bodies, through greater access to abortion, freedom of dress and investment in the fight against violence, and for which solidarity with all peoples in resistance around the world, from Ukraine to Palestine, is a matter of course.

Little media coverage

Despite various requests, the local press did not bother to attend or publicise our meetings, while devoting many lines to the events of other political groupings, the ‘big’ parties. This lack of interest echoes our very low media profile throughout the campaign, with the exception of a few notable appearances. This raises important questions in terms of democratic pluralism within the major

media outlets.

After 9 June

The discussions, both formal and informal, that followed the rallies were rich in lessons and showed us that our demands have a real resonance within society. Proof that there is political space for a radical and plural left, which assumes a strategy of rupture with capital and its representatives. The elections can be a springboard for broadly expressing our ideas, but our strategy will have to be deployed especially after 9 June. That’s why we’re reiterating the call we made at the end of our meetings to bring together all the forces of change to prepare the balance of power for the battles ahead.

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

The Drums of War are Banging in Europe

6 June 2024, by **Éric Toussaint, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Paul Murphy**

The next parliamentary term is unlikely to improve the continent and world, but instead will accelerate the most damaging processes: the rise of the far right, remilitarisation, the return of austerity, racism, xenophobia, neocolonialism and a global disorder marked by inter-

imperialist conflicts.

The beginnings of the last parliamentary term did not seem to foreshadow this context. In fact, it began with a ‘historic’ declaration of climate emergency [2] by the European Parliament, which

demanding the European Commission align all its proposals with the objective of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. That will require reducing emissions by at least 55% by 2030 in order to achieve so-called carbon neutrality by 2050. The political and democratic justification for the

European Green Deal came into being. However, it is critical to remember that this proclamation would not have been possible without the massive climate justice mobilisations led by the youth in several European countries and elsewhere, in the months preceding the 2019 European elections.

Above all, since the 2008 crisis, the lack of a European political project beyond the pursuit of maximum profit for private companies, the constitutionalisation of neoliberalism, and the establishment of a model of bureaucratic authority immune to popular will have eroded popular support for the EU, threatening its legitimacy and even its integrity. In this sense, the European Green Deal appeared to be justified by the urgency of infusing renewed political and social legitimacy into the neo-liberal European project by painting it green.

Yet the relative post-austerity hiatus during the Covid pandemic has not resulted in a shift away from the EU's neo-liberal policies. Faced with the health emergency and the effects of the pandemic, the EU has been unable to develop a common health response beyond a vaccine purchasing centre – while denying vaccines to the world's poor because German, Norwegian, Swiss and British leaders would not waive Intellectual Property rights when asked by more than 100 countries from 2020-22. The EU has not taken advantage of the situation to strengthen Member States' health systems nor to establish a European public pharmaceutical company to deal with potential future epidemics.

Meanwhile, on the economic front, the leading governments, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank have increased the public debt, rather than financing a large portion of the financial outlay with tax revenues that should have come from the windfall profits of Big Pharma, GAFAM, and the banks which were the main beneficiaries of expansive economic policies during the crisis. Once again, we have witnessed how the EU has become a millionaire's project at the expense of millions of poor people.

And in this sense, the pandemic was the prelude to the reassessment of the policies that were to accompany the declaration of climate emergency adopted by the Parliament. It served as a catalyst for a (new) gigantic transfer of public money to the private sector, with stimulus funds being used to support the interests of big business.

All the while, wily politicians peddled the Euro-reformist idea that it is feasible to pursue a non-austerity policy without definitively rejecting the European treaties and the fundamental principles that have governed the European economy for the previous three decades. Yet this represented merely an optical illusion of 'another way out of the crisis' that has, in practice, excessively deepened each country's productive specialisation within the EU, and in the process, solidified hierarchical relationships between the central capitalist countries around Germany, France, the Benelux countries, and the peripheral countries.

However, if handling the pandemic served as a cover for the subsequent 'shock doctrine,' Putin's invasion of Ukraine has become the perfect pretext for both full-blown austerity and the re-militarisation of Europe. Not only is the EU arming itself with expensive weaponry in order to speak the 'hard language of power' in a world beset by increasingly intense conflicts over scarce resources.

In addition, the most aggressive European capitalist agenda is also being amplified under the guise of war. Anything goes when we're at war. An excellent illustration is how quickly and easily the EU's green make-up was tossed out the window when in 2022, the European Commission's 'taxonomy' included methane gas and nuclear power as supposedly 'green' energy under the guise of breaking energy dependence on Russia.

Just as dubious a policy is to put Europe's carbon- and methane-cutting responsibilities in the hands of financial markets – the EU Emissions Trading Scheme – whose grasp of the planetary arson threat is so frivolous that immediately after Putin's

invasion, the price charged for emitting a tonne of CO2-equivalent crashed 30% and then between February 2023 and 2024, the price crashed by half.

Environmental policies approved in the middle of the parliamentary term also included the 'farm to table' strategy [3], one of the pillars of the European Green Deal, which promised to triple the area devoted to organic farming, to halve pesticides and to reduce chemical fertilisers by 20% by 2030. But that too became yet another casualty of the war in Ukraine. All's fair when there's war.

Similarly, the European Commission has declared that it will allow the use of 'ecological interest' zones and set-aside land to increase European agricultural production. Again, the argument is that food security must take precedence over the advancement of organic farming. War is again used as a justification.

In the absence of traditional military threats to justify increased defence spending, the EU's external border security policy has evolved into a goldmine for the European defence industry [4]. These are the same military and security companies that profit from the sale of arms to the Middle East and Africa, fuelling the conflicts that force so many people to flee to Europe in search of refuge. These same companies then supply border guards with necessary equipment, border surveillance technology and the technological infrastructure to track population movements. A far-flung 'xenophobia business' has emerged, in the words of French researcher Claire Rodier, [5] one which, given its opacity and obscure margins, increasingly relies on EU budget lines disguised as development aid or 'promoting good neighbourliness'. In fact, it could be said that the closest thing to a European army to date has been Frontex, the agency responsible for administering Europe's external border surveillance system as if it were a military front.

This dynamic is, as Tomasz Koniecz argues, inseparable from the crisis-riddled imperialism of the 21st century, which is no longer simply a

phenomenon of plundering resources, but also strives to hermetically lock off the centres of superfluous humanity that the system produces in its throes. Thus, the protection of the last relative islands of well-being is central to imperialist strategies, reinforcing the security and control measures that fuel growing authoritarianism [6].

The tightening of EU migration laws in recent decades is a prime example, culminating in the ratification of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum in April 2024. This authoritarianism of scarcity is perfectly in tune with another brutal process: shrinking economic welfare that, after decades of neo-liberal policies, in turn create misery for large sections of the population. This sense of scarcity is at the heart of the xenophobia of welfare chauvinism, which fits in perfectly with the rise of a neo-liberal authoritarianism whose slogan is, in essence, 'everyone for themselves!', in the war of last against the second last.

In addition to the imaginary barbarian [7] invasions of Fortress Europe and its authoritarian drift, there is now the danger of the new Russian imperialism. Nothing is more cohesive and legitimising than a foreign enemy, when it comes to constructing the European neo-militarist project, which is not really about defending Ukraine but instead supports European leaders' authoritarian neoliberalism. The new mantra in Brussels is that 'Europe is more united today than ever,' a phrase repeated to ward off the ghosts of recent crises and demonstrate to the outside world that Europe now has a common political goal.

The remilitarisation of Europe is an aspiration that European elites have long concealed behind euphemisms such as the 'strategic compass' [8] or the quest for greater strategic autonomy for the EU. Until now, there seemed to be too many stumbling blocks for it to be achieved. The President of the European Commission herself, Ursula von der Leyen, asked rhetorically in her 2021 State of the Union address, why no progress had been made so far on common defence: 'What has prevented us from making progress so far? It's not a lack of

resources, but a lack of political will'.

It is precisely this political will that seems to take precedence over everything else since the invasion of Ukraine. That war has become the perfect pretext for accelerating the agenda of Europe's neoliberal elites, who no longer see in the remilitarisation of the EU merely a lifeline to deter invasion. This is, more openly now, the new strategic project for European integration to complement the market constitutionalism that has prevailed until now. A Europe of markets and 'security'.

Thus, the global polycrisis - which is further undermining the EU's geo-economic and geopolitical weight - is causing new leaps forward in its financial and, in turn, military integration, in the name of competitiveness and in response to the invasion of Ukraine. A few weeks after the invasion of Ukraine, Ms Von der Leyen told the European Parliament that the EU was more united than ever and that more progress had been made on common security and defence 'in six days than in the last two decades', referring to the release of €500 million in EU funds for Ukraine's military equipment.

It cannot be denied that the European elites are using the war in Ukraine to accelerate the agenda of neoliberalism, including a closer financial and trade alliance between them and, in turn, a remilitarisation of the EU as a useful instrument for their project of a 'Europe of power'. The military and security integration is obviously aimed at transforming the European economy for war.

We are facing a real paradigm shift. The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, claims the EU 'must learn quickly to speak the language of power' and 'not only rely on soft power as we used to do' [9]. With this in mind, in March 2022, the Member States approved the famous Strategic Compass, an action plan to strengthen the EU's security and defence policy by 2030. Although the Strategic Compass took two years to draw up, its content was

quickly adapted to the new context opened up by the Russian invasion of Ukraine: 'The more hostile security environment requires us to make a quantum leap forward and increase our capacity and willingness to act, strengthen our resilience and ensure solidarity and mutual assistance'. The new strategy envisages European defence as no longer based on peacekeeping, but on national-European security and the protection of 'key trade routes.' In other words, the aim is to protect European interests by ensuring the EU's 'strategic autonomy'.

The interest of Europe's elites in speaking the hard language of power is intimately linked to the EU's neocolonial and 'green' extractivism, which aims to secure the supply of scarce raw materials fundamental to the European economy and its so-called green transition, against a backdrop of growing struggles between old and new empires. As Mario Draghi puts it: 'In a world where our rivals control many of the resources we need, such an agenda has to be combined with a plan to secure our supply chain - from critical minerals to batteries to charging infrastructure.' [10] The remilitarisation of Europe is only the necessary step towards being able to speak the hard language of power that secures the raw materials and resources that European businesses need.

The Strategic Compass repeatedly states that 'Russia's war of aggression constitutes a tectonic shift in European history' to which the EU must respond. And what is the main recommendation of this strategic compass? Increased military spending and coordination. Precisely in a context when the military budgets of EU Member States are more than four times those of Russia, and European military spending has tripled since 2007. [11] This increase in defence spending was confirmed at the Versailles European Council in March 2022, when the Member States agreed to invest 2% of their GDP in defence. [12] This is the largest defence investment in Europe since the Second World War. For the same reason, at the summit, the President of the Council, Charles Michel, stated

bluntly that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the EU's budgetary response had 'confirmed the birth of European defence'.

Just two months ago, the European Commission presented the first Defence Industrial Strategy [13], an ambitious set of new actions to support the competitiveness and readiness of the defence industry throughout the Union. The main objective is to improve the Union's defence capabilities by promoting the integration of Member States' industries and reducing dependence on arms procurement outside the continent. In short, it's about preparing European industry for war. As Mrs Von der Leyen told the plenary session of the European Parliament, while 'the threat of war may not be imminent, but it is not impossible', so 'Europe has to wake up'. [14]

Although the Strategic Compass increases European strategic autonomy, the document admits 'how essential NATO is for the collective defence of its members'. Since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO has endeavoured to redefine itself and adapt to a new geopolitical environment in which the transatlantic link appeared to have been overcome. French President Emmanuel Macron himself argued in 2019 that the absence of American leadership was leading to a 'brain death' of the Atlantic Alliance and that Europe had to start acting as a global strategic power. Today, as Russian soldiers have invaded Ukraine and Moscow tacitly threatens to use nuclear weapons, NATO is experiencing a resurgence, a return to *raison d'être* and a new sense of its existential purpose.

Indeed, Macron himself has left the door open to sending NATO ground troops to fight in Ukraine: 'We will do everything possible to prevent Russia from winning this war'[14]. [15] In addition to providing Kiev with 'long-range missiles and bombs,' which had not been done previously for fear of escalating the conflict, Joe Biden and his European partners have recently authorised the use of their military equipment against targets in Russian territory in an attempt to mitigate

Moscow's offensive against Kharkiv. As the months pass, all of the United States' and European Union's red lines and safeguards become diluted, pushing us progressively closer to an armed clash with NATO soldiers on Ukrainian soil, which might lead to a Third World War with completely unknown and dangerous scenarios.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine has not only allowed European public opinion to coalesce around a strong sense of insecurity about external threats; in response to the EU's call for rearmament, Spain's defence minister, Margarita Robles, stated that society 'is not aware' of the 'total and absolute threat' of war, legitimising the largest increase in military spending since World War II. However, it has also allowed NATO and US imperialism to erode any semblance of the EU's political independence while restoring long-lost legitimacy and unity, especially after the failed occupation of Afghanistan.

While Putin's invasion of Ukraine quickly became a figleaf for hiding the insecurities and pain stemming from neo-liberal social fragmentation - by exponentially increasing defence budgets and promoting European integration based on remilitarisation - so to does support for the State of Israel in its genocidal, collective punishment of the Palestinian people now function as an accelerator of the EU's militaristic and warmongering drift.

The most powerful EU leaders not only approve the Zionist state's policy of war crimes against the civilian population of Gaza, citing a non-existent 'right to defence' on the part of an occupying power. They also repress and attempt to ban any internal voices that oppose unconditional EU support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine and genocide of Gazans. The McCarthyite drift has a true goal: not simply to eliminate solidarity with the Palestinian cause, but to discipline the European population around the geostrategic interests of its elites, namely the remilitarization of Europe around the war in Ukraine and unconditional support for Israel.

Perhaps the only positive outcome of

all of this is that we can finally consign to the dust bin, all of the so-called 'European values' and 'founding myths of peace' that the EU liberal propaganda machine continues to hammer away at.

In this sense, the construction of domestic enemies as scapegoats to justify and support increasingly repressive models and curtailments of general freedoms, which particularly target minorities considered to be dangerous, plays a fundamental role. And here, a dangerous minority is anyone who does not fit into the identity framework of European Christian whiteness. [16] That identity framework has a limited flexibility, since membership in the community no longer depends on a matter of birth, but instead on an ideological commitment to the values that the elites stipulate as authentically European. [17]

Thus, a French person is not one who was born and nurtured in France, but rather one who identifies with a predetermined French identity. Anyone who rejects these French ideals loses their French identity, regardless of where they were born, what is inscribed on their passport, or whether they wear a national team jersey. Today, belonging to a national community is linked to a supposed identity and is increasingly thought of in ethno-cultural and ideological terms.

In this context, the far right sets the agenda, and the so-called centre complies, executes and normalizes it. And this is not only out of simple ideological conviction, but also out of pure strategic interest: in capitalist societies experiencing multiple and growing crises and instabilities, reinforcing repression and securitization becomes a necessary form of economic life insurance. Exploring and exploiting fears and insecurities to build an ideology of security gives the authoritarian neo-liberal project coherence and identity. Societies are rebuilt, and tensions are contained by the exclusion and expulsion of the most vulnerable or dissident sectors.

The far right is gaining a growing share of power within the EU, to the

point of becoming a fundamental factor in determining parliamentary majorities in the next parliament. Indeed, the Eurocrat bureaucracy in Brussels, aware that it will need the support of part of this political family to ensure the governance of the EU, has embarked on a campaign to differentiate between the 'good far right' and the 'bad far right', i.e., between the far right that unambiguously adheres to neo-liberal economic policy, remilitarization and geostrategic subordination to European elites, and the far right that still questions them, albeit in an increasingly timid fashion.

The European Eurocracy is planning to give the extreme right a specific role in European government, thereby burying all of the taboos and precautions that Western democracies have taken against these political movements since the end of WWII. All of this occurs in a context where the drums of war are beating in the chancelleries, bringing us dangerously close to a new global military confrontation, against a backdrop of climate emergency and the ineptitude of the multilateral governance and international legal systems that have governed neoliberal globalisation over the last few decades.

European elites are taking advantage of the situation to launch a new phase of the European project, with the goal of establishing an oligarchic, technocratic federalism. For this is what Mario Draghi, the former Managing Director of Goldman Sachs in Europe, openly proposed in his recent report commissioned by von der Leyen: to accelerate the introduction of joint decision-making mechanisms for European institutions, to promote the union of EU capital markets, and to be able to act under better conditions in the race for ever more intense competitiveness with the other great powers, whether in decline or booming, after the end of happy globalization.

This dangerous cocktail promises new conflicts, a recomposition of the players, a widening of the battlefield and, above all, an acceleration of inter-imperialist conflicts. Beyond assessments of military tactics, what is beyond doubt is that the winners so

far from the Russian invasion of Ukraine are: Russian imperialism itself, which succeeded in annexing and occupying part of the resource-rich territories Putin has long coveted; NATO, which has gone from a state of 'brain death' to the most aggressive geopolitical agenda in its history; the old desire of European elites to use militarism as an integration mechanism; and the corporations that manufacture death, which have never made so much profit. [18] And the main losers, as always, are the citizens, in this case the Ukrainian people who nevertheless continue to resist the invasion and who deserve our support, just as do the Russian activists who are fighting Putin's war.

While the European Parliament began the 2019 legislature by declaring a climate emergency, it ended by sounding the war drums in European chancelleries, promoting a remilitarization incompatible with any eco-social transition process. It seems that the next parliamentary term will see the return of austerity recipes, but this time under the straitjacket of an expansive defence budget that will ensure the remilitarization of Europe and the conversion of the European arms industry. It is therefore more necessary than ever to work towards building a broad transnational anti-militarist movement to challenge the elites' plan for a combination of austerity, internal repression and remilitarization of Europe, co-governed by the deep centre and the reactionary wave of far-right parties.

To achieve this, it is essential to challenge the concept of security based on spending on armaments, defence and military infrastructure. As an alternative, we need to propose an anti-militarist security model that guarantees access to a functional public health system, education, employment, housing, energy, improved access to social services that ensure a dignified life, and a response to climate change based on an ecosocialist horizon. As the ReCommons Europe manifesto states, 'the forces of the political and social left that wish to embody a force for change in Europe, with the aim of laying the foundations for an egalitarian society based on solidarity, must imperatively adopt anti-militarist

policies. This means fighting not only the wars of European imperialist forces, but also arms sales and support for repressive and bellicose regimes'. [19]

Condemnation of the Russian invasion and solidarity with the Ukrainian people must intrinsically integrate rejection of Russian imperialism and rejection of the remilitarization of the EU and the strengthening of the Atlantic Alliance. Under no circumstances can our support for the Ukrainian people and the fight against Russian imperialism appear subordinate to our own imperialism. We must avoid the binary trap of having to support one imperialism against another, accepting the logic of the Union Sacrée at the dawn of WWI with new war credits. As anti-capitalists, our task should be precisely to break down this dichotomy and adopt an active, clear anti-militarist stance in support of the Ukrainian and Russian peoples, creating our own field independently of the conflicting imperialisms and defending: the right to conscientious objection and to active desertion by all soldiers and to be welcomed as political refugees; non-payment of the Ukrainian debt; an end to neo-liberal dictates (e.g. from the IMF) impoverishing Ukraine; peace without annexations; the unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine; and guaranteeing the right of people, without exception, to freely decide their future.

Without successful resistance, the EU elites will continue jeopardizing the societal model for decades to come. In this world on fire, the underlying conflict is between capital and life, private interests and common goods, property, and rights. We will never be able to undertake an ecological and social transition without fighting the capitalist disease of militarism. Today, more than ever, it is essential to open a new cycle of mobilizations capable of moving from the national to the European level. We need to shatter the EU's Euro-reformist illusion to force through a democratic, anti-neoliberal, anti-militarist, feminist, ecologist-socialist and anti-colonial system that opens the door to a new project of European integration. Only then and there will we be, as Rosa

Truce in Gaza and the dilemmas faced by Netanyahu and Hamas

5 June 2024, by **Gilbert Achcar**

Media commentators found rather odd that an Israeli proposal is announced by the US President instead of being announced by official Israeli sources. The confusion increased when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seemed to want to distance himself from the project by asserting conditions that apparently contradicted it, or complicated it, the most important being his insistence on continuing the onslaught until Hamas's military and political capabilities are completely eliminated and Israeli security control over the entire Strip is ensured.

The truth is that this apparent mix-up reflects a real state of confusion that revolves primarily around Netanyahu himself. This is because the Zionist leader is caught between two fires: US pressure supported by the Israeli opposition and by a group within his own party, the Likud, led by "Defence" Minister Gallant, and counter-pressure exerted by Netanyahu's allies on the Zionist far right. What is the nature of these two opposing pressures?

Let us begin with the pressure from the two "neo-Nazi" blocs that Netanyahu allied with a year and a half ago to obtain a majority in the Knesset that allowed him to return to power. It is well known that these two blocs believe that there is no point in concluding any agreement with Hamas, even if only temporary, and that the goal of the ongoing war must be for the Zionist state to seize the entire Gaza Strip and annex it to its territory as part of "Eretz Israel" (the Land of Israel) between the river and the sea. (This has become the common goal of the Zionist far right after it was forced to downsize the "Greater

Israel" project by stopping it at the borders of Sinai in the south and the Jordan River in the east, while expanding north to the Golan Heights and coveting part of southern Lebanon.) The leaders of the Zionist far right aspire to deport the Gazans from the Gaza Strip – or incite them to leave it "voluntarily" as they claim with brazen hypocrisy – and to replace them with Jewish settlers. They also see this goal as more important than the lives of the remaining captives held by Hamas and other Palestinian factions in Gaza.

On the other hand, the two main partisan wings of US imperialism see that their state's interests are achieved by forming a regional military alliance that includes the Zionist state and Washington's Arab allies, namely, from the Ocean to the Gulf: the Kingdom of Morocco, Egypt, the Saudi Arabian Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and other Gulf Cooperation Council monarchies, as well as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It is a project for which Donald Trump made strenuous efforts while he was in the White House, and his endeavours were continued by his successor, Biden, who has been almost indistinguishable from him with regard to the "Greater Middle East". Achieving this project requires however a "solution" to the Palestinian issue based on the establishment of a "Palestinian state" that would give it its backing, and thus deceive Arab public opinion (in the belief of the governments concerned).

As for the fate of Gaza according to this vision, it would be a return to what emerged from the Oslo Accords, i.e. a Palestinian Authority entrusted

with the task of managing densely populated Palestinian areas, while the Zionist army surround these areas and supervise them security-wise in addition to the said authority. But experience has proven that a Palestinian Authority cooperating with the occupation is not able to control the popular resistance alone. US officials and their Arab allies also agree that the current Ramallah-based Authority is unable to prevent Hamas from regaining control of Gaza if the Zionist army withdraws from the Strip's populated areas. They believe therefore that the ideal solution would be to deploy an Arab "peacekeeping force" in those populated areas, a force upon which the Palestinian Authority collaborating with the occupation could rely in controlling the population. Citing Western sources, the Financial Times revealed that three Arab countries have expressed their willingness to send forces to Gaza: Egypt, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates.

Biden needs a truce that he could attribute to his administration's efforts before US public opinion, especially among traditional Democratic Party voters, in order to limit the electoral loss that he is likely to suffer in some circles. His administration made extensive efforts to persuade the Israeli war cabinet established following the "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation to agree on a second truce project, the first phase of which consists in a six-week ceasefire during which a number of Israeli captives and a larger number of Palestinian detainees, as usual, would be released, along with the withdrawal of the Zionist army from Gaza's densely populated areas (as stipulated in the

Oslo Accords). These areas have actually been significantly reduced in size, as most of the Gazans have become displaced and confined to restricted areas of refuge.

While the project stipulates a second phase during which the remaining Israeli captives and an additional batch of Palestinian detainees would be released, Netanyahu publicly disagreed with the project's promise of a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza during this same phase, stressing that he had never accepted this, and that the Zionist army would not end the war before ensuring the complete elimination of Hamas's potential in the Strip. What Biden and the members of the Zionist war cabinet really want, however, is nothing more than a temporary truce leading to the release of all Israeli captives except male soldiers, so that they could claim before the public opinion that they did everything they could to save those who could be saved. The rest will be regarded as part of the normal cost of war that soldiers are prepared to pay when they join the armed forces. The war

cabinet members know that completing their occupation of the Rafah area will likely result in the death of the captives who constitute the last card in the hands of the Hamas leadership inside the Gaza Strip. They want therefore to reduce the number of these captives to what Israeli public opinion can stomach.

As for this second phase of the project and the third (reconstructing the Gaza Strip), they will not be achieved as the truce will not go beyond its first phase, which is what convinced Netanyahu to accept the project in the first place - even if reluctantly, because he knew that his far-right allies would not accept it. This is the reason for the mix-up and confusion that emerged in recent days as Netanyahu is trying to persuade his allies not to break their alliance with him and withdraw their blocs' support for his premiership, thus forcing him to rely on the opposition, whether it is Gantz's party, which joined the war cabinet, or Lapid's party, which refused to join it. The two parties have expressed their willingness to support

Netanyahu's remaining in his position until the next parliamentary election if he accepts the truce and behind it the settlement project based on the involvement of Arab forces with the Zionist forces in the security control of the Gaza Strip.

It is a difficult choice that Netanyahu is facing today, the inevitable result of his reliance on two extremist groups, compared to which the Likud Party itself, despite its fascist roots, looks "moderate". It is an equally difficult choice, if not more difficult, that the Hamas leaders inside the Gaza Strip are facing on the opposite side, as they are asked to give up their last card in securing their survival, in exchange for a few weeks of truce accompanied by a massive entry of aid that is necessary to avoid the death of an additional large number of Gazans, children in particular.

4 June 2024

Translated from the Arabic original published in Al-Quds al-Arabi on 4 June 2024. Source: Gilbert Achcar's [blog](#)

Wage strike in Norway

4 June 2024, by **Collective**

At the same time, a major strike in the state civil service shook the country. However, unlike the widespread recognition of Palestine, the strike was virtually ignored, including by the Norwegian media. Every spring, wage negotiations take place between employers (private and public) and trade unions, the content of which is kept secret. An agreement ('tariffavtale') is generally reached before the deadline, thanks to the consensual culture of a country that is not very prone to industrial action. This year, for example, the local civil service (mainly schools and hospitals) signed a bad agreement, with a pay rise well below inflation.

Decline of the public service

The state civil service, particularly for graduates, benefits from a kind of special scheme guaranteeing better pay rises, but, as we might expect, the government wants to undermine it. It is supported in this by the country's largest trade union (LO for 'Landsorganisasjonen i Norge'), on the sadly trite grounds that this constitutes inequality between workers. However, the second largest union, Unio, which has a strong presence in the education and research sector, rejects the plan and the government is a long way from reaching a wage agreement.

The conflict also concerns the replacement of retiring staff, as the government has developed the unfortunate habit of hiring young graduates on the cheap, so that after a few years they leave to work in the private sector, thus contributing to the decline of the public service. State departments are short of staff and skills, so the government contracts out to the private sector or hires temporary staff on fixed-term contracts for specialised issues that it is unable to deal with. Whatever the country, the little tune that undermines the public sector is always the same!

Renewable strike

Unio, along with a number of other unions, has therefore launched a rolling strike in the state civil service. [20] The Norwegian system is very special in this respect. Each member gives his or her union the mandate to negotiate and decide on strike action. The union then sets the strike participation rate, and the strikers are chosen by lot. The lucky ones are legally obliged to go on strike, while the others have to go to work. Well-stocked strike funds make up for most of the lost wages. Surprisingly, the employer cannot give a non-striker a job usually done by a striker. On the other hand, the Norwegian government has a secret

weapon, often criticised in the past by the International Labour Organisation for its abusive use: if the dispute lasts, it can submit to Parliament a vote to force the strikers to return to work, on the pretext of danger or serious consequences for society or health. A mediator between the parties is then appointed.

Between 20% and 60% of strikers

Under this half-yellow, half-red system, 3,500 civil servants have been on strike since 27 May (in universities, research institutes, ministries, state regulatory agencies, the medical and labour inspectorates, the police, etc.), representing between 20% and 60% of

strikers, depending on the sector. In this peaceful little country of five million inhabitants, the last comparable movement in the civil service dates back at least a decade. In Oslo, the head of the police union even declared, embarrassed, that this was his first time speaking at a demonstration! With negotiations at a standstill, the number of strikers will double from 3 June. In the private sector, it is possible that airline pilots and certain sectors of the retail sector will join the movement, for similar reasons.

Stay tuned!

2 June 2024

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

Are teachers the (new) proletarians?

3 June 2024, by **Hafiza b. Kreje, Raphaël Greggan**

Grimaud recalls Taylor's intentions in 1927: '[to] convince us that there is a science for each of the elementary acts that constitute trades'. This brings to mind France's minister of education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, and his desire to 'build a method for objectifying [the teaching profession]' and the way in which he insisted that 'cognitive sciences must feed into practice'. The aim of Blanquer's reforms is above all to turn the profession into a repetitive, standardised job, where the teacher can be replaced by anyone (or even by videos or artificial intelligence). This echoes the current reforms to teacher training. The government wants to rename the training institutes to become Ecole Normale Supérieure du Professeurs (ENSP). [21]

This is not just a change of name. The ENSPs will not have the support of higher education and academic freedom, but will simply provide training under the control of the French education system. In this respect, it is significant that Macron has proposed (unconsciously, we

hope) that 'the teacher training colleges of the 21st century' should have the same acronym as the police academy. [22]

Teachers as artisan-educators

But are the reforms introduced since 2017 enough to say that teachers are new proletarians? As Grimaud himself acknowledges, 'the formula is risky'. On the one hand, Marx established that a proletarian has a precise place in the process of creating or realising value. The creation of value is understood in two senses: a concrete sense which refers to the actual transformation of material by a technique - the worker produces something - and an abstract sense which refers to the fetishisation of the product as a commodity. On the other hand, within the framework of commodity fetishism that Marx specifies 'what the worker sells is not his labour directly, but his labour-power, the momentary disposal of

which he cedes to the capitalist'. [23] Labour power is a commodity like any other, whose price is determined by the employer. It is customary to identify the role of education with increasing the value of labour power: it is in this sense that public education can be seen as the means of ensuring the existence of a skilled workforce. It is in this sense that teachers can be seen as workers: they 'add' value to a material in the form of the pupil, a workforce in the making.

Productive labour

However, it's not so obvious to say that the teacher is a 'producer', and therefore a 'worker' in Marx's sense. From the point of view of abstract labour, it is in part (and in part only) that the price of labour is determined by the skills and knowledge of the employee. This is where the problem lies for the teacher: while we can see that the presence of teachers has an impact on the value of the labour power of future workers, it seems

impossible to measure it. To put it another way: the same teaching does not lead to the same increase in the value of the workforce for those who follow it. To use the formula of the educational think tank, the Groupe français d'éducation nouvelle (GFEN): in the final analysis, it's the young person who learns, in other words, etymologically: they take what they can when they can. And even worse: there is no way of establishing whether the knowledge transmitted will be retained over the long term.

It cannot be said that teachers have actually produced anything: they profess, declare and state the knowledge that they are supposed to have mastered and 'teach' it, i.e. they ensure that this discourse is not simply declamation, but that it is prehensible and that the interlocutors can acquire it. Their actual acquisition depends on their reception, which can never be merely passive. If there is indeed an 'addition of concrete value', this is entirely dependent on the active consent of the student, even though the latter is not the initiator of this contribution.

Objectivising tasks?

This fraternal criticism of the title of Grimaud's book does not detract from the accuracy of his intuition. The structural reforms undertaken by Macron and his epigones seek to 'convince people that there is a science of each of the elementary acts that make up a profession' and that the teaching profession can hence be divided into elementary tasks, themselves scientifically optimised. [24] But this is a pipe dream. Not because teachers are impervious to liberal theses, but because the work of the teacher is not identified with production. Production is not simply the result of the perfect execution of a task or the appropriate use of a technique. Imagination is required in production and in the contribution of value: it is not distinct from labour, it is the foundation of human labour. Marx opposes the idealism that makes imagination a real force, but he also asserts that labour cannot be reduced to visible

operations. Materialism is not crude objectivism. To define labour, Marx points out that 'what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality [what] distinguishes the worst architect from the most expert bee from the outset is that he has built the cell in his head before he builds it in the street. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will. [25]

It is to this 'humanising' component of work that the teacher addresses themselves: they strive to extend what makes work possible, and their work is entirely encompassed in this task prior to the pupil's production and ability to produce. [26] They don't produce, they make it possible.

Pedagogy and the interpersonal link

In a way, the teacher bears a resemblance to the artisan. The increase in the student's knowledge, skills and know-how is specific to the teacher and is linked to the student's current attitude in their interaction (or lack of it) with the teacher. You can only learn what you don't know. The act of learning begins with the recognition that we don't know and implies a desire to fill the void that has just been created. The teaching profession is a precarious and special combination of managing to interest pupils in unknown content that they have not chosen a priori, and giving them the means to fill this intimate absence that has just been created. This is what is at stake in pedagogy, which corresponds to the teacher's non-reproducible know-how: it cannot simply be a matter of technique, because the subject, the student, is not a material whose properties are always identical. A hard head is not a wooden head. Although certain tasks in the teaching profession are reproducible and, after more than a

century of educational research, methods have emerged that are more effective than others, they all depend on the interpersonal relationship that teachers establish with their learners. To put it more clearly, whatever happens, the scientific division of the teaching profession into elementary tasks is doomed to failure, precisely because it is based on the relationship between two free and conscious living beings, capable of working, and not between a worker and inert matter.

Are teachers in the camp of the proletariat?

Classifying teachers in the ranks of the proletariat is a socio-historical construct that cannot be detached from the massification of this body, following the Ferry law of 1882 on compulsory education. This was based on the ideological desire of 'class defectors' at the turn of the century to be attached to their class of origin, as underlined by the manifesto of the syndicalist teachers in 1905. But there was nothing obvious about this primitive attachment, and other teachers preferred a peer organisation, autonomous from the proletariat, which was reflected in the bipolarity between trade union organisations and professional associations. As Samuel Joshua reminds us, in the 1970s, Marxists classified teachers as 'the new petty-bourgeoisie'. [27]

Even if this economist characterisation is debatable, it is certain that teachers do not belong to the class per se, but the question of the class per se is debatable. Schools have a collective dimension, like primitive factories. Operating collectively within the same structure induces habitus and group reflexes. The numerical importance of teacher unionism in France places a significant proportion of teachers in the ranks of the proletariat.

Functionaries in

the service of the state

However, this categorisation overlooks the fact that teachers are mainly functionaries. At the very least, they represent, as Bourdieu puts it, 'the left hand of the state'. This dimension is absent from Grimaud's book. And yet it is a fundamental contradiction. Ultimately, they assume the contradiction between liberating knowledge and confining scholasticism (minds and bodies). In this sense, teachers are the daily representatives of the training (and formatting) of the proletariat to the needs dictated by the state. This is precisely one of the issues that has been at stake since compulsory schooling began at the end of the 19th century, through the mass schooling of the post World War 2 era to the Blanquer reforms: the school is a tool of the state to serve the interests of employers. It is this ideological contradiction that explains, for example, the debates between teachers on the 2004 law on religious symbols, which is seen as alienating teachers from the Islamophobic decisions of governments, under the

guise of a so-called 'republican' discourse. Macron's school reforms, designed to meet the current needs of French capital, are leading to a profound change in the teaching profession, and this is what Grimaud points out. He rightly speaks of the proletarianisation of the profession.

Cognitive capitalism

The convergence of teaching work with the situation of the proletariat can be thought of in a more structural way, under the hypothesis of a partial evolution of capitalism into 'cognitive' capitalism and no longer just industrial capitalism. Yann Moulier Boutang writes: 'By cognitive capitalism, we mean a form of accumulation in which the object of accumulation is principally knowledge, which becomes the principal resource of value as well as the principal locus of the process of valorisation': the subordination of the humanisation of teaching work to liberal imperatives aims to assimilate the creative process to capitalism, in the same way that 'emancipatory' demands were integrated into the logic of liberal

management after 1968. [[Y. Moulier Boutang, 'Le capitalisme cognitif: la

From this perspective, if teachers can be said to be proletarianised, it is because they are aware of the degradation involved in translating imagination into an abstract resource for capital. In this sense, the integration of teachers into the proletariat's 'class for itself' is essential.

The state's efforts, which make use of the teaching profession's ideological affinity with republican discourse, are aimed at forcing this institution into generalised proletarianisation. By making teachers the defenders of the Republic, the state is creating an abstract divide between teachers and students by opposing them on the basis of 'ideological values', whereas teachers are opposed by their professional practice to the commodification of humanising faculties. That's why the fight against the alienation of teachers is the fight of our social camp.

May 2024

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

Trump Found Guilty of 34 Felonies—What Does it Mean for the Election?

2 June 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

In fact, the trial was a model of American justice. New York State prosecutors brought the charges after three years of investigation, Judge Juan M. Merchan conducted a fair trial, and Trump was found guilty by the unanimous vote of 12 jurors, ordinary citizens of New York City, vetted and selected by both teams of attorneys. One has to admire the remarkable courage of the jurors for declaring a guilty verdict despite violent threats from Trump's supporters. Former president Donald

Trump was found guilty of all 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up hush money payments to porn film actress Stormy Daniels with whom he had sex. The jury was allowed to consider that suppressing that information interfered with both the state and federal election.

The judge alone will sentence Trump on July 11 and he has great latitude. He could allow the former president to go free, could condition his discharge, could have him held under house

arrest, or send him to prison for four to twenty years. Many believe that he is unlikely to go to prison. He might well.

Judges typically take one's record into account. Trump has no former criminal convictions, but the judge will take into account other civil cases. A judge already ordered Trump to pay \$35 million for lying about his wealth. And in another case, he was ordered to pay \$5 million in a civil suit for raping E. Jean Carroll and then \$83.3

million for defaming Carroll. During this fraud case, the judge issued a gag order, forbidding Trump from threatening witnesses, jurors, the judge, family members of the judge and jury, prosecutors, and court official. Trump violated the gag order ten times, for which he was fined \$9,000. The judge may also consider that Trump has shown no remorse in this case.

Once Trump is sentenced, he has the right to appeal, though appeals can take several months. Since this is a conviction of a crime in New York State and not a federal crime, he may appeal to higher state courts but by law cannot be appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, some of whose members he appointed.

Mike Johnson, the rightwing Republican speaker of the House, called upon the U.S. Supreme Court to intervene in Trump's appeal, which would be a violation of the Constitution.

The U.S. Constitution does not prohibit a felon or even a prisoner from being a candidate or being elected to the presidency. The Socialist Eugene V. Debs, while in prison for his anti-war activities, ran for president in 1920. Ironically, Trump may not be able to vote for himself in his home state of Florida, because there a felon can't vote until he has served the full sentence.

Trump maintains a very slight lead in

polls over Biden, despite his conviction. Over 80% of Republicans say they will back Trump, while 16% say they are reconsidering how they will vote, but only 4% have deserted him. Key Trump constituencies such as the Evangelical Christians still back Trump. Biden, meanwhile is losing the support of Arab and Muslim voters and of some young voters who call him "genocide Joe." And while most Black and Latino voters still back him, his support among those groups is declining some.

On Tuesday, November 5, Americans could go to the polls and elect a neo-fascist who is a convicted felon—and perhaps a prison inmate.

2 June 2024

The PTB between rupture and participation

1 June 2024, by **Daniel Tanuro, Freddy Mathieu**

It's clear today just how much this 'monumental slap in the face' frightens those in power. That's why the political class and the dominant media are besieging the PTB to make it say that it is ready to participate in government. At the same time, many in the unions and associations want the PS, ECOLO and PTB to join forces to block the right. A complex situation. Caught in the crossfire, the PTB has responded by formulating its 'breaking points' for entering government. The problem is that the points put forward are far from sufficient to bring about a real break with the past. Why is the PTB adopting such a low profile? How does this relate to the history of the organisation and its limitations? And how can we go further, how, in today's reactionary context, can we bring about the political emergence of an anti-capitalist alternative that is equal to the challenges? These are the three questions discussed in this contribution to the debate by Gauche anticapitaliste activists.

The PTB has the wind in its sails.

Although the polls should be taken with caution, its breakthrough is truly impressive. It is seriously destabilising traditional politics, particularly social democracy and the Greens. Given that the record of these parties is littered with renunciations and betrayals, it's pleasing to see them in trouble: it's like a revenge. It reflects the desire for an alternative. The PTB claims to embody both revenge and an alternative. Social, ecological, ethical, democratic, credible and radical. Turning its back on 'extremism', it presents itself as 'the authentic left'. A left that does not deny its values, that refuses to compromise, that puts its actions in line with its words and that proposes concrete changes. This is a major reason for its success.

But this enormous success has a weak point: the more it strengthens electorally, the less the PTB can avoid the question of participation in government. The PS and Ecolo are just around the corner. They, in turn, hope to take revenge on the party that is unmasking them and taking votes away from them. The calculation is

simple: people will understand that there is no point in voting for a party of 'cowards' (Magnetite) who refuse to 'take responsibility'. Pressure is also mounting within the trade unions. The FGTB (Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique) trade union federation says it openly: on the French-speaking side, it hopes for a united left to better relay its demands inside governments.

An inflection point

So what about participating in government? Until now, PTB spokespersons have been on the sidelines. To journalists, they would basically say: 'We'll see later', 'We're not strong enough yet', 'We have to start at municipal level', 'Look at Zelzate, it's proof that we're ready, if there's a real break'... But this line has become untenable. When you have become a major party that argues for the urgency of a left-wing alternative in the face of the growing threat from the far right, you cannot avoid the question of power. Power is by definition the goal of all politics. At

the current stage of its electoral development, a PTB that avoided the question of power would probably begin its decline. This is why Hedebouw and his comrades are today putting the conditions of their possible participation in the public debate. This is a turning point. It takes two forms.

On the one hand, the PTB is submitting a text entitled 'Voter PTB: pour une vraie alternative de gauche' ('Vote PTB: for a real left alternative') to a number of leading left-wing figures. The text condemns 'predatory and exploitative capitalism, which dictates the law and accumulates unlimited profits'. The signatories note that 'the picture is bleak'. They no longer want to 'settle for compromise policies that always end in stalemate. The 'without us it would be worse' approach is no longer appropriate, they say: 'the time has come to break with the past, to assert genuinely alternative policies, and to build new relationships of power'. They point out that 'the elected members of the PTB have demonstrated their ability to act within institutions in parallel with their struggles on the ground'. As a result, they 'share the hope and desire of FGTB President Thierry Bodson that, following the elections, serious negotiations will be held between the PS, Ecolo and the PTB, which will, arithmetically, be able to secure a majority in Wallonia and Brussels. Despite the PS's doublespeak and Ecolo's refusal to position itself clearly on a left-right axis,' they conclude, 'it is in any case important for us that the PTB, without denying itself, goes as far as possible in these negotiations.'

Echoing this call, the PTB also identifies 'breaking points' at all levels of power (federal, Wallonia and Brussels). In its programme, this approach is justified as follows: 'We choose to break with the neoliberal policies of the last thirty years. This choice is necessary to respond to urgent social needs in terms of purchasing power, tax justice, an end to political privileges and the climate'.

So on the one hand we have a general intention - to break with the neo-liberalism of 'predatory and exploitative capitalism'; on the other hand we have a series of concrete

'breaking points' that the PTB sets out as necessary conditions for its possible participation.

A perilous exercise

As such, for anti-capitalists, this approach is justified. In the kind of situation we're in, we can't just advocate revolution, the destruction of the bourgeois state and soviet power. Nor can we be satisfied with the convergence of struggles at grassroots level, while sidestepping the question of their political outcome. This is indispensable. A politics of rupture must then include more than a program of demands and forms of struggle: to be credible, it must outline the perspective of a government of rupture, and show the way to impose it on the ruling class.

This is no easy task. In fact, it's an extremely perilous exercise, because the PTB has to say whether it is prepared to govern with the PS and Ecolo. And that's where the trap lies. Because one thing is crystal clear: no rupture worthy of the name is possible with the PS and Ecolo. None whatsoever. With these parties, it is futile to even hope for the beginnings of a break. The lessons of history and more recent events demonstrate this. Particularly for social democracy. It chose capitalism over a century ago. It is structurally incapable of going back. The last illusions have vanished since the 'social-liberal' turn of the PS in the 1980s. Since then, those who envisaged working with social democracy (and the Greens) on a path that would be 'anti-neoliberal' without being 'anti-capitalist' have fallen flat on their faces. And why? Because neoliberalism is the only regime compatible with the demands of capital at the current stage of its development. There is simply no other.

Consequently, for anti-capitalists, the only way to avoid the trap of government negotiations is to put forward 'breaking points' that meet three criteria: they must correspond to the key demands of the exploited and oppressed; they must form a limited but coherent set of measures, incompatible with the neo-liberal policy of co-management of the system; and they must be clearly part

of a dynamic of anti-capitalist emancipation.

The 'breaking points'

Let's look at the PTB's 'breaking points' from this angle. First observation: they are limited to four areas - 'purchasing power, tax justice, an end to political privileges and the climate'. There is no 'breaking point' in the face of racism, Islamophobia, violence against women, LGBT-phobia, chemical pollution, neo-colonial plundering of resources or remilitarisation. As the abolition of closed centres for foreigners is not on the PTB's programme, it is not surprising (but more than deplorable!) that it does not constitute a 'breaking point'. But why are demands that are on the programme, such as development aid at 0.7% of GDP, or the cancellation of illegitimate debts, not 'red lines'?

The second observation is that the PTB's 'breaking points' in the four areas above do not make it possible to 'break with the neo-liberal policies of the last thirty years'. Let's take a closer look:

- Tax justice. The 'millionaires' tax' of 2% on fortunes over €5 million and 3% on fortunes over €10 million is "a red line" for the PTB. A tax on wealth is certainly a very important demand, but 1) the tax threshold (5 million!) is clearly too high; 2) 'taking the money where it is' also requires an increase in the rate of corporation tax (ISOC). It was around 33% until the government decided to lower it to 25% in 2019. Calling for a return to 33% is no more 'extremist' than demanding a return to a 65-year pension. The PTB programme does not do this. It calls for the effective application of the 25% to large companies and the elimination of tax loopholes, in the name of equality between SMEs and large companies, but this is not a 'breaking point'.

- The PTB has two 'breaking points' to 'protect purchasing power'. [28] First, to 'revise' the law on competitiveness; second, to 'reject European austerity', these 'European rules which would

like us to make savings on pensions, health and public services'. This is really too limited. Why only 'revise' the law on competitiveness? It must be abolished! And why only commit to preventing new European austerity measures? European or not, we need to start abolishing the measures that have already plunged 15% of the inhabitants of Wallonia and 28% of the inhabitants of Brussels below the poverty line, particularly women. For example, a return to the individualisation of social security rights (imposed, without European diktat, by the 'socialist' Dewulf in 1981). This is part of the PTB's programme, but it is not a breaking point.

- Climate. The PTB's programme says many things: 'public and democratic control of the energy sector', 'public management of hydrogen networks', 'ecological planning', 'exit from the carbon market', 'ambitious public investment plan in renewable energies, housing renovation and public transport', and so on. We know that Raoul Hedebouw and his comrades are not anti-productivist. They are not calling for the abolition of unnecessary or harmful production. But all the same, at a time when the planet is burning, can we be satisfied with free TEC and STIB services as the only 'breaking point'? Why not reject the expansion of air traffic or the construction of new motorways, for example? Or denouncing the neo-colonial agreement (concocted by Green minister Tinne Van der Straeten) that allows Belgium to monopolise Oman's renewable potential, in order to produce in that country - tax-free and with the complicity of the local despot - the green hydrogen needed for Antwerp's petrochemical industry?

- 'Political privilege'. On this point, the PTB cannot be criticised for making a big gap between its programme and its 'breaking points': the key demand of its programme - halving politicians' salaries - constitutes a major breaking point for it. This demand is fully justified from an anti-capitalist point of view. The problem is the central place the PTB gives to it in its mass propaganda, the emphasis of this propaganda and the danger of confusing it with the

'everything is rotten' of the extreme right. This danger would be countered if the PTB demanded a rise in corporation tax and a cap on bosses' pay. Unfortunately, these demands are absent from its electoral programme.

Third observation: where the PTB has no chance of taking part in government (at federal level), its 'breaking points', although very inadequate, are nonetheless precise. The PTB will not enter the federal government unless it obtains: 'an end to wage freezes', 'a real tax on millionaires', 'the return of pensions at 65', 'the rejection of European austerity' and 'an end to political privileges - in particular the halving of politicians' salaries'. At other levels of power, things are less clear-cut. For Wallonia, in addition to free TEC services, the PTB is proposing 'among other things' 'the establishment of a Walloon public waste service with no waste tax or paid bin bags'. For Brussels, in addition to free STIB services, it is proposing 'among other things' federal refinancing of the Region, an end to subservience to major property developers and the construction of 100% public housing. What does 'among other things' mean? The text does not say...

In conclusion, the PTB's 'breaking points' are: 1) too far down the socio-economic scale; 2) mute on feminist, anti-racist, anti-militarist, anti-colonial and anti-exclusion demands; 3) well below what is needed to begin to seriously tackle the ecological emergency in general, and the climate emergency in particular.

Gradualism and left-wing populism

There are two possible interpretations of this conclusion. They are not necessarily contradictory. The first is that the PTB does not want to come to power but is opting for a very low profile because it fears above all to appear as the party that has prevented the formation of more left-wing governments, which could harm it in the local elections. Above all, it is probably afraid of disappointing the trade unions, the FGVB in particular. That's why its breaking points focus

on ending the wage freeze, tax justice and a return to the 65-year pension. The second is that the PTB is ready to 'take its responsibilities' if the results allow and the opportunity presents itself. The vagueness of the breaking points at Walloon and Brussels level seems to be an indication in this direction: don't tie your hands, you never know....

We'll see more clearly in a few weeks' time, so there's no need to anticipate. Be that as it may, this campaign brings the PTB closer to a qualitative threshold in the long evolution it began in 2007-2008. Back then, it decided to shed its image as a Stalinist, 'extremist', pro-Chinese party (originally anti-trade union and anti-Cuba!), justifying the crimes of the Khmer Rouge, the crushing of Tiananmen Square, the tyranny of North Korea (to name but a few). However, despite its new image and real changes, the PTB has retained something of its past: the dogma of the 'leading role of the Party' ('the Party leads the front') and, more broadly, the balance sheet of Stalinism ('globally positive', as Georges Marchais used to say).

Paradoxically, it is this remnant that is being expressed today through the 'breaking points'. The transition from maximalism to minimalism is a classic feature of Stalinist parties. Like its former rival, the pro-Moscow CP, and for the same reasons, the party led by Raoul Hedebouw and Peter Mertens is committed to a gradualist logic of 'small steps'. Like the CP before it, it has accompanied this with a strategy of 'soft power' by building its own associations (Intal and so on) and by taking control of sections of the trade union apparatus, such as it was.

This logic of small steps has a name: reformism. What the PTB is doing today looks more and more like reformism. We're not happy about it, because it's not good news for the left! But the truth has its rights. In view of the current campaign, it is legitimate to ask what still distinguishes the PTB from classic social democracy - social democracy as it was before it embraced the neo-liberal turn.

Of course, the PTB hasn't got its hands dirty in power; it is involved in

most of the struggles. Of course, social democracy is pro-NATO, while the PTB leans towards the BRICS (though it no longer demands that Belgium leave the Atlantic Alliance). So the differences are obvious. The fact remains that the PTB's programme in these elections is not substantially different from that of social democracy. A typical example is the nationalisation of the banks. The PTB championed this. In its election campaign, it was replaced by the demand for 'significant public control over the financial sector' with 'the creation of public banks' and 'the separation of investment banks from deposit banks'. It's an anti-neoliberal regulatory programme à la Joseph Stiglitz, not an anti-capitalist programme à la Karl Marx.

The signatories of the call to vote for the PTB are therefore quite right: 'programmatic convergences exist' with the PS and Ecolo. According to the Bureau du Plan, the PS proposal on wealth taxation is more radical in some respects than that of the PTB.

Could it be to hide these convergences that the PTB is pushing hard on what most clearly distinguishes it in the eyes of ordinary voters - 'the fight against privilege in politics'? Or is it to attract voters from the working classes, to whom its other 'breaking points' might not seem very appealing? Both, no doubt. The PTB's 'left-wing populism' sets it apart from the PS (and Ecolo!) Having said that, however, there are also similarities between the PTB and the PS in terms of strategy. Particularly in terms of the relationship between the party and social movements.

'Politics is the Party's monopoly' is the hallmark of social democracy. It sees itself as the political extension of social movements. The trade unions, in particular, had to subordinate themselves to the Party's electoral objectives and accept the limits of its gradualist strategy. At the end of the 1950s, when the FGTB, on behalf of the workers, wanted to impose its programme of structural reforms on the PS (a programme that contributed greatly to the build-up to the 1960-61 general strike), the latter opposed it with all its might. 'The emancipation of the working class must be the work

of the working class itself' is not a slogan of social democracy. Nor is it a slogan of the PTB. We can see this clearly today in the way it determines its 'breaking points': according to its own political calculations in a given 'sequence' of its own construction.

For the PTB today, the 'sequence' is dominated by the low-profile but very real battle for influence within the FGTB apparatus. Hence the very socio-economic emphasis (in the narrow sense) of the 'breaking points'. But the PTB's approach does not really consist in relaying the trade union alternative politically, as the socialist left did at the time of the Structural Reforms. The example of taxation is significant: the FGTB is obviously in favour of taxing wealth, but it links this demand to others. The PTB, for its part, focuses its 'breaking points' on the 'tax on millionaires' alone. At the same time, its programme includes 'proposals to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)' (not just the small self-employed: SMEs). 'The Party leads from the front'. In the current 'sequence', the Party believes that the front it leads must be broadened to include SMEs.

What alternative?

It's easy to criticise, you might ask. What's your alternative, given that you represent nothing - or so little? It's true: our political current is more than modest. For many years it was in competition with the Communist Party and then with the PTB. And the PTB won. It has become a powerful party. Its hegemony on the left is indisputable, and it shines in Europe. We need to be able to acknowledge this fact, without bitterness or resentment. But it is possible to be small and issue a fair warning. That's what we're doing with this article. The aim is not to air our disagreements with the PTB. We have therefore not criticised the PTB's 'campist' stance in support of the BRICS, even though this stance is, in our view, in contradiction with 'the tenderness of peoples' (as Che Guevara said), in other words with internationalism. At a time when the PTB vote is the focus of many people's hopes, we wanted to point out the danger that a shift

towards gradualism could pose for the entire left in our country, including the PTB itself.

It goes without saying that our criticism requires an alternative. In fact, not so long ago, the trade union left asked itself this question: how do we get out of subordination to social democracy and its gradualism? How could an anti-capitalist political alternative emerge without jeopardising trade union independence? The answer came in the form of a few bold ideas. It came from the leadership of the Charleroi FGTB, which at the time published a pamphlet on the subject: to bring to life 'a more combative and democratic form of trade unionism'; 'to draw up the anti-capitalist programme that we, as trade unionists, want to see taken up in the political arena'; and on this basis to play the leading role in 'bringing together all those who aspire to an anti-capitalist alternative'.

The basic principle was simple: to turn the relationship between the social movement and politics on its head: 'We will draw up our programme and conduct our struggles on the basis of a single concern: the needs of working people. We will encourage them to become actively and democratically involved, so that this programme and these struggles are their own. Then we'll turn things around. Then we will regain our strength. Then, instead of the parties dictating their policies to us, we will be the ones demanding that the parties commit to fighting with us for this programme'.

'Strength to be regained'

This text referred to the 'strength to be regained'. This is a decisive point. Not only for the unions, but also for other social movements. Over the past ten years, it has become clear that the electoral breakthrough of a new party, even an 'authentic left-wing' one, cannot in itself halt the deterioration in the balance of power at grassroots level, in companies, schools and neighbourhoods. The song goes: 'There is no supreme saviour, no god, no Caesar, no tribune'. Let's add: 'nor party'. In fact, the deterioration can

only be halted if the forces fighting on the ground converge, think, create, resist and set the tone for a reconquest of politics from below, with a clearly anti-capitalist and democratic perspective.

We saw the beginnings of this in 2012-2014, particularly when the CNE joined the call from the Charleroi FGTB. The assembly, which brought together 500 trade unionists from all walks of life, numerous activists from associations and the entire radical left (Géode de Charleroi, 2014), was a first concrete expression of the intention expressed in the 'Eight Questions' brochure: 'We don't want to set things in stone. On the contrary: it's about opening up a space and getting a dynamic going. The process of political regrouping must be extended to include left-wing members of the PS and Ecolo, left-wing intellectuals and community activists. (...) To a certain extent, we are inspired by the action of the 19th century workers' militants who worked to create the POB (the forerunner of the PS) because they understood the need for a political tool to strengthen their struggle. But we

obviously need to learn from the way in which this political tool ended up eluding them'.

Our political current was enthusiastically involved in this ferment of hope and emancipation. The PTB was also involved. But, for the PTB, it was only a 'sequence' in its own construction. On the evening of the 2014 elections, having achieved its first breakthrough in Parliament thanks to the PTB-Gauche d'Ouverture lists, the Party blew the whistle on the end of the playground. No need to regroup, there's the PTB. There was no need to reverse the relationship between social movements and politics, the PTB was the synthesis. There's no need to open a space to create a dynamic: become a member of the PTB. The small embryo of a political tool that the trade union and associative lefts had begun to acquire by forcing left-wing political organisations to participate loyally in it has 'frozen'. 'The political tool eluded them'.

Ten years on, the ambiguity of the result is clear to see. On the one hand, the PTB is flying to an electoral

triumph. So much the better for the Left as a whole! On the other hand, the 'breaking points' that it has determined on its own are far below the trade union programme, even further below the programme that the Charleroi FGTB adopted in 2012 in another pamphlet, and ignore other fronts of struggle.

Our alternative, you ask? To pick up together the thread of what was attempted in 2012-2014, drawing all the lessons from the experience. Apply the same method, taking into account the new context (geostrategic, ideological, ecological, political and social). There is no other way. In any case, we intend to build our own political current to carry this perspective forward more forcefully, with all those who understand its importance. Whether the PTB breaks with the past or participates in it will depend on its electoral success.

28 May 2024

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