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Kamala Harris: Not a Progressive nor a “Crazy Leftist”

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

In just a few days, Harris collected enough votes to win the Democratic nomination. In less than a week she raised \$200 million. Supporters rallied around her, for example, 44,000 women who joined one Zoom call as soon as she entered the race raised \$1.5 million. While Biden trailed Trump in the polls, several recent polls now show Harris tied with Trump. Harris appears to be doing better than Biden had been among women, Black voters, and young voters.

Harris, whose father is Black and mother is Indian, immediately faced racist and misogynist attacks from Trump, his running mate J.D. Vance, and their supporters. Trump apologist Sebastian Gorka referred to Harris as, “this disaster whose only qualification is having a vagina and the right skin color.” He and other Trump supporters have called her “a diversity hire,” that is someone who does not have the qualifications to hold a position but was only hired because of their gender or race. Vance claims that Harris and the Democrats are “a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they’ve made.” (Harris has no children of her own but has two step-children with her husband Douglas Emhoff.)

Some progressives in the Democratic Party would like to see Harris as someone like themselves, but there is little basis for it. She fully supported Biden’s economic and social programs—the most significant in half a century—most notably the American Rescue Plan Act (\$1.9 trillion) to support business and workers during COVID, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (\$1.2 trillion), and the Inflation Reduction Act (\$369 billion) to deal with climate issues. Vice-president’s never present their own views, and neither did Harris.

She has also completely supported Biden’s foreign policy, backing Israel and its war on Gaza, supporting Ukraine against the Russian invasion, and opposing China’s rival imperial ambitions. Harris’ reputation for being more progressive regarding Israel is based on statements like this one a few days ago after her meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, “What has happened in Gaza over the past nine months is devastating,” she said. “The images of dead children and desperate, hungry people fleeing for safety, sometimes displaced for the second, third or fourth time — we cannot look away in the face of these tragedies,” she said, adding, “I will not be silent.”

Perhaps she will not be silent, but she has not said how she would change U.S. policy, if at all.

Trump meanwhile is flailing around, calling Harris every name in the book. A “failed vice-president,” “a bum,” “dumb,” a woman with “crazy San Francisco liberal values.” And, he says, “She’ll appoint hardcore Marxists to the Supreme Court to shred our Constitution of all of our religious liberty.”

Those of us on the left will defend Harris from racist and misogynist attacks, but we will be clear that there is nothing progressive much less leftist about her. She is a Biden Democrat, a centrist, a moderate. But a vote for her could save us from Trump’s authoritarianism and his reactionary plans.

Once again the far left is debating the question of elections. Within Solidarity, sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, for example Howie Hawkins is arguing for support for Jill Stein for president as the candidate of the Green Party, while Dan La Botz argues that at this time one must support Harris to stop Trump.

28 July 2024

A far-right Françafrique

30 July 2024, by **Paul Martial**

Pandering

Marine Le Pen relies on a network that has been present in Africa for a long time. Far-right militants were fierce supporters of colonialism, fighting to the bitter end against Algerian independence with the OAS. Some were recycled by Foccart and ended up in the Congo alongside the colonialists who tried to create a state in the mining province of Katanga. François Duprat is one of them. A theorist of revolutionary nationalism and notorious anti-Semite, he was one of the advisers to Moïse Tshombé, puppet president of independent Katanga from 1960 to 1963. Subsequently, Duprat was for many years a member of the political bureau of the Front National (FN) and close to Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Mercenary Bob Denard recruited from the ranks of far-right militants to create a sort of French Wagner. They overthrew the government of the Comoros and established a reign of terror. Some of these mercenaries made up the Département Protection Sécurité (DPS), the FN's security service.

Jean-Marie Le Pen's trips to Africa

Although in 2015 Jean-Marie Le Pen, then an FN member of the European Parliament, and his daughter, then FN president, declared that apartheid 'was initially a desire to promote the two communities. We can judge this more or less harshly, but we cannot betray the thinking of those who developed it'. [1] This did not prevent him from meeting some of the pillars of Françafrique.

Le Pen used the presence of former OAS members in Africa to meet African presidents. In 1987, he went to Gabon to greet Omar Bongo. Later, his wife Jany Le Pen visited the First Lady of Cameroon, Chantal Biya, who underlined the convergences of views with the far-right movement. In 2016, Le Pen was invited to the presidential investiture of the dictator of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema, elected after a grossly rigged poll with a score of 93.7%.

With these trips, the far right is gaining credibility and strengthening its base. The other advantage would be financial. Robert Bourgi's testimony refers to funding by Omar Bongo, corroborated by the former Gabonese Prime Minister Jean Eyeghe Ndong, who recounts the words of the President of Gabon: 'This gentleman, although he is a racist, still received the kindness of suitcases of money from me'. [2]

Marine following in her father's footsteps

Marine Le Pen's trips to Africa have reinforced her international stature. To achieve this, she is benefiting from her father's network, which she is trying to expand. Lawyer Marcel Ceccaldi, who defended Gaddafi's son, enabled her to meet Chadian dictator Idriss Déby senior and give a speech at the country's National Assembly.

Her trip to Dakar, where she met Macky Sall in the midst of an authoritarian drift, owes much to the work of Philippe Bohn, who has held senior positions in major French companies. A close associate of the Republicans, he is now working for the Rassemblement National.

She can also rely on Gilbert Collard,

also a lawyer, who had joined Reconquête. He defended the leaders of the Arche de Zoé association, who tried to kidnap several dozen children in Chad for adoption by French families.

One message for Africa...

The relations she has forged with past and present African potentates in no way prevent Marine Le Pen from playing the role of defender of Françafrique and the sovereignty of African countries, based on an ethno-differentialist ideology. This idea, developed by the New Right, is that each territory should be dedicated to one ethnic group, thus avoiding any mixing. This ideology is common to all rightist identity-based politics. It meets with the approval of certain 'patriotic' movements existing in West Africa or 'neo-Panafricanists', most of whom are in the pay of Putin.

...Another for the electorate

As for the discourse in France, the Rassemblement National's African policy is approached primarily through the prism of immigration. Countries refusing to admit 'undesirable nationals' expelled from France would be penalised. Visas, money transfers and development aid would be abolished. The latter would in any case be reduced and should only benefit French companies. Marine Le Pen is obviously opposed to 'repentance speeches', as she defends the positive aspects of colonisation.

The policy of the Rassemblement National boils down to finding allies in Africa and discriminating against Africans in France.

Israel, a colonial and apartheid state at the Olympic Games

29 July 2024, by **Louisa D**

The conclusions of the opinion confirm what Palestinians and those who follow this colonial situation have been saying for years: that Israel's occupation of the territories (Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem) since 1967 is illegal because it has become an annexation, and that the regime of general restrictions imposed on the Palestinians impedes their right to self-determination. This consensus on the illegality of the occupation, including within the international community, was affirmed during the pleadings of more than fifty states and organisations on 1 February 2024, the majority of which supported the rights of the Palestinian people. Only Israel's historic allies (mainly the United States and the United Kingdom) took the opposite view.

A clear denunciation of the persecutions committed since 1967

In this sense, the opinion is indisputably clear for the entire international community, with legal obligations for Israel: withdrawal of all Israeli State presence from Palestinian

territory, compensation for all damage caused by the occupation, including the right of return for refugees and the dismantling of all settlements. The international community thus has an obligation not to recognise the current situation and this illegal presence in occupied territory, which is the first step in the strategy of the BDS movement, which is now calling for divestment and sanctions.

Above all, the Court affirms for the first time that the system of discrimination imposed by Israel on the Palestinians constitutes the crime of apartheid or segregation.

This non-binding opinion is part of the Palestinian strategy of investing in international institutions in order to break the isolation to which the Palestinians were confined. This long-term strategy has borne fruit in the context of the ongoing proceedings for recognition of the genocide and the proceedings before the International Criminal Court, which is expected to issue arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant in the coming weeks.

Ten months of massacres and multiple fronts

All this may seem a pittance when nothing seems to be stopping the genocidal policy in Gaza, where 7% to 10% of Palestinians are thought to have died, where the polio virus has been detected and while Israel is increasing its strikes on Lebanon and, for the first time, on Yemen in retaliation for a Houthi attack on Tel Aviv.

However, the unequivocal classification of colonial crimes by the highest international court breaks the status quo strategy that Israel is trying to impose on the Palestinians because it is based on an illegal situation. Indirectly, it reaffirms the right of the occupied Palestinian people to resist the occupying power. It also calls into question the two-state solution: on 17 July, the Knesset passed a resolution against the creation of a Palestinian state, which it described as an 'existential danger' for Israel.

Although mobilisation in France has fallen drastically since the dissolution of the National Assembly, Palestine remains at the heart of the news. The Olympic Games provide an opportunity for a new dynamic, with the Israeli President scheduled to attend the opening ceremony. The end of colonisation will not come from a court decision, but by banning the genocidal state.

In Kenya, a whiff of revolution

28 July 2024, by **Paul Martial**

From #RejectFinanceBill 2024...

The 2024 Finance Bill included taxes on products consumed by the middle and poor classes. Bread was taxed at a rate of 16%, as were mobile phone money transfers, which mainly affect people with a low level of bank penetration, and cars at a rate of 2.5%. Other products were targeted, such as cooking oil, sanitary towels and foreign exchange transactions.

These punitive taxes, as the Kenyans called them, were a serious blow to an already precarious social situation. Across the country, hundreds of thousands of young people took to the streets and even occupied Parliament, forcing MPs to flee underground.

Ruto's government responded with a ferocious crackdown, leaving 41 people dead, dozens injured and hundreds abducted by the security forces. Some were found dead with signs of torture.

But the mobilisation was such that the Finance Bill 2024 was withdrawn, and the Director of Police was forced to resign. Finally, Ruto sacked his entire government.

... to #RutoMustGo

But there was no end in sight. The mobilisation against the tax increases turned into an anti-government mobilisation. There are several reasons for this development. Ruto was elected on a populist platform against the dynasties of the rich and by claiming to satisfy the people on the street like the 'boda boda', motorbike drivers, or the 'mama mboga', small grocery sellers. For those familiar with this politician's background, everything pointed to demagoguery. Indeed, Ruto began his political career supporting the dictator Daniel Arap Moi by being in charge of 'Youth for Kanu "92" (Kanu being the presidential party). It was on this occasion that he became rich. The rest of his political career has been one of broken promises and demagogic rhetoric. While he promised to defend the poor, his policies have been exactly the opposite.

His last card is to form a government of national unity with the aim of bringing together the country's elites to save a corrupt system.

Young people are well aware that even if the Finance Bill 2024 is withdrawn, other equally anti-social measures will

be imposed. In other words, there is nothing to expect from this government or any other politician to solve the country's problems.

It's not just a generation gap between these young people and the ruling elite. It is above all a political divide.

Generation Z in the fight

This mobilisation was structured through social networks. It had no structure or leaders, which was one of its strengths, as it prevented the authorities from cracking down on the leaders as they usually do. The strength of this movement was also its democracy: in the virtual discussion forums, everyone could put forward their own vision of how the mobilisation should be run.

As the struggle continues and the question of power is raised in concrete terms through the demand for Ruto's resignation, alternative proposals must emerge. Left-wing organisations and activist networks in Kenya have an important role to play in linking up with the workers' unions and proposing immediate measures to meet people's aspirations. This is a decisive challenge for the coming weeks.

It's time for the left to talk

27 July 2024, by **Amandla!**

In 2007, Amandla published an editorial on the outcome of the 2007 ANC Polokwane Conference, entitled "Zuma victory: a call for the left to vuka". Once again we make the call for the Left to recalibrate. Failure to do so will usher in a long period where we will be marginal and largely irrelevant to politics. In the face of the real possibility of the extreme rightwing coming to power in France, this is precisely what the Left was able to do. Communists, Greens, Social Democrats and Trotskyists successfully united and defeated the

threat of the extreme right— at least for the moment. The situation in South Africa is different, but something similar is required.

What happened in the elections?

The ruling ANC has been implementing harsh austerity and introducing the privatisation of key industries. In those circumstances, the Left might have been celebrating its

paltry 40% vote. However, a closer analysis of the elections should put a stop to any false triumphalism.

For a start, the ANC did not lose support to the Left. There was no genuine Left party standing in the elections. The Economic Freedom Fighters is the closest we get to something resembling a Left party, if one is willing to ignore its anti-democratic commandism, history of involvement in corruption, dubious financiers, and parliamentarism. And it also lost support; it received over

350,000 fewer votes than in 2019 and will now have five fewer MPs.

The big winner was Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP), only formed a mere six months before the election. It won almost 15% of the vote and will have 58 seats in Parliament. It is now the third largest party in Parliament, after the ANC and the DA. The MKP is a party led by a disgraced former president of the ANC and the country, who is facing corruption charges for his involvement in the arms deal, who is a misogynist and rape accused, centrally involved in facilitating state capture and corruption amounting to hundreds of billions of rands. The fact that such a party is able to garner almost 2.5 million votes (2 344 000) tells us a lot about the state of politics, especially class politics in South Africa.

Rise of a populist politics

It is not possible to characterise MKP's economic policies as reactionary. After all, its manifesto advocates a series of redistribution programmes, nationalisation of key sectors of the economy, greater regulation of big business, and an end to austerity and neoliberalism. But its social policies are regressive and right-wing. Of equal concern is that it is a thuggish party which will not hesitate in mobilising storm troopers against those who stand in its way. It will continue to attack and delegitimise institutions necessary for defending the democratic gains achieved in ending Apartheid.

This thuggish, ultra-nationalist politics is complemented by the rise of the Patriotic Alliance, which wants to drive foreign migrants out of South Africa. No one should be fooled by its jovial, charismatic leadership. It focuses on the resentment of the so-called 'coloured' population, especially those in the rural areas. And it has grown from nothing (6,660 votes in 2019) to now having 330,425 votes, nine members of Parliament and a ministerial position in the new government.

The PA is the closest political

formation to fascism in South Africa. It has weaponised the issue of foreign nationals, especially illegal immigrants, to win electoral support. Together with MKP, it signals the potential for the growth of an extreme right-wing type of politics, with particular South African features.

Aiding the growth of these parties is the great disillusionment of South Africans, who have had their hopes of a better life killed off by the destruction of jobs, collapse of services, and failures of local government. The deep alienation in society can be seen in the millions who stayed away from the elections. Part of the ANC's poor performance is that, of the 41 million eligible voters, only 27 million registered, and just 16 million went to vote. Even though this was characterised as the most important election since 1994, the percentage poll dropped from 66 to 58 percent.

It is MKP, and parties like the PA, with their populist and demagogic message, which are better placed to capture the attention of these disgruntled layers. There is nothing progressive that can be read into the millions who have become disillusioned with one person one vote! It is in this sense that we say, once again, the Left must Vuka.

Government of National Unity

The ANC was always going to disguise getting into bed with the Democratic Alliance through the formula of a government of national unity. And in many ways the alliance with the DA, IFP and the rest makes it easier for Ramaphosa to push through the structural reforms demanded by the IMF, and make big business the drivers of South Africa's stalled development.

Opposition in the ANC itself will now be neutralised by Ramaphosa's new partners. Therefore, there should be no doubt that the Government of National Unity will, at the very least, be a continuation of Ramaphosa's 'neoliberalism light'. The more likely outcome will be neoliberalism on

steroids: greater budget cuts, more rapid privatisation, retrenchment of public sector workers, subsidies to incentivise capital investment, and even greater use of precarious forms of labour. Given the weakness of the labour movement on the one hand, and the depth of the economic crisis on the other, tough times lie ahead.

A Left dialogue

This makes it even more urgent for different components of the Left to come together to take stock of these elections, and forge a common approach to the GNU and Ramaphosa's plan to build a consensus amongst all sectors of society for neoliberal reform—his long-desired social contract.

The Left we are referring to are those activists in popular organisations who believe organisation and struggle are the most important means to confront the current situation, and who oppose subordinating these struggles to nationalist agendas. We are referring to Left formations who are expressing the need to build unity and solidarity, such as those in Cosatu and the SACP calling for a left popular front, those in Saftu involved in building the Working Class Summit, and those in Amcu who are building a Labour Party. We are also referring to progressive faith leaders who have made calls for a new movement to fill the vacuum left by the United Democratic Front.

We are mindful of the danger of Left sectarianism, and those groups who reduce the problems facing the workers movement to the question of leadership. It will take much more than denouncing the bureaucrats of mass organisations as sell outs to rebuild working class and popular power. In particular, the dangers of the current situation need to be soberly assessed. We need to come to terms with just how bad the current balance of forces is. We need to hold up a mirror to ourselves, not to beat ourselves up, but to be realistic about what basic action programme we can unite on. Adventurism of sustained general strikes or occupations of cities has to be replaced with a programme capable of closing the gap between the few hundred activists that we are

as the Left and the millions labouring in impoverishment.

Although we need to look ahead to the 2026 local government elections, our immediate attention must be on struggling together around the most immediate needs of poor and working class people. Hand-in-hand with

struggling for a basic income grant, in defence of jobs, resisting budget cuts, privatisation, etc, spaces need to be created to discuss politics, where new and common reference points can be developed. At all costs, polarizing ideological polemics, which shed more heat than light, should be avoided.

The elections, and the coming into

existence of the GNU, must do for the Left in South Africa what the first round of the French elections did for Communists, Social Democrats, Greens and Trotskyists—they woke up, came together, and forged a minimum programme based on labour and the social movements. Here too, the Left must Vuka!

No Olympic truce for capitalism

26 July 2024, by **Fabienne Dolet**

Like many other states that also trample human rights underfoot... Like China with the Uighurs, like Iran, like Burma, which murders its opponents. Like Russia, whose athletes are treated differently.

Some get the honours, others don't! That must be the Olympic spirit! We didn't understand. For the duration of a spectacle, rigorously orchestrated and skilfully costed, we should therefore, as Macron urges us, call a 'truce'.

And yet there is no truce for exploitation, social cleansing and generalised population control. No social truce either! The dancers have come to remind us of this. They have contracts that don't respect labour

law, and they can't get decent pay... for lack of a budget. In fact, the CGT-Spectacle has called a strike.

When you remember that six preliminary investigations linked to the Olympics are underway for suspicions of 'illegal taking of interests', 'favouritism' and 'influence peddling' - the latest of which concerns the remuneration of Tony Estanguet, president of the Organising Committee for these Olympics - the show seems less meticulously prepared.

There was no truce for the society of the spectacle, for sport as a commodity, for the chilling hypocrisy of the International Olympic

Committee, which asked the Russian and Belarusian athletes only to take part under a neutral banner because of the invasion of Ukraine, and checked that none of them had actively supported that invasion.

While many of the participants are formidable athletes, we cannot turn a blind eye to this hypocritical political instrumentalisation of variable geometry, which rightly denounces the invasion of Ukraine, but is silent on the genocidal war, the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories and the possible participation of Israeli athletes in the execution of Palestinian children! A spectacle that Jupiter Macron never tires of, since he wants to do it again for the 2030 Winter Olympics...

Russian terror in occupied areas of Ukraine: homes confiscated en masse

25 July 2024, by **Simon Pirani**

The confiscations "are now being conducted on a massive scale", the Eastern Human Rights group (EHRG) reported on their telegram channel. More than 1 million flats, houses and garages had been seized in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

"The occupation authorities' list of properties with 'no owner' includes 541,904 units in Luhansk and 873,438 in Donetsk (updated on 1 June 2024).

"There are both open and hidden confiscations."

For example, a family can find that its home has been declared to have "no owner", and be forced to make a payment to prevent it being seized. If people are away from home for e.g. a month, they can return to find their property has been expropriated.

If the owner of a flat dies, the occupation authorities typically sell it cheaply, or hand it over to the security forces, regardless of the rights of family members or legatees.

Allotments, country houses and garages are being grabbed, as well as flats.

“The seizure of property in the occupied territories is a way of reducing the number of Ukrainian citizens in the occupied areas, since many people’s connection with those areas is exactly that they have property there”, the EHRG said. “Many flats are handed over to citizens of the Russian federation who move to the occupied territories.”

Other ways of piling pressure on Ukrainian citizens include:

□ Detentions by the security services of people accused of failing to inform on people committing “terrorist acts”. The EHRG stated: “We are aware of 96 cases in which residents were sentenced to terms of imprisonment in this way.”

Typically, the army or security services will detain someone on “terrorism” charges – which can include e.g. communicating information – and, having beaten a “confession” out of them, arrest more people who were supposedly aware of this activity.

They are then charged under Article 205.6 of the Russian criminal code, which criminalises any failure to inform the authorities of people who “will commit or have committed a crime”.

□ A wider campaign of “filtration”, using a wide range of charges, which the EHRG reported results in deportation or imprisonment in 90% of cases. “If the person is imprisoned, then he is sent as far as possible away from the occupied territories to complete his sentence.”

□ Discrimination against Ukrainian passport-holders at Sheremetyevo airport near Moscow, the key travel junction from the occupied territories to other destinations. The travellers, mostly elderly people whose families have left the occupied territories, are

made to stand in queues for between 15 and 27 hours to have documents checked.

More than half are then refused entry to the airport, despite the fact that they are travelling from territories that are supposedly part of the Russian federation.

□ The imposition of Russian nationality on teenagers, including through recruitment of 48,000 over-14s to the “Movement of the First”, which effectively compels its members to take a Russian passport. This goes with nationalist indoctrination programmes in schools.

The EHRG has received confirmation of four deaths this year, and numerous hospitalisations, as a result of the conditions at Sheremetyevo.

The EHRG was formed in Luhansk in 2014 by labour-movement-affiliated lawyers, in response to the mass of labour rights violations and human rights abuses that accompanied the initial Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine. Since 2022 it has continued to monitor the situation for working people in the occupied areas.

Commenting on the latest de-Ukrainisation measures in the occupied territories, the EHRG denounced Russian nationalist ideologues who claim that Ukraine is becoming “post-Ukraine”. They singled out the writer Sergei Uralov, who works with the far-right TV presenter Dmitry Puchkov, and his book *The Ukrainian tragedy: the technology of craziness*.

Uralov warns in the book that Russian nationalism faces a “struggle for the future”: in “post-Ukraine” it will have to explain the history of the “special military operation”.

Uralov writes:

If the narrative of “occupation” [of Ukrainian territory by Russia] dominates, recidivism will continue. On the territory of post-Ukraine a generation will grow up that have lost their fathers, brothers and granddads. And each one of them will want revenge. [...] The safety of our children and grandchildren depends on how we communicate to people in

post-Ukraine, who will eventually become our fully-fledged fellow citizens, why the special military operation was necessary, and what sort of state and society we will build together.

The theme, developed in the book – and fitting closely with the intimidation directed against Ukrainian passport-holders in the occupied territories – is that Ukraine has become post-Ukraine, and its only future must be its subordination to Russia. The EHRG cited Uralov’s book and commented:

The occupiers admit that a new generation will appear in Ukraine that hates Russia. [...] The dictator in the Kremlin and his acolytes are signalling to western politicians and the press that they are supposedly ready for negotiations. But at the same time, within the Russian Federation they are stirring up hatred towards Ukrainians, pumping up the rhetoric [...] that all Ukrainian citizens are the enemy and must be destroyed.

Reports of organised resistance to the Russian occupation were published last month by Alterpravo (Luhansk regional human rights centre). The Zhovta Strichka movement, active in Dovzhansk, Luhansk, Melitopol, Berdiansk and Perevalsk, posts pro-Ukrainian slogans, writes protests on Russian bank notes and posts videos on line of Russian propaganda materials being burned.

Another report, by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies that works closely with the US military, outlines the stream of assassinations, sabotage, poisonings and other attacks on Russian armed forces, some coordinated by the Ukrainian armed forces and some conducted by volunteer partisan groups. It claims a high level of participation in sabotage activities in Crimea, especially by women.

□ Sources of information in English about the situation in the occupied territories include the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, the Confederation of Free Trade Unions twitter feed and the regular reports by Alterpravo (tricky to find on their Ukrainian-language web site, the

latest is here). For other sources, see also People & Nature's overview of the situation in the occupied areas (February 2024).

□ PS. In the last 24 hours western politicians, the new UK prime minister Keir Starmer included, have loudly condemned the Russian bombing of the Ohmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv as a war crime, which it undoubtedly was. By comparison, the politicians' silence on the news from Gaza is deafening: the publication on

Friday by The Lancet of a "conservatively" estimated 186,000 death toll from the conflict; the bombing on Saturday of a school where displaced people were sheltering, causing at least 16 deaths and 50 injuries; the new assault on Gaza City yesterday, forcing the evacuation of the Al-Ahli Baptist hospital and leaving civilians nowhere to go. These are all war crimes, too. (Starmer phoned the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Palestinian president Mahmoud

Abbas, yesterday, but has made no public mention of these genocidal acts.)

On this blog, I write about Russia and Ukraine because I know more about those countries, about which I have written for decades. There's no hierarchy of suffering here. Shame on these politicians and their disgusting double standards. From Ukraine to Palestine, occupation is a crime.

[People and Nature](#)

The beginning of the end of China's rise?

24 July 2024, by **Au Loong-Yu**

Federico Fuentes - Could you outline the key factors that help explain China's phenomenal economic rise over the past few decades?

Au Loong-Yu - China's rise has been spectacular. For the past 20-30 years, China's average annual GDP [Gross Domestic Product] growth has been about 10% or slightly less. This has meant China has managed to double its GDP every eight years. Generally speaking, any underdeveloped country that converts huge numbers of small farmers into factory workers in such a short time will experience high economic growth, given the big differential in productivity between the two sectors. Achieving this is not easy, however, because it requires a huge amount of capital. In my opinion, there are three important factors that, although inadequate in terms of providing a full explanation, are indispensable — and yet often overlooked — to explain this rapid rise.

The first factor is China's investment rate that, as a share of its GDP, is the highest in the world. China's ability to maintain such a high investment rate for such a long time is unprecedented. For the past 20-30 years, China's investment rate has stayed above 40%, peaking at 45-46% in 2014-15.

Some readers might remember the so-called miracle economies of the "Four Dragons": South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. The first two in particular had very high investment rates. But even they only got to slightly more than 30% of GDP. So we are talking about a huge share of GDP being directed towards investments in new plants and infrastructure. That is the first explanation for China's rise: an abnormally high investment rate over a sustained period of time.

I would add, though, that to fully understand this factor we must look at what happened in Mao [Zedong]'s era. During the first three decades of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) regime, China's investment rate was also very high: between 1958-80, the investment rate was almost 30% each year (excluding the period after the famine in the early 1960s). By the time Mao died in 1976 the country was exhausted, but China had laid the foundation of its modern economy. It had a level of infrastructure and manufacturing that was more diversified and self-sufficient than most countries with a similar level of development. It also had a labour force with a relatively high literacy level. Without these, China's later rise would have been improbable.

But to sustain even higher investment

rates required more capital, something China could not obtain solely from domestic resources. This was the context for Deng [Xiaoping]'s historic compromise with the United States and Britain, which enabled China to start attracting foreign capital and integrate into global capitalism. At first, Western capital was hesitant to invest on a mass scale, especially after the June Fourth Massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989. That is why during the first stage of "reform and opening up", the extra capital came from Hong Kong and Taiwan, two former colonies of Britain and Japan, respectively.

This brings us to the second factor, China's colonial legacy, which is important but sometimes overlooked in analysing China's rise. Readers may be puzzled by this idea, given colonial legacies are generally viewed as an inherent hindrance to development for developing countries. But we need to analyse this issue concretely. At particular moments, for particular reasons, the opposite can also occur. That is exactly what happened in China's case after Deng's historic compromise with the US empire and the replacing of Mao's command economy with a capitalist economy.

Taiwan and Hong Kong enabled China's rise by contributing industrial

and service capital (creating jobs for rural migrant Chinese workers) and by training up the first generation of entrepreneurs and managers (which were especially rare in Mao's China). Hong Kong was important in other ways. During the Cold War, Beijing obtained one third of its foreign currency through trade with Hong Kong, despite being tightly contained by the West. From there, Hong Kong went on to play the unique role of financial hub for "greater China", helping Chinese corporations raise huge amounts of capital and laying the foundation for their global ambitions. Between 2010-18, Hong Kong became home to two-thirds of initial public offerings of mainland Chinese corporations. Today, more than half of China's incoming and outflowing foreign direct investment (FDI) goes through Hong Kong. Moreover, Hong Kong essentially fulfils the function of a US dollar printing machine for China, given that the Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the US dollar. Macau also played its role, even if it was more symbolic. When Deng agreed to keep the casino city open after it was returned to China, it was his way of saying to the West: "Look, if we can even allow a huge casino city with hundreds of gambling houses to exist right on the doorsteps of China, imagine how friendly we can be to capitalism."

The importance of these colonial legacies is evidenced by the fact Deng wanted to keep "foreign forces" in Hong Kong and Macau through his promise of "One country, two systems" (hence Hong Kong's autonomy) even after the leases on these territories expired in 1997 and 1999, respectively. Deng offered a similar compromise to Taiwan, which the latter declined. Regardless, it is true to say that without Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau, we would not have seen China's rise — at least not on the same scale.

The third factor is the party-state, which was capable of bringing together the other two factors and making them possible in the first place. Unlike what happened in Russia with the fall of the Soviet Union, when Deng reintroduced capitalism, he held onto the existing party-state. This enabled his regime to be much more

ruthless in crushing any challenge from below. Beijing apologists praise China as a model "development state", but ignore the price Chinese people have paid in pursuit of such high investment rates. Guaranteeing such a high investment rate requires suppressing consumption and wages. That means having to suppress workers to ensure they cannot organise or go on strike. Hence why during Mao's era wages remained frozen, despite an annual average economic growth rate above 4%.

Herein lies the continuity between Mao and Deng. Deng was only a bit more moderate in the aftermath of Mao's death, but he and his successors soon returned to Mao's extremely high investment rate policy. Despite the CCP's rhetoric of "serving the people", since Mao's era the CCP has always prioritised the pursuit of its neck-breaking industrialisation — summarised in Mao's slogan *chaoyingganmei* (超英赶美, surpassing Britain and catching up with the United States) — over the welfare and living standards of the people. When workers become disgruntled, the party's propaganda machine simply rolls out the slogan *xianshengchan houshenghuo* (先生产后生活, production first, consumption later) or its military equivalent *ningyao yuanzi(dan) buyao kuzi* (宁要原子弹,不要裤子, atomic bomb first, trousers later).

There is, of course, a rationale for poor countries investing resources in infrastructure and means of production. But, in the CCP's case, this was grossly overdone. Its abnormally high investment rate was less about socialism and a sensible modernisation program, and more about the vanity and pipe-dreams of its top leaders. In this they share much in common with voluntarist emperors such as Qin Shi Huang, the founder of the first unified state of China in 221 BC whom Mao praised for his ruthlessness.

It is important to add that alongside official propaganda about the "China dream", which is used to justify the CCP's ruthless pursuit of economic growth, the bureaucracy has always pursued its own dream of self-enrichment. The result of this is that the bureaucracy has hijacked the

"China dream" for its own ugly ambitions. Accountable to no one except party bosses, bureaucrats have used all kinds of modernisation programs to plunder the nation's wealth through corruption and kick-backs or founding companies.

This is not completely new. But whereas Mao's bureaucracy could only appropriate social surplus in the form of use value, the post-Mao bureaucracy has combined the coercion of the state and the power of money to achieve its own enrichment in the form of exchange value. Through this process, the bureaucracy has consolidated itself into a new surplus-appropriating ruling class — one that views its own endless reproduction as its top priority. To ensure this it has continuously perfected the party-state's mechanisms of coercion in order to extract as much social surplus as possible.

I want to return to the nature of this bureaucracy, but first: you referred to the historic compromise Deng made with the US. As a result of that compromise, the US began offshoring its manufacturing to China not long after. What impact did this have on China's rise? And how can we explain current US-China tensions given this process of economic integration that has taken place over the past decades?

A decade after Hong Kong and Taiwanese companies started investing in and shifting manufacturing to China, Western and Japanese capital began to do the same. Back then, the far right ran small campaigns in Britain demanding "British jobs for British workers" in protest against such offshoring. Something similar occurred in the US. But there is a fatal mistake in the idea that Chinese workers took jobs off US or British workers. What really happened was that capitalists in the West and Japan took jobs off their "fellow citizens" and, in collusion with the Chinese regime, created much worse jobs in China. Even if the plant was the same and the numbers of workers were the same, the jobs were not the same when lower-end manufacturing shifted to China. Not

only because pay and conditions were drastically worse, but because workers in China were also denied basic civil liberties and the right to organise, leaving them largely powerless.

We should also note that this process of offshoring was accompanied in China by the privatisation of many medium- and small-sized state companies and the sacking of more than 30 million workers. In this sense, China's rise as the world sweatshop was guaranteed through the downsizing of its state sector and recruitment of an entirely new working class from the countryside to be exploited in new factories funded by foreign capital.

The end result was that capitalists in the West and Japan as well as the Chinese regime benefited greatly from offshoring and the super-exploitation of 250 million powerless Chinese rural migrant workers. At the same time, deindustrialisation in the West and Japan along with privatisation and mass sackings in China made it a lose-lose situation for working people on both sides. That was the essence of the deal struck between Deng and [US president George HW] Bush.

It is important to understand, however, that this deal began to come to an end when Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. By that point, both sides were sensing that the honeymoon period was over, particularly as the US empire had not expected China to rise so quickly. Xi's ascension, and his subsequent Belt and Road Initiative, can in many ways be understood as a response to the US' "Pivot to Asia" under then-Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in 2009. This was followed by the trade wars started by [former US president Donald] Trump, who argued the US needed to impose tariffs because China had achieved a trade surplus while the US was suffering a huge trade deficit.

Trump's argument is deceiving, though, as it ignores one important thing: much of what China exports is simply assembled parts, materials and technology imported from elsewhere in the world. That means only a very small percentage of the profits stay in

China. So, the excuse for the trade war was wrong; the real reason behind the trade war was that the US — being the empire it is — could never allow a rising China to challenge its global status.

But it is also important to say that China shares responsibility for rising tensions. Deng always maintained that China's approach towards the US should be to *Tàoguāngyǎnghuì, yǒu suǒ zuòwéi* (韬光养晦, keep a low profile and bide our time) and not try to challenge its global hegemony, at least not in the short to medium term. Xi, on the other hand, basing himself on the assessment summed up by the phrase *Dōngshēng xī jiàng* (东升西降, The East is rising, the West is declining), decided it was time to challenge US hegemony. Hence his slogan on foreign policy became *Ganyudouzheng* (敢斗争, dare to struggle). The first step Xi took in that direction was his decision to militarise the South China Sea in 2015. At that point, China's actions could no longer be defined as defensive. In militarising the South China Sea, China was not fighting the US empire; it was, first and foremost, taking away the rights of surrounding countries over their economic maritime zones. Such moves must be opposed.

How has this shift in orientation under Xi impacted on China's rise?

Xi's assessment not only led him to confront the US head on but to also crush Hong Kong. Of course, from the point of view of the autocracy, that the Hong Kong people would dare defy Beijing's law on extradition was intolerable and had to be punished. The problem is that, even from the viewpoint of the collective interest of the regime, Xi went too far. Xi not only annihilated the opposition, but in practice destroyed the very institutions that underpin Hong Kong as China's financial hub. By killing Hong Kong's autonomy, Xi is killing this goose that lays golden eggs for Beijing.

Something similar is happening with regard to Taiwan. The truth is that the CCP has successfully integrated Taiwan economically into its orbit. If Taiwan was to sever its economic relations with China, its economy

would suffer a huge blow, if not completely collapse. Moreover, the CCP's tactic of winning over the KMT (Kuomintang) to its side has been working. But its hawkish approach towards Taiwan is increasingly counter-productive.

Previously, the West's focus was on Taiwan's strategic role in East Asian geopolitics. But with the advance of AI, there is now an additional concern among developed countries given the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) produces half of the world's chips and about 90% of the most advanced chips. This is Taiwan's bargaining chip. Unlike Hong Kong, Taiwan has much more leverage to fend off Beijing's aggression because if Beijing takes Taiwan by force, this would antagonise many countries. Here again, Xi's premature showdown with the US has only worsened China's position, as the response from Washington has been to block China from importing high-end products, especially cutting edge technology. All of this reaffirms that we are at the beginning of the end of the historic compromise between Deng and the US/Britain.

China is going to find it harder to continue growing as it has up until now. Its annual growth rate has been slowing down from 10% to 5%. On top of this, China's economy is experiencing both a cyclical and structural crisis. Previously, China could just throw big chunks of money towards buying foreign high-tech companies or hiring top engineers from around the world as a means to catch up with the West. This option is becoming less available. Instead, it has resorted to producing high-end products at non-profitable levels through state subsidies, and the super-exploitation of workers and the environment. But this option too faces important obstacles, given not just Washington's actions but China's economic downturn makes it more difficult to invest as much money as before. I would also add that innovation is incompatible with the Chinese autocracy and its Orwellian society.

In all this, it is important to remember that the US empire is clearly not the "good cop" — but neither is China.

The US empire is steadily declining, but China's rise has not reached a point where Beijing can impose its will on the West. Despite this, rather than follow Deng's advice, Xi has sought to strike out, creating enemies in the process. Xi's leadership has not only been a disaster for Chinese people but is now even a liability for the regime. Xi must therefore assume his fair share of responsibility for the immense difficulties China faces at home and abroad.

This takes us back to the issue of the party-state bureaucracy. Given what you have said about Xi's leadership, why does the bureaucracy not act to remove Xi? More generally, what does all this tell us about the nature of the bureaucracy?

First, it is important to say that we cannot blame everything on Xi. Hearsay suggests that Xi, in response to critics inside the party, blames his predecessors for leaving China's economy in a mess. In some sense, this is true. After setting an example in crushing public dissent through the June Fourth Massacre, many bureaucrats felt assured that they could plunder the country's wealth without restraint. The subsequent Global Financial Crisis of 2007-8 created a golden opportunity for municipal governments to enrich themselves by hijacking funding from the central government's rescue package and channelling it into mega projects and real estate, while pocketing unknown portions for themselves. This paved the way for the property bubble and its eventual bursting, the effects of which Xi is now having to deal with. All those ruling elites are accomplices of the crisis facing China today. They also know that allowing Xi to remain in power means more harm than good for the country and regime. At the same time, they are deadly afraid of what may follow if they plot against Xi: what if it triggers a mass movement from below?

To fully grasp what is going on, it is useful to better understand the nature of the Chinese bureaucracy. The Chinese regime carries with it a lot of pre-modern political culture, such as blue blood worship and the hereditary

"rights" of the "second or third red generation", as well as mechanisms of personal loyalty that run through the whole bureaucracy. This means that, in contrast to the Weberian ideal concept of the impersonal characteristic of bureaucracy, China's version is highly personal. This triggers a second mechanism, the negative selection of officials. By this I mean that the worst kind of people are more likely to get promoted while those who speak the truth or possess more merits, independent thinking and talents tend to be sidelined. In the end, what you are left with are leading bureaucrats whose most important task is to appease the emperor and work for the latter's wildest dream, while behind the scene they nurture their own plots for personal gains.

That is why I said that innovation is incompatible with the Chinese autocracy. This does not entirely preclude China making further advances in innovation, but it does hinder it from reaching most of its potential. What effect it will have on the science and technology community, for example, is unclear. But if we look at Xi's Zero-COVID policy, we can get a glimpse of how little influence medical specialists, for example, possess in shaping state policy. Not to mention the fact that every technological advance comes at a much higher cost as it implies terrible corruption.

Overall, the regime is entering a period of great difficulties, in which it has not yet realised that it is not an answer to the problems; rather it is a big part of the problems. That does not mean it will easily collapse of its own accord. But it does mean that any steps it takes in the technological, economic and armament race it is now engaged in with the US will bring with it immense suffering for the people.

What does the bursting of China's property bubble and its ongoing debt crisis tell us about the state of the Chinese economy?

If you look at China's debt-to-GDP ratio, which refers to total debt including all government and private household debt, you will see it was about 87% in the early 1990s but rose to 211% in 2010 — a rise of more than

100% in 20 years. Figures from late 2023 now put it at closer to 300%, meaning China's debt level is triple its GDP. While some advanced economies in the West and Japan have a similar debt-to-GDP ratio, China is the only higher middle-income country with such high debt. The average debt-to-GDP ratio for middle-income developing countries is about 124%. What this tells us is that China's high investment rate has been partially funded by a sea of debt. The property market is a typical example.

In my opinion, the bursting of this property market bubble marks a turning point in China's rise. The reason for this is that the three factors I mentioned earlier as having contributed to China's rise have now all exhausted their potential. Take China's colonial legacy: this factor was always underpinned by the historic compromise between China and the US/Britain. But Xi's annihilation of Hong Kong's autonomy and decision to bring forward the showdown with the US has not only deprived China of a vibrant financial centre — which it badly needs amid the economic downturn — but made China vulnerable to US hostility.

The same is true for China's high investment rate. This factor has always depended on a high growth rate, which was previously driven by converting huge numbers of small farmers into factory workers. But the regime's rapid urbanisation program caused this pool of rural labour to dry up: while 76% of the population lived in rural areas 40 years ago, today the percentage is 35%, and most of them are women, kids and elderly. Ironically, the regime's super high investment rate has ended the initial advantage it gained from China's huge rural population. This problem has been further aggravated by the former one child policy — itself once an incentive for China's high growth rate, given that the financial costs of raising many children was saved, even if only at the expense of future generations. The resultant accelerated trend towards an ageing population and lack of young workers has contributed to driving down China's growth rate.

Furthermore, the previous high investment rate was only possible at

the expense of household consumption and low wages. China's household consumption level has declined dramatically since the early 1990s, from about 50% of GDP at the start of the 90s to a low point of 34-35% in 2014. It has gone up a bit since then, but has not hit 40%. The result is that China faces neverending overproduction and overcapacity, but a relatively narrowing domestic market as people are too poor to buy what is produced.

In practice, the Chinese government's response has been: "Well, we do not need to do anything about this, we can just export our excess production and capital." That is one reason why China became a leading merchandise exporter and, since the turn of the century, has become a leading capital exporter. This is also why China's Belt and Road Initiative is not just a geopolitical project but an outlet for this overcapacity. China has basically sought to export its problem.

But this can not go on forever for the simple fact that a new trade war is looming. European countries are complaining that China's EV cars are too cheap due to Chinese state subsidies and the US government has already said: "If you subsidise your cars, we will subsidise ours as well." So, we are witnessing a second round in the trade war. This one is different from the first, however. In this round, I have no sympathy for the Chinese government. How can you continue to contribute more than 40% of GDP to investment when 600 million Chinese are forced to live off a monthly income of 1000 renminbi [roughly US\$140]? This is super-exploitative and the exact opposite of socialism.

Socialism is not productivism; its ultimate goal has never been to increase productive forces indefinitely. That is the capitalist mindset, not the socialist mindset. By maintaining such a high investment level, the Chinese government is hurting the Chinese people and the environment — and the world. This is not to say that the retaliatory actions taken by US and European governments are right. The new trade war is a result of the toxic capitalism and productivism that they pursue. But China too has played its role in

championing toxic capitalism and productivism.

It is true that one thing China counts in its favour is that much of this debt is not foreign debt. The Chinese government is very sensitive to the idea of foreign powers gaining leverage inside China, including through debt. That is why the Chinese government has always preferred to borrow a lot from Chinese people. This is safer for the regime because it knows that it can always shift the burden onto Chinese people in various forms. For example, when the trade war started in 2016, China maintained it was not scared of a trade war. One state official went as far as to say that Chinese people were ready to eat grass for a whole year if needed, as an indication of how much pain Chinese people were willing to endure.

This brings us to the third factor, the party-state. It has been the main actor forging together the two other factors to bring about China's break-neck paced modernisation — which has become increasingly unbearable for society, people and the environment. Today, the party-state's two inner logics — boundless greed for corruption and boundless appetite for perfecting state coercion — have created a monster in which the two logics feed into each other. The more "perfect" the state coercion, the more the bureaucracy is free from any accountability for its actions. This creates more incentives to get rich through corruption, which in turn requires more state coercion to protect the bureaucracy. But everything has a limit.

The bursting of the property market illustrates the limits of the first logic. Given urban land is state-owned and managed by local governments, this was a market that was dominated from the start by local governments, their "financial vehicles" (LGFV), and cronies bankers and developers. They were responsible for the piling up of billions of dollars of debt. They created a mega bubble in which so many new flats have been built since 2009 that alone they could house 250 million residents while the current housing vacancy rate stands at 25%.

On the other hand, the emergence of

the White Paper movement in response to the government's zero-Covid policy is an example of the limits of the second logic. The regime's zero-Covid policy was never a regular "lockdown" to prevent the spreading of the virus. It was what I called a "lockup", because for three years, people were locked up in their communities or homes over just a single case of Covid, with no regard for whether they had the food or medications they needed. And what for? For the naïve idea that zero Covid was achievable. Meanwhile, the regime did not even bother importing adequate amounts of the more efficient Western vaccines. What this policy did, however, was give the regime a golden opportunity to further perfect its control over people. The seeming madness also had another rationale: it was highly profitable for municipal officials and their cronies, from groceries suppliers to Covid testing companies.

The inconvenient truth for the regime, however, is that there is a limit to how much pain Chinese people are willing to endure before they rebel. And this regime has become increasingly unbearable, as we saw with the White Paper movement.

Could you tell us a bit about the significance of the White Paper movement?

The White Paper movement began as a direct response to the zero-Covid lockup but became a historically significant moment because the movement achieved a victory and, to a certain extent, the regime suffered a defeat.

In talking about this movement, it is important to acknowledge the role played by Peng Zaizhou, who, amid the pandemic and lockdown, staged a one-man protest on Sitong Bridge in Beijing on the morning of October 13, just three days before the 20th CCP Congress. As part of his protest, Peng hung two banners over the bridge, including one that read: "We want food, not PCR tests. We want freedom, not lockdowns. We want respect, not lies....We want to be citizens, not slaves". While at the time no one heeded his call for protest, the Urumqi residential block fire on November 24

did kick off a wave of protests in more than 20 cities against the CCP's zero-Covid lockdown policy. Protesters' anger was largely driven by the fact that the 10 deaths in the fire were the direct result of the regime's lockup policy, which meant no fire truck was close enough to save the victims.

From there, protests quickly came to echo Peng's demands and ultimately forced the government to back down from its zero-Covid policy. Of course, people may dispute this, saying: "Well, the government specialist was already advising to end the zero-Covid policy because it was not working and had become impossible to implement." That may be true. But everything that happens in China is the result of political decisions, not the decisions of specialists; it is the top leaders, the politburo, who are responsible for making the final decision. This leads us to ask a legitimate question: why the abrupt change in their policy? We do not have enough information to ascertain which was the decisive factor: dissident voices in the party leadership, specialist's advice, or mass protests. But those dissident voices and the specialist's advice should not be seen as counterposed to the contribution made by the mass protests. Anyone who tries to minimise or dismiss the movement altogether is wrong.

This victory was important because Chinese people have been oppressed to the point that they have essentially been denied their right to self-esteem. Many have taken to referring to themselves, in a self-mocking way, as "garlic chives" (jiucai, 韭菜), by which they mean vegetables that are endlessly harvested by the CCP regime. Others use the term "huminerals" (renkuang, 人矿), or human minerals, which are mined by the CCP. This gives us a glimpse into the deep pessimism that exists among the people and the sense that one cannot do anything about being repressed and exploited. Of course, not everyone thinks the same. There has been resistance — strikes have been reported in social media, for example — but it has been very fragmented, very partial and rarely political.

The significance of the White Paper movement is that though we cannot

say it represents a complete shift in people's mentality from accepting the status quo to brave resistance, the movement has awakened young people. It not only prompted common citizens to protest against lockup and workers to protest against being forced to work, sleep and eat in the same place, but resulted in them winning their own freedom — even if only temporarily. This was eye opening for many, in particular the youth.

One of the horrible legacies of the post-1989 repression was depoliticisation. We had 30 years in which young people did not dare to talk about politics. They simply focused on their studies and professional careers. But with the White Paper movement, young students took the lead in protests and became more outspoken and sharper in their attacks on the regime. They started to meet on the internet and at protests and began saying: "We should repent for the fact that we stayed silent during the Hong Kong uprising and repression, and during the repression against the Uyghur peoples. We should not allow the government to divide and rule over us." This is very significant.

Of course, we need to be cautious about the extent of this reawakening — it is very uneven and, as a matter of fact, the movement has died down since the end of the zero-Covid policy. While at that time thousands of overseas Chinese students were demonstrating in New York, London and so on, their numbers have shrunk quite quickly, with the remaining activists now comprising very small circles. That is not surprising given the severity of repression and the unpreparedness of these young people. But the fact that discussions have taken place on social media channels such as Twitter, Instagram, Telegram and so on, among overseas Chinese students and thousands of mainland Chinese, exchanging all these political ideas and opinions, is significant progress compared to the past 30 years of depoliticisation, even if there is still a long way to go.

How does all this fit into the question of China's rise? Well, what we are seeing is that China's rapid

modernisation and industrialisation has also transformed Chinese class structures and cultures. Today workers, partly due to their concentration in cities and partly through their own spontaneous struggles — together with the conscious work of labour NGOs in the previous stage — are no longer easily fooled by their employers. As for the urban middle class, while there was hope this class would lead the democratic movement, this never materialised. But they have gradually adopted very rudimentary ideas of accountability, of human rights, and so on.

While the CCP's modernisation project has not yet brought about the forces that could undermine the regime in a fundamental way, it has created increasing impatience with the party itself. It is now becoming increasingly difficult for the CCP to continue with its extreme modernisation project. Even if Chinese people have not yet won any democratic rights, the White Paper movement has shown that their mindset is changing and their political awareness is rising — very slowly, from a very low starting point and in a very unbalanced manner, but nevertheless progressing.

Of course, no one can say what will happen next. We should not try to project some kind of linear progress when talking about China's future. The CCP is acutely aware of what is happening and is thinking of ways to revert the situation. One card they may play is diverting people's attention away from domestic issues towards external enemies — half real and half imagined. That is why the Chinese government has been increasingly adopting a war-like stance in its diplomacy. The CCP believes it may perhaps solve its domestic problems through a war with some foreign country, especially over Taiwan, or by greatly escalating existing tensions.

It is difficult to guess what the regime will do next. Nevertheless, we are clearly entering a new period, and we must prepare ourselves for it.

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The Labour programme in the king's speech: what next for the left?

23 July 2024, by **Dave Kellaway**

The State Opening Plan

The royal pomp and ceremony at the State Opening of Parliament and the delivery of the King's Speech express a very real political truth. Capitalist management and the British state's stability are ensured even with a change of government in a Labour landslide. Whichever party gets in, the King delivers the Labour programme as his speech, his laws. The archaic language reflects that too.

Starmer's team has been acting like a government in waiting for some time now. Any risks of a moderate challenge to the rule of capital have been ruthlessly eliminated from his party's ranks. A complete bipartisan foreign and defence policy has been established. Willingness to press the nuclear button, renew Trident, and align totally with US policy on Gaza has been enthusiastically taken up by Starmer. Strict adherence to the fiscal rules policed by the Bank of England and the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) has been trumpeted loudly for more than two years. Indeed, the OBR will be genuflected to even more piously as Labour proposes even greater reach for its powers. A new bill will enshrine its role in checking every bit of spending meets the fiscal rules. Labour blindly accepts that the OBR is 'independent,' whereas it reflects an acceptance of the rigid limits set by the way capital runs our economy.

Labour's Conservative Game

Team B has come running off the sub's bench with the same game plan in their boots. All the key sectors of British capital have switched their financial support and coaching staff to the new team. Once they understood that the Tory team was going to be relegated, they started negotiating with the new manager and sent in their top staff pro bono to all the shadow cabinet areas.

The new management team, in fact, wants to keep the same playbook but without the turnover of players, their failure to perform, and their willingness to look for side bets and backhanders. Starmer, in his first week or so, wants to present the government as a competent, more honest, and coherent team. After five Tory prime ministers, countless ministerial changes, the COVID disaster, the cost of living crisis, and the Truss chaos, you can see why this was an obvious and relatively easy turn to carry out. The initial honeymoon for the government is all about public relief from all that.

Starmer has stated he wants politics to sit more lightly on the people's shoulders. He is happy for people to leave politics to clever lawyers and managers like him. Inside Labour, he is quite content to see over 200,000 members leave and for internal democracy to be reduced to less than the bare minimum. Most of the new MPs who were installed by his apparatus are in that technocratic, managerial image. A few troublemakers like Diane Abbott managed to hang on despite his best efforts, but with a whopping 174 majority, their voices will be drowned out.

Some Policies We Support - As a Start

Of course, a Labour government is never exactly the same as a Tory government. If it were, then the two-party system would work much less effectively in convincing enough people to think it is worthwhile voting for an alternative to the incumbent government. Socialists welcome:

- The end of the Rwanda racist project
- New labour laws that will help unions organise more easily
- The gradual renationalisation of rail and allowing local authorities to manage buses
- Lifting of the ban on onshore wind and the idea of a publicly managed British energy company
- The ban on no-fault evictions
- The tobacco bill
- Imposing VAT on private school fees and the extra teachers/breakfast clubs/nursery provision

We welcome all these measures but point out they only scratch the surface of the deep crisis facing most people. For example, education needs huge new money to pay teachers and other staff properly, to renovate buildings, and to reduce class sizes. The green energy project was formerly worth

£28 billion, but it has been so scaled down that it will not help hit net-zero targets. Nowhere does Labour propose developing safe and secure routes for asylum seekers, which would stop people dying in boats; instead, it is spending huge sums on security forces. As We Own It has pointed out, while taking back the rail operators is a good first step, you also need to take the rolling stock back into common ownership. These companies make good profits for private shareholders which could instead be reinvested in public transport.

The Ideology of 'Grow Our Economy'

A lot of the other measures are aspirations based on supply-side reforms and public incentives to encourage private investment to 'grow our economy'. Every word of that refrain is quite ideological and misleading. Grow for what and in whose interest? We need to evaluate any growth in terms of the ecological impact. The growth of the Blair years actually increased inequality while very slightly reducing some absolute poverty. Then the economy is not 'ours' but is in the hands of the one percent. We have nil control over the economy; decisions are made in boardrooms - occasionally in liaison with government 'partners'. Finally, the economy appears as an ahistorical, fixed entity, almost part of the natural world that we cannot change. The law of value and the markets are seen as almost physical, natural laws. No, this is not some neutral economy but a capitalist system based on the exploitation of labour and the allocation of resources through profitability.

The proposals on housing seem to be all about changing the planning laws - and some of that may be necessary. However, very little public money is going into this; planning changes are seen as key because they do not involve tax and spend. Unlike the post-war New Towns programme, the government is not setting up Public Development Corporations that were

able to buy up and manage land without giving owners and developers unwarranted windfall profits. Today, the whole operation is based on partnerships with property developers and building companies. Listening to the business news on Radio 4 one morning recently, you could literally hear the developers' representatives rubbing their hands at all the money coming their way. Their shares have been going up. Very little social housing is included in the plans - like much else, the figures are not there; it is all about vague aspirations. Local councils will still have to sell off social housing and will not be given money to build new ones. How will the homeless and the average worker be able to buy these so-called affordable homes?

The new Public Wealth Fund is not like the Norway one, where the oil/gas tax revenues were accumulated to be used for investment by the government. Labour will be pump-priming everything in partnership with business - a sort of massive match-funding operation. Despite many economic commentators predicting that it will be very difficult to break through the 1.5% growth barrier, Labour insists that only growth will allow them to release extra spending for social programmes.

A massive hole in the legislative programme is social care. This affects nearly everybody - including relatively well-off people. If it is not sorted, you will not really be able to solve the crisis in the NHS because many old people who are not able to find social care provision are blocking hospital beds. Private companies are making massive profits in all areas of the social care system since local authorities were forced to outsource it. Social care is not in the programme because it needs massive social investment. In fact, one piece of reasonable Labour policy - facilitating sector pay agreements in social care - may well correctly increase the labour costs but would require more government spending. Even the Liberal Democrats were clearer on this issue and recognised during the election campaign that it needed increased taxes to pay for any reform.

Generally, the media have been

supportive of the new Labour programme. It does not really affect the wealth and profits of the newspaper moguls who set the news agenda on the TV. Everything looks a lot more competent and more expressive of public service than the depths sunk to by the Tories. The ideological soundtrack to the measures pushed by Labour has been all about restoring trust and competency. It is hard to deny that reality - for the moment in any case. In fact, the idea that politics should be less loud and intrusive in people's lives was the way in which the whole speech was rather de-dramatised. Partly because there were no surprises at all and also the resignation of Gareth Southgate has been dominating the airwaves. Some coverage has also featured the presence of more ministers who are state-educated and of working-class origin in the cabinet. Even the media is temporarily relishing the changing of the guard.

Challenging the Labour Government from the Left

The one big controversy that has flared up has been the continued refusal of Starmer to end the two-child benefit cap. Kim Johnson, the Liverpool Labour MP, has been leading the fight over this in the media over recent weeks. Her community in Liverpool is badly affected by this callous rule. The Child Poverty Action Group says that ending the cap would be the quickest way of taking 300,000 children out of the worst poverty. It would directly benefit 1.6 million children. The actual cost of £1.7 billion, or 0.14% of government spending, is peanuts compared to the money the government will be handing out to private companies 'in partnership' through tax breaks or grants. When Labour talks about wealth creation, they do not mean creating more wealth for the poorest but rather lots of privately built houses or new factories for car batteries that boost profits for the few. The best working people can hope for

is the crumbs of 'trickle down' benefits if growth is achieved.

The SNP has tabled an amendment to the King's Speech to scrap the two-child benefit cap, which has received cross-party support from the Green Party, the SDLP, Plaid Cymru, the Alliance Party, and independent MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn. Some Labour MPs have said they will support it or table their own amendment. In an effort to head off the revolt, Labour speedily proposed the setting up of a task force to review child poverty. So all you kids can wait months or years longer for the great and good to work out whether giving back £3455 a year will help families ease their poverty. Really, you need a commission of specialists and MPs to work that one out.

Socialists should welcome this challenge to Labour's new austerity and support any MPs or local campaigns working around it. It shows that despite a big landslide, there are voices to the left of Labour, either still in the party or outside it, who will not give this government a free pass. Piling in on this issue that can draw in a wide coalition is a good tactic. A

victory on this would help build further battles. Paying a decent wage to public sector workers, funding, and defending our NHS from private profit are upcoming campaigns.

The election results showed there is a broad constituency of activists who supported independent left or pro-Gaza candidates as well as those working with the remaining slim band of left Labour MPs inside Labour, like Momentum. Some of the Greens' activists and voters can also be drawn into such campaigns for more radical measures. We can be more hopeful that Starmer will not have it all their own way.

We should not limit ourselves to pressurising Labour. It is insufficient just calling for some of the first steps to be quickly implemented and then plaintively imploring Labour to go further; otherwise, Reform and the hard right will take advantage. Working alongside people like John McDonnell, who advocates such an approach, is useful but not enough. A more coherent left political alternative needs building nationally.

Jeremy Corbyn, in his post-electoral Guardian article, does not go so far as to call for establishing such a movement as clearly as he might. However, he does seem to finally accept that the doors of Labour are now forever shut to him. He recognises that alternative organisation outside the party is necessary, including through electoral challenges. Jeremy has called for monthly meetings of all progressive forces in his constituency to help organise campaigns and discuss politics. Also, he implicitly criticises operators like George Galloway who build undemocratic vehicles around their own personalities. All this is positive and we should welcome it.

We need to continue the debate about how Jeremy and other current initiatives (Organise, Many not Few, Transform, Collective, Owen Jones, just to mention a few) can take forward the project of a national left alternative. There is no reason why progress cannot be made on this while keeping a healthy non-sectarian approach to unity in action with Labour left MPs and Labour members.

[AntiCapitalist Resistance](#)

Trump, Biden and Divine Intervention

22 July 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

Biden stepping down is not the only providential event of the last couple of weeks. At the Republican National Convention, the party's candidate Donald Trump was hailed not only as the party's nominee for president, but as a man chosen by God. Many of the 50,000 in attendance, many of them Evangelical Christians, talked of the "divine intervention" that had saved Trump from assassination only a couple of days before, saved him, their Messiah, to lead their Christian nation to salvation from diabolical Democrats.

At the same time, the photo of Trump, surrounded by Secret Service agents, blood streaming from his wounded

ear, raising his fist and mouthing, "Fight! Fight!" with the American flag flying behind him—a tableau now available on posters and t-shirts and all-over the media—suggests he is the invincible strongman his followers always believed him to be. Now wearing the halo of divinity, he is on the march to become an American Caesar.

The strongman was a central theme of the Convention, with Hulk Hogan, the huge theatrical wrestling star ripping off a shirt on stage to reveal beneath it another reading "Trump/Vance." Trump was not introduced, as tradition would have it by his wife, but by Dana White, CEO of the Ultimate

Fighting Championship (UFC), the mixed martial arts promotion company. The music for Trump's introduction was Kid Rock's vulgar, violent, rap metal song "American Bad Ass," and where the audience usually shouts, "Hey, hey, hey," he led them in "Trump, Trump, Trump." He ended the song, "Ladies and gentlemen, get ready for the most patriotic, bad ass on earth, President Donald J. Trump." The whole thing was about testosterone, masculinity, and power.

Trump also announced his running mate, J.D. Vance. He might have chosen Nikki Haley, the woman who won a significant portion of votes in the Republican primary, in order to

appeal to women, or picked South Carolina Senator Tim Scott to garner more Black vote, or he might have selected Florida Senator Marco Rubio to appeal to Hispanics, but he chose Vance, freshman senator from Ohio, hoping to appeal to white working class voters in that state. Vance is the author of *Hillbilly Elegy*, a book (later a movie) about his hardscrabble upbringing raised by a drug addict mother and a series of step-fathers in poverty-stricken Appalachia. After high school he joined the Marines,

graduated with honors from Ohio State University, studied at Yale, moved to Silicon Valley where he became a venture capitalist and returned to Ohio to become a far-right politician.

Trump talked in his acceptance speech about unifying the country, about being president for all Americans. But the sweetness and light lasted a half hour of his 90-minute speech and he soon reverted to his usual bombastic and bizarre speechifying. Trump told the crowd,

alluding to the bullet that chipped his ear, "I stand before you in this arena only by the grace of almighty God." Was that the same God who got Biden to step down? I'm not sure.

Biden's withdrawal and the likelihood of Harris' campaign has already begun to breathe a little life into the Democratic Party base and that could make all the difference in the election. Perhaps Trump's march to victory can be stopped, and forgive me, being an American, for saying, God willing.

On the raging student movement in Bangladesh

21 July 2024, by **Radical Socialist**

What is the reason behind this movement? Is this primarily a movement of traitors, razakars? Is this protest just against quotas?

This movement was sparked off by the recent judgement of the country's high court that has ruled to bring back the quota system which was halted in the year 2018. Government education and jobs in Bangladesh are 56% under quota, out of which 30% consists of the freedom fighter quota. The Bangladeshi system is not a quota system for marginalized or deprived peoples, which we are used to in the Indian reservation system.

Rather, this is an attempt by Awami League to permanently create a vote bank for themselves through the creation of a privileged class that receives preferential treatment. It is worth noting that this time many descendants of freedom fighters have spoken in support of the movement.

In 2018, the government under pressure from a mass movement was forced to order a halt this quota. This order was challenged in court. Why had the government not passed a clear cut law regarding the same issue where affirmative action for genuinely

deprived peoples is initiated and separated from the "muktijoddha quota" (trans: freedom fighter quota)?

In 2018, students had demanded a reform of the 30% quota for the families of freedom fighters. And the Hasina government had completely removed the 26% reservations kept for marginalized and deprived peoples along with these quotas.

When the same was taken to court, the quota system in its entirety has been brought back. It is not impossible that some people in the movement are conservative, and some are against quotas for women.

However, the arrowhead of the movement is pointed at the freedom fighter quota.

This movement is so strong because under late capitalism there are very few jobs in underdeveloped Bangladesh resulting in hundreds of thousands of young people hopefully applying annually for a few thousand secure government jobs.

The Bangladeshi government does not look after the interests of the many. They serve international capital, including big capitalists of China and

India and look to line the pockets of the ruling party and political leaders with profit. One of the slogans of the student movement is "Bhuya! Bhuya" (trans: Fake! Fake!). The underlying meaning is that "freedom fighter family" is often a bogus label given to those close to the Awami League.

Sheikh Hasina has tried to label this movement as one of Razakars. In 1971, Razakars assisted the Pakistanis and were traitors to the Bangladeshi cause. The protesters have responded with the slogan "Ami ke? Tumi ke? Rajakar! Rajakar! Ke boleche? Ke bolecche? Shwoirachar! Shwoirachar!" (trans: Who am I? Who are you? Rajakar! Rajakar! Who says so? Who says so? Who says so? Dictator! Dictator!) The word "Razakar" from the mouth of Sheikh Hasina is similar to the utterance "antinational" or "terrorist" from the mouth of Narendra Modi.

Masses of students have joined this movement in Bangladesh. As of 6 pm, 18th of July, 2024, 64 people have been martyred. But this movement has not been able to organize itself in a clear leftist direction. Organizations like Jamaat-e-Islami exist in Bangladesh.

Haseena has labelled the movement as one completely of Razakars in order to exploit the presence of these organizations. This is of course a failure of left organizations that they have not been able to create a strong counter polarity in their favour. Out of these, the Workers' Party (known to be close to the CPIM) and sections of JASAD/JSD are completely subservient to Hasina. Others are supportive of the movement but we cannot claim that they are giving any direction to it.

We support the democratic movement of Bangladesh against unjust quotas and at the same time support the system of reservation directed at removing social discrimination. We support the democratic movement of the people against the authoritarian Bangladeshi government and support the demand for democratic and free and fair elections which was raised by a united left in 2023.

It is an important task in India to stand in solidarity with the movement

in Bangladesh for history will read the progressive movements of both countries as intertwined.

We also strongly condemn the actions of the Kolkata police who detained protesters in solidarity with Bangladesh and sent them to Lalbazar (HQ of Kolkata police). May the democratic movement of the people stand strong against the union of dictators!

Radical Socialist - 19th July, 2024.

Pinkwashing and Queer Dilemmas

20 July 2024, by **Maryam Gilani, Jet Menist, Samara Ghazal**

From 1996 to 2005 the whole of Amsterdam Pride was organized by the Gay Business Association. Even after that it remained mostly a politically tame spectacle for throngs of tourists, with relatively small but militant and creative protests by the radical queer group Reclaim Our Pride. The centre-left Amsterdam city executive tried recently to overcome this polarization by turning the second week of Pride over to the foundation Queer Amsterdam, supposed to represent the city's more radical queers. But Queer Amsterdam's statement that Israeli flags would violate the Pride Walk's anti-racist spirit blew the attempt at inclusion wide open.

The decision of Queer Amsterdam to not welcome Israeli flags in this time of the ongoing genocide on Gaza sparked an array of homonationalist reactions across different stakeholders involved in the organizing of Pride events in Amsterdam. Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema reported that this "ban" would not be allowed, describing it as "imposing censorship on demonstrators". In response, Queer Amsterdam initially issued a statement apologizing, making clear that the Pride Walk would be open to people of all backgrounds who shared the basic

values of solidarity. It highlighted the presence of an invited speaker from the Dutch anti-Zionist Jewish group Erev Rav. But this attempt at backpedaling failed to quiet the storm.

In their turn, the Homomonument foundation, which claims to have been organizing Pride since its first edition, issued a statement taking over the organising of the Pride Walk on the 20th, welcoming everyone "regardless of their flag". Queer Amsterdam took a courageous stand in withdrawing from the organizing of the Pride Walk, declaring that they could not accept a compromise that violated its fundamental queer values. It announced that it will hold its own international solidarity protest in the second week of September.

Pride, Respectability politics, and Pinkwashing

According to the Lancet journal, an estimated 186,000 or more deaths among Palestinians can be attributed to the current Israeli genocide on Gaza. The International Court of

Justice in the Netherlands found earlier this year in January that it is plausible that Israel is violating the genocide convention. Halsema's stance to consider not welcoming Israeli flags as an act of censorship is absurd to say the least, given this background. Queers have been part of the increasingly strong movement in the Netherlands opposing the genocide. Victories have been won both in mobilizing and on a legal level against Dutch complicity with the genocide. Would Halsema demand tolerance of antisemitic banners at a march against antisemitism? Merely asking the question shows the absurdity of her argument. But clearly sympathy for Zionism is deeply rooted and stubborn, not only in the PVV and on the right but also in the PvdA.

This stance of allowing Israeli flags in the Pride Parade of Amsterdam is an act of pinkwashing the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Pinkwashing is the process which the Israeli state has been using for decades to polish the ongoing settler colonialism of historic Palestine, picturing Israel as a beacon of gay rights and dismissing the lives of LGBTIQ Palestinians in Occupied Palestine.

Allowing Israeli flags in the Amsterdam Pride Parade is engaging

with a system that dismisses queer Palestinian lives both in occupied Palestine and in Europe, and is fueled by the growing racism against people of Middle Eastern origin and people of colour in general. The Amsterdam gay scene has unfortunately long been a fertile ground for pinkwashing ideologies. Queer Amsterdam's courageous stand has now broken a breach in a consensus that has been too solid for too long. In response, BDS Nederland are holding a queer solidarity protest on Saturday 20th of July, to refuse the pinkwashing of the genocide during Pride, under the slogan "No Pride in Genocide".

The creation of Queer Amsterdam as a major actor in Pride offered promise of reaching broad LGBTIQ milieus, going beyond the relatively small numbers mobilized in the past by Reclaim Our Pride's actions against commercialization and homonationalism. But now we must ask whether the opportunity depended too much on funding and supervision by the Dutch state, specifically by the Amsterdam municipality. The resulting foundation structure, which has not been open to broad democratic debates and decision-making, has now weakened Queer Amsterdam in its clash with the municipality.

Setting up foundations for interest groups is an old tradition of Dutch multiculturalism, functioning to contain movements by giving them a

limited space for visibility and action. Political movements in contemporary Dutch neoliberal democracy, when organized into foundations, face two significant challenges. Firstly, this results in substitutionalism, resulting in a small number of individuals advocating on behalf of the wider population with limited community engagement in politics. Secondly, these foundations are constrained by the rules established by other, often structurally more powerful, institutions with which they must negotiate.

A recent, particularly problematic example of this was the Feminist March NL, which dissolved on the very day of their planned march due to their inability to manage potential police violence against concurrent anti-genocide protests. Built on the efforts of a few activists and lacking the robust support that collective thinking, discussion, and organization provides, these foundations are inherently vulnerable. In contrast to the outcome of the Feminist March NL, we hope Queer Amsterdam emerges from this experience stronger.

In times of repression of anti-fascist voices within the queer community and the weaponizing of queerness to pinkwash a genocide, it is more essential than ever to draw on the historical anti-fascist symbolism of the Homomonument. The monument, erected in 1987, is composed of three

pink triangles, similar to the ones stitched on the jackets of gay victims in concentration camps. Each triangle represents a different aspect of queer memory: one triangle at street level symbolizes the oppression and homophobic violence queer people endured in the past, and contains a verse from a poem by Dutch gay Jewish poet Jacob Israël de Haan: "Naar vriendschap zulk een mateloos verlangen" ("Such an Endless Longing for Friendship").

The pink triangle was later adopted during the AIDS pandemic in 1987 as part of the SILENCE = DEATH movement, and ACT UP New York adopted it as a logo symbolizing solidarity and the struggle for life. They, along with Jewish Voice for Peace, recently launched a significant solidarity event with the Palestinian people, calling on Biden to stop arming Israel, with slogans ranging from "No Pride in Genocide" to "From New York to Gaza: Stonewall was an Intifada."

As for De Haan, after moving to Palestine as an ex-socialist religious Zionist, what he saw there turned him within a few years into an anti-Zionist. In 1924 he was assassinated by an armed Zionist band led by a future president of Israel. His memory should remind us: queer solidarity must inspire us to intransigent rejection of discriminatory ideologies, never to acceptance of them in the name of "tolerance" or "unity".

The U.S. hurtles toward political crisis

19 July 2024, by **Ashley Smith**

The United States was already headed for one of the most acute political crises in recent memory. Then former president and convicted felon Donald Trump was nearly assassinated at a rally in Pennsylvania. Having survived, Trump has consolidated his base and cornered the Democrats by blaming them for the attack.

Trump will now position himself as a

strong man and survivor over a debilitated Biden campaign. He has an inside track to victory in the election with a clear advantage despite being widely despised.

Even before the attempted assassination of Trump, President Joe Biden's catastrophic debate performance had thrown his candidacy into doubt with the

bourgeois press, the Democrat's capitalist donors, and centrist politicians, all calling for him to pass the baton to another nominee.

GOP Capitalizes on

Assassination Attempt

The attempt against Trump has drowned out all other issues. The image of him bloodied, defiant with fist raised, and chanting “fight, fight, fight” has been plastered across the media and will no doubt end up on t-shirts at this week’s GOP Convention in Milwaukee.

At this point we don’t know much about the shooter, Thomas Matthew Crooks, except that he was a twenty-year-old, white, registered Republican who donated to the Democrat’s PAC, Act Blue, after Biden’s election. His motives and politics remain unclear, although reports paint him as a loner with a history of being bullied in school.

But Trump and his minions have already blamed the Democrats for the assassination attempt. Vice Presidential candidate J.D. Vance exclaimed, “The central premise of the Biden campaign is that President Donald Trump is an authoritarian fascist who must be stopped at all costs. That rhetoric led directly to President Trump’s attempted assassination.”

Cornered by these accusations, the Democrats immediately condemned the attempted assassination, and pulled their campaign advertisements across the country, something of course not reciprocated by the Republicans. The reeling Democrats are already muting their sharpest criticisms at least for now, while the Republicans have doubled down on their attacks on Biden and the Democrats.

Amid their spiraling conflict, both parties have united on one thing—blistering condemnation of “political violence.” Their hypocrisy on this point is plain for all to see. Both parties have jointly funded the Pentagon’s war machine to the tune of nearly \$1 trillion a year, armed Israel to carry out genocide in Palestine, and unleashed their militarized police to enforce the racialized class inequalities of U.S. capitalism.

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Contrary to the current bipartisan political theater, political violence is a systematic feature of U.S. society. It is as American as apple pie.

And it is getting worse. Capitalism’s long-term global slump is deepening inequality, fueling political polarization, opening space for the far right including fascist forces, and intensifying social and political violence.

Even Biden admitted this in his national address when he listed just a few recent examples like Trump’s January 6th “beer gut” putsch, the attack on then House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s husband, and the plot to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Rhetorical pleas by Biden and especially Trump for national unity will not dampen down such violence, which is the product of a deep socioeconomic crisis and intractable political polarization.

The beneficiaries of the assassination attempt will be Trump’s campaign, the far right, the security state, the military, and the police. They, along with the, at best, qualified support of the Democrats, will whip up a moral panic about “extremism” to justify a law and order crackdown.

As a result, we are likely to see even further erosion of our already endangered democratic rights to organize, speak out, protest, and strike. Regardless of the identity, motive, and politics of the shooter, the target of this crackdown will be the Left, progressive movements, unions, and especially people of color. In particular, this will strengthen the attacks on the Palestine solidarity movement, which is already subject to a McCarthyite witch hunt.

The Times of Israel reports that Biden campaign officials stated, on condition of anonymity, that, “Rather than verbally attacking Trump in the coming days, the White House and the Biden campaign will draw on the president’s history of condemning all sorts of political violence including his

sharp criticism of the ‘disorder’ created by campus protests against Israel over the war in Gaza with Hamas.”

Crisis in the Democratic Party

While the Republicans capitalize on the assassination attempt, the Democrats are in a full blown political crisis. Their standard bearer, Biden, has confronted eroding support from young voters as a result of his unrelenting political, economic, and military support of Israel and its genocidal war on Palestine.

His position has put him to the right of most Democrats, and repulsed almost all Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims. Biden is widely and rightly called “Genocide Joe” by young activists.

On top of that, his policies have failed to alleviate the crisis in the lives of workers and the oppressed. His pandemic funding has ended, state and local governments are now turning to austerity to balance their budgets, and workers wage increases have failed to match inflation, particularly in housing costs particularly for renters.

For most oppressed people conditions have deteriorated over the last four years. Abortion has been massively curtailed, racist police brutality and murder have continued apace, and deportation of migrants has dramatically risen under Biden. Unsurprisingly, voters, even before the debate, had little enthusiasm for the Democrats.

In that faceoff, Biden had two tasks—prove that he was mentally competent to run and focus the electorate’s attention on Trump and the Republicans’ authoritarian and reactionary program. He failed on both counts. This caused panic among the Democrats who were confronted with a candidate who was simply unfit for office.

In [the debate], Biden had two tasks—prove that he was mentally competent to run and focus the electorate’s attention on Trump and

the Republicans' authoritarian and reactionary program. He failed on both counts.

The Republicans sensed blood in the water. One senior GOP strategist crowed, "Joe Biden is an anvil wrapped around the neck of every Democrat candidate and incumbent. Republicans should be praying nonstop he stays in the race."

That led centrists in battleground districts as well as donors and the bourgeois media, which have clearly leaned toward the Democrats, to call for Biden to withdraw from the election and support either Kamala Harris or some process to select a competent nominee. Rather than listen to reason, however, Biden has dug in, touting his record, denying his obvious age-related clinical frailty, and pointing to national polls that show him in a dead heat with Trump.

But his record is for most people, despite this or that minor reform, a lead balloon. And his repeated flubs in almost every unscripted appearance only confirm his incapacity.

And national polls are irrelevant. We do not live in a democracy. U.S. elections do not turn on the popular vote, but on states and their apportioned delegates in the undemocratic electoral college. That actual race turns on seven battleground states in which Biden trails Trump.

In fact, most election analysts think that Biden's opportunity to win has narrowed to just three states—Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Without those he will lose, and after the assassination attempt his odds, especially in Pennsylvania, look terrible.

Biden and the Democrats are to blame for this disaster. While Trump may be a malignant narcissist, Biden has proved himself to be, at best, an arrogant narcissist, more concerned with promoting himself than defeating Trump and the Republicans.

The entire party shares responsibility for promoting a candidate that is unfit for office, including its so-called progressive wing. Neither competent establishment candidates nor

progressives challenged him in the primary, leaving Biden a clear path to lock up the nomination. And, now in the wake of the assassination, he and his handlers will defend his candidacy in the name of stability and try to block any attempt to dislodge him from the top of the ticket.

Progressives Front for Genocide Joe

The possibility, if not likelihood, of a Trump victory has precipitated panic and desperation throughout the liberal and social democratic Left. The Black political establishment, union bureaucracy, as well as Sanders and the so-called Squad with the notable exception of Rashida Tlaib have for the most part doubled down on support of Biden.

As Biden's candidacy appeared to be in serious jeopardy, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez rushed to his defense, declaring, "The matter is closed. He is in this race, and I support him." Rep. Ilhan Omar, whose daughter was part of the encampment at Columbia University protesting the genocide, chimed in, "He's been the best president of my lifetime, and we have his back."

Even worse, Bernie Sanders who has repeatedly called Biden the "most progressive president since FDR" penned a column in The New York Times that plumbd the depths of the lesser-evil argument for supporting Biden. While admitting that he opposed Biden on many questions including his support of Israel's war, Sanders claimed that Biden was "a good and decent Democratic president with a record of real accomplishment."

The precondition of the Squad and Sanders making such claims is deprioritizing opposition to genocide. But that is nothing new. They have dressed Biden's administration in sheep's clothing since Sanders lost the contest for the Democratic Party nomination in 2020.

In reality, the Biden administration was always a wolf, one with a strategy of co-opting the Left with an imperialist Keynesian program of

modest liberal reforms, shoring up U.S. hegemony, and confronting its great power and regional rivals, especially China and Russia. Biden's support of Israel's genocidal war on Palestine has ripped off the sheep's clothing and exposed him as not just a supporter but an architect of genocide.

Instead of trumpeting our program and mobilizing forces to fight for it, Sanders and the Squad adopted Biden's and became the best salespeople for it...Out the window went Card Check, Medicare for All, the Green New Deal, codifying Roe, immigrant rights, and countless other demands.

That, in turn, has generated the radicalization of the best of a whole generation, most dramatically expressed in the encampments on college campuses against Biden and the Democratic Party as a whole. As a result, in the eyes of these Palestine solidarity activists, Sanders and the Squad will be looked upon as accomplices, not opponents, of Biden's regime and its genocidal war.

These politicians are prepared to risk alienating Palestine solidarity activists based on the fantasy that in supporting Biden, they have influenced him over the last four years and that by working for his victory in the election, they can save him from defeat and thereby secure even greater influence in his second term. In reality, the capitalist establishment backed Biden to defeat Sanders and his followers in the 2020 primary.

He then used them to corral DSA and the broader Left, social movements, and union officialdom, into supporting his program, not ours. As the recent book, *The Internationalists* details, Biden's program was created by his own imperialist brain trust with no consultation with progressive Democrats let alone socialists.

Instead of trumpeting our program and mobilizing forces to fight for it, Sanders and the Squad adopted Biden's program and became the best salespeople for it against centrist Democrats and Republicans. As a result, out the window went Card Check, Medicare for All, the Green New Deal, codifying Roe, immigrant

rights, and countless other demands.

Moreover, even if Biden defies all the odds and wins, there is no reason to think that he would adopt anything like our program of reforms. In reality, if reelected, Biden will double down on his own program. Thus, Biden has blocked the Left in the Democratic Party, neutralizing and co-opting its elected officials as spokespersons for his regime at the moment of its greatest crisis and possible impending defeat in November.

The Self-Defeating Logic of Lesser Evilism

To justify their strategy, Sanders, the Squad, and many on the Left are yet again making all the classic lesser evil arguments, even if the last four years have definitively disproved their case. The most honest of them do not try to dress up Biden as anything but evil. They admit that readily. They actually argue that the only way for us to stop Trump and what they see as fascism is to campaign for a candidate carrying out genocide.

The basis of the argument is that Trump is the immediate danger, that he must be stopped, and that the only way to do that is to support Biden. They argue further that conditions under a second Biden administration will be more auspicious for the growth of the Left, social movements, and trade unions.

In reality, the last four years disprove their arguments. The Left's broad support for Biden in 2020 and after has weakened organized socialists, dampened down class and social struggle, and failed to stop the rise of the right. It has tied us to a class enemy at home and its imperialist project abroad.

Before Sanders' capitulation to Biden, DSA was an expanding organization with at least some part of it openly discussing how to build a mass socialist alternative to the Democratic Party establishment and the GOP. But instead, it followed Sanders, AOC, Jamaal Bowman, and others in rallying

to support the Biden administration.

The talk of organizing a dirty break, building a surrogate party, or even realigning the Democratic Party and turning it into a social democratic party has evaporated. All that was replaced by trying to elect progressive Democrats and lobbying the establishment to adopt their demands. Of course, that yielded next to nothing.

The first crisis DSA suffered was unsurprisingly over U.S. imperialism and Palestine. When the Palestine Working Group protested DSA member Jamaal Bowman's support for Israel, the working group was disciplined, not Bowman, leading to an exodus of Palestine solidarity activists from the organization.

Moreover, faced with the general impasse of the Left inside the Democratic Party, DSA has lost tens of thousands of members, its chapters have become largely inactive, and its remaining members are mostly inactive. Pointing to this or that electoral victory just covers up the obvious crisis the organization has suffered. It is no longer the dynamic, vibrant expression of radicalization it promised to be.

It is time to face the hard reality that lesser evilism has never worked to advance the Left, working class struggle, and the liberation of the oppressed. The last four years proves it beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The same result has been faced by most social movements under Biden. Popular struggle on most fronts from climate to migrant rights and even reproductive justice remain at a low ebb. But perhaps the worst setback suffered was to Black Lives Matter, which the Democratic Party and the Black political establishment convinced to retreat from the streets and instead to campaign for Biden in 2020.

While that tremendous uprising has left a profound political radicalization in its wake, it is no longer an organized political force across the country. Both parties are rolling back any reforms, funding not defunding cops, and re-instituting racist repressive measures across the

country.

The one social movement that has scored significant ideological victories and a few institutional reforms—the Palestine solidarity movement—has done so in defiance of liberal university bureaucrats, Democratic Party elected officials, and the Biden administration. These are all opponents of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions and the entire struggle to free Palestine from Israel settler colonialism.

What gains the labor movement has won was not the result of Biden being elected or lobbying him in office. Few to no gains have been won that way. And there have been massive defeats at the hand of his administration like breaking the strike of railway workers. The only real victories have been won by organizing and staging strikes like the UAW's standup strike against the Big Three automakers.

But most damning of all, support for Biden in the last election and over the last four years has failed to stop the electoral resurrection of Trump and the far right. In fact, while deeply unpopular and widely condemned for January 6th, they are more organized than four years ago.

Trump and his minions have taken over the GOP as well as traditional Republican think tanks, driven out so-called moderates from the party, developed a far more comprehensive program for authoritarian nationalist rule laid out in Project 2025, and built a united cabinet in waiting ready to try and implement it upon victory. Even worse, Steven Bannon with his War Room podcast along with others in this right wing ecosystem are organizing, in Bannon's words, "an army of the awakened" prepared, according to Kevin Roberts, the leader of Project 2025, to carry out a "bloodless" revolution if possible, but implicitly a violent one if necessary.

It is time to face the hard reality that lesser evilism has never worked to advance the Left, working class struggle, and the liberation of the oppressed. The last four years proves it beyond a shadow of a doubt. Our forces are weaker, more disoriented, and unprepared to carry out the fight.

The only exception is the Palestine solidarity movement that knows in its bones that Biden is our main enemy right now.

Building Resistance to the Right and Establishment

Whichever party wins in November, the U.S. seems headed for a constitutional crisis. If Biden and the Democrats somehow manage to win, the GOP will not recognize their victory and will attempt to implement their far right program in the states they control, establishing separate and unequal laws for the oppressed and exploited. The judiciary, both state and federal, and especially the Supreme Court, have proven themselves just as subject to this partisan manipulation and polarization, and incapable of mitigating the constitutional crisis.

If the GOP wins these elections, it will attempt to implement Project 2025 at the federal level. That will be opposed by the Democrats in the states they control, leading to open conflict between them and the Trump administration.

Such polarization and radicalization has led even mainstream news outlets like CNN to ask whether the U.S. is headed for another civil war.

Neoconservative Robert Kagan in his book, *Rebellion*, fears that a far-right revolt—a counter-revolution against the existing constitutional order—is a real and imminent danger.

Faced with this looming crisis, it is time to bring an end to the cycle of illusions on the Left. All those who followed Sanders into the Democratic Party now have a choice to make: Either continue speeding down this dead end or begin the hard process of building an alternative to both the Democratic Party, which is now the main party of U.S. capital, and its far right opponent, the Trumpite GOP. It is time to chart a different course forward.

Regardless of what individuals do at the ballot box, the Left must not spend our time, money, and energy on campaigning for Biden and the Democratic Party. Instead, we must build our social and class struggles, especially the movement in solidarity with Palestine against Israel's genocidal war. Our alternative must be primarily committed to building class and social struggle and only running candidates on an independent platform and with the aim of being tribunes and builders of independent mass movements for progressive demands.

There are no shortcuts, as the last few years have proved. But we must be honest about the challenges we face in this alternative strategy. First our infrastructure of resistance—our democratic organization of social and

class struggle—remains very weak. We must overcome that in order to build the kinds of disruptive mass movements and strikes that will be necessary to win even our most modest demands for reform.

Second, we must face the fact that our forces face an emboldened and increasingly dangerous right. They will not be blocked by the capitalist establishment in the Democratic Party and, in fact, will only gain momentum if the Democrats are seen as the only political alternative. Our forces on the Left must be smart in this context: We must defend our democratic rights, lend maximum solidarity to each other's struggles, continue to protest for our demands against both the establishment and far right, and use tactics designed to reach out to the widest ranks of the working class and oppressed.

In this moment, we should also remember that however temporarily emboldened the right may be, it will not be able to create a stable regime in the U.S. or anywhere else for that matter. They have no solutions to capitalism's systemic crises that they are exploiting politically and no answers to the demands of the vast majority of our society. Neither does the capitalist establishment, whose regimes in the U.S. and globally are also unstable. The Left must begin to build an independent pole that can offer an actual alternative for humanity.

[Tempest](#)

The right after Sunak - and the left-wing alternative

18 July 2024, by **Phil Hearse**

In an article published [here](#) five weeks before the UK general election, we argued that two key takeaways from the election would be the marginalisation of the Labour left and a big surge for Reform UK - and that

this would reflect an international push for power from the hard right. This is exactly what is underway. Below we review what this means internationally, but first, it is necessary to look at the outcome in

Britain.

Labour's Fragile Victory

Labour's huge 410 seats were won with just 35% of the vote on a 60% turnout – in other words by 21% of the electorate. Doubtless, some abstainers didn't bring any photo ID with them or were worried about their immigration status. But there was an 'active' abstention by 35% of the electorate. This low score of votes for Labour underlines the fragility of their vote.

The voters took to the polls with the same attitude towards the Tories as those villagers who attack the hillside castle in Dracula movies – determined to drive a stake through the heart of the vampire. To do this, voters in many cases voted for parties that were not their first choice, especially cross-overs between the Liberal Democrats and Labour. But darker things were afoot.

In the 98 seats where Reform UK came second, 89 of them were in seats won by Labour, leading to Nigel Farage's boast that in the next election Reform "is coming for Labour". The total votes were nine million for Labour, seven million for the Conservatives and four million for Reform UK. And around two million for the Greens.

What's going to happen in the Conservative Party? The four leading candidates for the leadership are all from the hard right – Suella Braverman, Kemi Badenoch, Priti Patel and Robert Jenrick. The predominant discourse in the 'Conservative family', which includes newspapers, magazines and broadcast pundits, is that the Tories lost because they were "not conservative enough." But this cannot be substantiated by the facts. In every poll, voters cared more about the cost of living, social care and the NHS, way above taxation and immigration. Voters expressed scepticism about Labour's plans to fix these things, and probably many voting Labour did so more in hope than expectation.

Labour has no real plan to fix anything from social care to sewage-strewn rivers because they have no real plan

to raise the money needed to do that. Instead, they propose the "magical realism" of growing the economy and public sector reform. Within two years or so Labour will be mired in conflict with the unions, increasingly unpopular because of the failure to fix anything substantial and embattled with progressive voters over the Middle East.

Five independent candidates were elected whose platform was mainly about Gaza or who featured it prominently (including Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North). Other independent candidates like Andrew Feinstein in Holborn and St Pancras got high votes while the Greens won almost two million votes.

Votes for independents suffered from there being no viable national structure or party framework behind them. In other words, whereas Reform had a clear national profile and platform to the right of the main parties, other independent candidates had no such platform or programme to the left, and the Greens have not always been left-wing in this country.

The Direction of the Tories

In a recent poll, 50% of Conservative members said they would like the party to merge with Reform UK. There's no doubt Nigel Farage would emerge as party leader from any such deal. But this poll tells us everything we need to know about the politics of Tory members. This now includes more than 200 ex-MPs, unleashed from the Tory whip. But you cannot put a cigarette paper between Reform UK and ex-Tory MPs like the belligerent Jonathan Gullis, formerly representing Stoke-on-Trent North, and the more refined Jacob Rees-Mogg whose sister Annunziata is a leading member of Reform. Another in the category of ex-MPs is Steve Baker, a parliamentary right-wing fixer until he was made a junior government minister in 2022. Also on the ex-MPs list is Michael Gove, still popular among Tory members.

The developments on the British right cannot be analysed outside of the

politics of the European right as a whole. On numerous fronts, the traditional 'centre-right' are being crowded out by parties that are on the 'creeping fascism' spectrum. They make up the biggest bloc in the new European parliament. The participants in recent European hard-right conferences in Brussels in 2023 and Madrid this year were Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Marine Le Pen from the French National Rally and Spanish Vox leader Santiago Abascal. Both conferences were held under the banner of National Conservatism and included right-wing theorist Frank Furedi, Professor Emeritus at Kent University.

National Conservatism: The New Right-Wing Vanguard

The National Conservatism conferences targeted allegedly 'woke' ideology, especially left and liberal concerns for racial and gender equality. Giorgia Meloni, leader of the Brothers of Italy, and Santiago Abascal of Vox are vocal in their denunciation of "gay agendas"; that "undermine the traditional family and the traditional role of women as mothers and homemakers".

But what is National Conservatism, and what is Illiberal Democracy? National Conservatism is the idea that we are now (or should be) in a post-neoliberal globalisation phase. According to author and academic Angelos Chrysosogelos, National Conservatism is increasingly the ideology of the new mainstream parties that have displaced more 'moderate' right-wing parties in Hungary, Poland and Italy, and threaten to do the same in France, Germany and – via Reform UK – in Britain.

National Conservatism cannot roll back the juggernaut of economic globalisation, but it can limit it. A recent example is the American decision to impose huge tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles to

defend American producers. But this is a double-edged sword. One of the biggest manufacturers in China is Elon Musk's Tesla, a truly globalised company

National Conservatism promotes, in theory at least, the role of the national state as opposed to international bodies like the IMF, the World Trade Organisation and, especially, the UN and world and European courts.

But most importantly, National Conservatism advocates state intervention to promote traditional values and defeat the 'woke' agenda. This could involve anything from banning school books that explain Britain's role in the slave trade to banning the teaching of alternative sexualities and genders. This is the 'anti-woke' agenda now on full display in the US Supreme Court, which has effectively banned reproductive rights in many US states.

National Conservatism goes hand-in-hand with Viktor Orban's 'illiberal democracy'. This means using the state to manage democratic rights, like the right to demonstrate on issues like Gaza, hold pride marches, and organise political rallies. It also means purging the local and national state apparatuses and doing the same in university and high school teaching.

And of course, National Conservatism means political mobilisation on the basis of anti-immigrant racism and nationalism.

A lot of these things are already happening in Britain but they are imposed in an uneven way, according to national circumstances. In Poland, National Conservatism in power wrapped itself in reactionary Catholicism, which is not the case elsewhere.

Suella Braverman has been an important attendee at National Conservative conferences and she is highly likely to be one of the two candidates referred to the membership in the upcoming Conservative leadership election. If they vote for her, there is sure to be a united front with Farage on many questions.

According to Tim Bale, four leading candidates for the Tory leadership – Kemi Badenoch, Robert Jenrick, Priti Patel and Suella Braverman – all seem to adhere to the right-wing mantra that the Conservatives lost the election because they were “not conservative enough”.

In the general election, the anti-woke agenda was downplayed. But after the Tory leadership is decided in favour of Braverman or front-runner Kemi Badenoch, a full-on anti-woke agenda can be expected, focusing on anti-trans ideology and targeting Gaza demonstrations as racist “hate marches” and left-wing/Gaza demonstrators as “violent” towards MPs and “out of step with ‘British values’”. A key target for the anti-woke theorists is teaching, and in particular left-wing or liberal university teachers. These things are out there in the Tory and right-of-Tory ecosystems, but with an effective Conservative-Reform united front in parliament, they could become the focus of a massive ideological offensive.

The Extreme Right's International Influence

The fate of the extreme right in Britain is linked to that of the extreme right internationally. Political leaders on the creeping fascism spectrum are already in government in Italy, Hungary, Turkey, Argentina and the Netherlands. The danger of Donald Trump coming to power again in the United States looks even more likely after the attempted assassination and the refusal of an obviously struggling Biden to step down as the Democratic candidate.

Farage talks of Reform targeting the 2029 election to become the biggest party in parliament. But the extreme right is not the only show in town.

People Power

The Green Party won four seats and came second to Labour in dozens of

others. Campaigners for Gaza or a more extensive left-of-Labour programme won five MPs and organised hundreds of activists. In a post-election opinion piece, Jeremy Corbyn outlines how he and local community activists intend to maintain strong roots in the constituency by campaigning and helping local people with their problems. Of those who mobilised around his campaign, he says:

‘...energy needs somewhere to go. It needs to be channelled. It needs to be mobilised. That's why our campaign will organise with those who have been inspired by our victory to build community power in every corner of the country. Once our grassroots model has been replicated elsewhere, this can be the genesis of a new movement capable of challenging the state two-party system. A movement that offers a real alternative to child poverty, inequality and endless war. A movement that provides a real opposition to the far right – one that doesn't concede ground to divisive rhetoric, but stands by its principles of anti-racism, equality and inclusion.

‘I have no doubt that this movement will eventually run in elections. However, to create a new, centralised party, based around the personality of one person, is to put the cart before the horse. Remember that only once strength is built from below can we challenge those at the top.’

But this counterposition of building locally from the bottom upwards, against organising nationally, in trade unions, in national campaigns, and inside student struggles is terribly one-sided and avoids the crucial role of socialist organisation.

It would be brilliant if the Islington North model could be repeated in every corner of the country, but it cannot. Islington North campaigners have got to where they are because their candidate is the former leader of the Labour Party, and on the basis of

thirty years or more local work, has talked to every local campaign and thousands of local constituents.

Local community and campaigning structures will inevitably face national and international questions. Waiting until Islington-type community power before standing candidates is a very long-term perspective that takes place in the context of an extreme right that will also fight for community allegiance. That is unthinkable in Islington North but a real proposition in northern and midlands 'red wall' towns. Reform UK will also advocate a programme that demagogically appears to defend the NHS and working-class living standards by, for example, opposing the two-child benefit cap.

All the evidence from across Europe and Latin America shows that local support has been built from national electoral alliances of parties, not just from 'the bottom up'. The bold

experiment with community power organised 20 years ago in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre was based on the national and local power of the Workers Party (PT).

But this is not a one-way street. The PT emerged by fusing together diverse political trends, and especially radicalised Christians and the militant trade unionists from the 'ABC' industrial zone in Sao Paulo. This involved local and national political organisation, including revolutionary political trends. Broad left parties in Spain and Greece emerged from mass struggles in the post-2008 austerity period, but they did not do that by simply linking up local struggles.

To argue in the British context that doubtless candidates will stand once the Islington model of local empowerment has been realised, is to put it off to the indefinite future.

In France in the recent elections, the offensive of the far-right

Rassemblement Nationale was repelled in large part by the electoral alliance of the New Popular Front, involving the Communist Party, the Greens, the Socialist Party and crucially France Insoumise (Insurgent France). France Insoumise has not been built by ignoring elections or refusing to build a national political organisation.

Jeremy Corbyn is right to imply that a new left party cannot be built instantly by declaring a new party around one individual. But without some sort of national coordination, a new national party will never be built.

Further Reading

[Global elections, hard right reaches for power](#)

[Creeping fascism, Neil Faulkner et al](#)
[National conservatism](#)

Source: [Anticapitalist Resistance](#)

On the Murder of Children and the Return of Genocide to Banality

17 July 2024, by **Gilbert Achcar**

Indeed, humanitarian organizations sounded the alarm regarding children since the very beginning of the Zionist invasion of the Gaza Strip. On 30 October 2023, the Geneva-based Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor issued a communiqué titled "Number of Gazan children killed in under a month is 10 times higher than that of Ukrainian children killed in entire first year of Russia's ongoing war". The statement explained that "over the course of 24 days of Israeli airstrikes and artillery shelling in the Gaza Strip, 3,457 children were confirmed killed, with over 1,000 more reported missing beneath the debris. Based on data from the United Nations, this figure is more than 10 times the number of children killed in the first year of Russia's war on Ukraine."

The latest figures available from UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) indicate that the number of children killed in the Gaza Strip has now exceeded 14,000, in addition to the number of missing, wounded, forever disabled, and orphans, which is many times that number. As for the number of child victims in Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian invasion in February 2022, according to the same UN source, it amounts to over 600 dead and 1,350 wounded. Thus, the number of children killed in nine months of Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip is 23 times greater than the number of children killed in thirty months of Russian invasion of Ukraine. "Russia's brutality", as Biden called it, seems rather moderate compared to the

Zionist state's brutality, which he supports.

Hardly a day goes by without a report being issued by a media source or a humanitarian organization pointing out the horror of what the Zionists are committing against the Palestinians, not only in the Gaza Strip, where the intensity of killing and destruction exceeds anything witnessed in contemporary history, but also in the West Bank as well as in Israeli jails. Palestinian prisoners are exposed to practices much worse than those committed by the US occupation army in the prison of Abu Ghraib in Iraq, which sparked world outrage in 2004.

We recently saw a blatant example of the brutality of the Zionist army in the

attack that targeted Hamas military leader Mohammed Deif in the Al-Mawasi area, which the Israeli leadership had previously designated as a safe zone for the people of Gaza. The attack claimed the lives of more than ninety Palestinians. The way that massacre took place clearly indicates that the Zionist forces deliberately killed the largest number of people without any distinction between alleged combatants and civilians, including children. This is because the Zionist army fired a first missile at the building in which it thought that Deif was present, then a second at the same building to complete its destruction, then a third in the vicinity of the building targeting those seeking to rescue anyone who remained alive among the rubble, then additional bunker-buster missiles to destroy any tunnels that might exist under the target area.

This determination to kill without any concern for the fate of civilians – children, elderly, women and men – has led to the fact that the proportion of civilians to combatants in Israel's war on those it calls "terrorists" in

Gaza far exceeds their proportion in other wars fought in various theatres under the banner of the "War on Terror" since the beginning of the current century. This, in turn, brings us to an ideological feature characteristic of Zionist thought, which reached its peak in the present, after decades of drift of the Israeli society to the far right leading to the current government, a collection of neo-fascists and neo-Nazis.

This characteristic is shared by Zionism with all types of settler colonialism that seek to seize a land, and hence deny the indigenous people's rights, including their right to life. The moral justification for this supremely immoral project is achieved by denying the humanity of the people whose lands are coveted, downgrading them to the status of subhuman beings who do not deserve to live. This logic backfired into the heart of Europe in the last century with the Nazis, who classified certain categories of Europeans as subhuman beings (Untermenschen), reaching the point of exterminating them.

It is not unlikely that the logic of settler colonialism will return to European heartlands again after its decline following the defeat of the Nazis in the wake of the genocide they committed in the past century, especially since the far right is on the rise again throughout the Global North, east and west. It is one of the cruel ironies of history that those who claim to speak on behalf of the victims of Nazi genocide are the perpetrators of the most horrific campaign of extermination in the history of contemporary settler colonialism. Their behaviour is a source of inspiration for the far right in the contemporary world. They have made genocide banal again, with the complicity of "liberals" who have abandoned the most basic human values in the face of the ongoing genocidal war in Gaza, often under the pretext of compassion for the victims of the Nazi genocide.

Translated from the Arabic original published in Al-Quds al-Arabi on 16 July 2024. Feel free to republish or publish in other languages, with mention of the source.

From the dissolution of the National Assembly to the creation of the New Popular Front

16 July 2024, by **Olivier Besancenot**

Was Macron's decision to dissolve the National Assembly a folly or a political calculation?

You could say it was a mad political calculation. That's what institutional political crises are all about: when there's a major political crisis like this one, centrifugal forces feed on themselves. These forces may know, as Macron does, that they're going up against a wall, but they're going in happily. I don't know whether his calculation is to play on a political crisis that could benefit him now, or to

play the card of cohabitation with the Rassemblement national (RN) that could benefit his camp or himself later.

In any case, the political choice is to dissolve the government now. At the time of the pension reform, we all half imagined that political dissolution was objectively on the cards. It wasn't just the use of 49-3. [3] With the motion of censure, we realised that in reality they did not have a majority, even in Parliament. If he had dissolved the Assembly at that point, it's clear that the political choice and the electoral

result would not have been the same. So there is a political choice on his part: to do it later, in a specific context, where he knows it will favour the far right. Basically, he is making the political choice to put the keys to a large part of the state apparatus in the hands of the RN.

What's your response to the claim that "we've never tried the far right"?

It's beyond me. If you have to try a deadly poison at all costs to be sure it's deadly, that escapes me. On the

other hand, it has already been tried: in the long history, in the short history, in the municipalities... We've seen what it does in terms of censorship, withdrawal of subsidies from cultural associations, associations defending women's rights. In Europe, we know what it's like with the different governments that have implemented the policies we know.

And the long story! You can look at it any way you like, this political current is not quite the same as its ancestors, but it is the heir to a political current and it is guilty of that history. I think that for a long time we underestimated, even on the left, the fact that there is a fascism that is French in the true sense of the word. We kept the idea that fascism in France was a foreign product that was imposed on us at the time of the collaboration, through the Nazi occupation, under the Vichy regime, forgetting that in reality there is a specific type of French fascism, which is probably as old as the French Revolution, or in any case as old as French counter-revolutionary ideas. They are nevertheless deeply rooted in a part of the authoritarian and conservative right.

People have forgotten - or pretended to forget - that political anti-Semitism was born in France with the Dreyfus affair, in the ranks of the nationalist, conservative, not to say monarchist, right. So it has nothing to do with the "Islamist-leftists"! What's more, we've forgotten that the theory of race was first developed in France by Gobineau, as part of France's "republican" colonial history.

These ideas later inspired the Nazi regime. If you look closely, even historically, it was this current, remodelled and recomposed, which took over during the Occupation, and which often anticipated many of the demands that the German occupiers didn't even make of them. This trend had never disappeared, and it is now re-emerging. I think we may be paying for that too.

To talk about more recent history: you were there in 2002, the first time a Le Pen came close to coming to power. What has

changed since then?

What has changed is that part of Le Pen's programme was implemented even before his daughter was elected, the Immigration Law being the latest prime example. And then what's changed is obviously the trivialisation, the de-demonisation taken to extremes, which is even more than de-demonisation: we've reached the ultimate project of the far right, which is to demonise the left. Not just the far left or the radical left, but the entire labour movement.

We're really in a situation that corresponds to the Orwellian aberration of his book 1984, with the slogans of the Ministry of Truth: "War is peace", "Ignorance is strength", "Freedom is slavery"... Today, it's like that: everything is turned on its head. Immigrants, by their very presence, are responsible for racism. Women, through their excessive actions, are responsible for sexism. The unemployed are responsible for unemployment. Capitalists, on the other hand, are responsible for nothing, except possibly for trickle-down, i.e. a form of distribution, and we owe them everything. And, to cap it all, the far right is anti-racist and the left is anti-Semitic. What has changed is the culmination of this radicalisation on the right.

And there's one final point: up until 2002, there was still the culmination of activist work, which had been going on since the end of the 1980s, where young people in particular were being taught, by young people themselves - it wasn't taught in schools - how to fight the far right, on the basis of morality and history. That was 2002. And afterwards, a bit of music began to play on the left, on the theme that you can't fight the far right simply in the name of morality and history. Which is true, but as a result we gave up. We're paying the price. Today, we have generations who say "History is so far away". It's true that the thread is broken. I think we're also paying part of the price.

And in this political landscape, we got rid of Hollande, and now we have to deal with him again. How does that make you feel?

It inspires me to do two things. Firstly, that we have to use violence. We have no choice but to use violence. We're in the Popular Front, which is really something new in terms of our political history. It was far from a foregone conclusion, but an exceptional situation calls for an exceptional response. We're in a long phase of reconstituting a new emancipation movement, with the aim, I believe, of constituting a new organisational pole which is anti-capitalist, internationalist, which doesn't seek to separate itself from the rest of the emancipation movement but to be as useful as possible, and to go beyond the existing organisations, including our own.

In this context, we need to be united and revive the traditions of past generations, far away, who were even more violent than us. For example, in the debates of the Communist International in 1922-1923, at a time when the German revolution was in decline, the German revolutionaries felt that we were no longer riding on a propulsive wave and that we had to restore the proletariat's confidence, one way or another. So there was this proposal for a united front, i.e. German communists addressing German Social Democracy. But in 1922-1923, German Social Democracy was only 2 or 3 years after the assassination of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, and they were responsible for it. So we have to do something dramatic.

And if Hollande is obliged to come back, it also means that, in spite of everything, and this is the paradox, things are tending to go to the left. If you look at the programme that's been adopted, it's not a revolutionary programme, it's not even a radical reformist programme, but hey: to cut a long story short, I think Hollande is more uncomfortable with that programme than Philippe Poutou.

You were behind the creation of the NPA some fifteen years ago. What lessons have you drawn from the NPA's activities over that period?

That we held on, in our own way, but that it didn't work. I'm at a point in my life where, when you're up against the

wall, faced with the situation you're in, you have to admit your mistakes. And so you have to do some introspective work as an activist and politician. Sometimes we were sectarian - well, I was, I think. After that, it's a question not of blaming ourselves but of what it means.

But it's to our credit that we have maintained a strong programmatic and strategic content, in our independence - sometimes a little daring, sometimes a little sectarian - on questions of property, the distribution of wealth, constant and marked internationalism. And then, a certain need for an open Marxism. I think that, in a small way, this has contributed to something, and that we'll need it to develop a new project. I think that our organisations have largely lived on. Now, in July, we're in a phase where the situation is going to change radically, in any case.

Whether the Popular Front wins, whether it's an intermediate situation, or whether the RN comes to power: we're going to have to be active, to continue to act in a period that we hadn't foreseen, in a situation of continuing crisis. We're all going to have to find ways to rise above, to unite. And in this period, your generation has a particular responsibility. We're trying to pass on to you everything we inherited and all the stupid things we did, so that we don't do them again.

A few weeks ago, you had a chat with Jean Batou, about the new anti-fascist and internationalist issues. Why, when history is being made now, are we still interested in discussing, debating and reflecting on the revolutionaries of the last century?

We're living in a period of total crisis and transition between the old world that's dying and the new one that's slow to emerge, to use Gramsci's words. A friend and comrade, Daniel Bensaid, who was a philosopher and a militant, used to say in these situations: "You have to go back to Marx". And I think we need to go back to Marx, understood as an open Marxism that argues with itself, that seeks to renew and reinvent itself.

Trotsky is one of the heirs of the Marxist current, with its errors - there is a part of Trotsky's life and thought that I share, a part that I share less, a part that I am rediscovering. In particular his vision of the rise of fascism and the need for a united workers' front. He wrote some texts in 1931 that were, unfortunately, prophetic, in which he criticised the sectarianism of the leadership of the German Communist Party, which at that time refused to unite with social democracy. This was what we call the Third Period, which lasted from 1928 to 1932-1933, when the CP leadership thought that the main enemy was social democracy and was therefore capable of taking joint action with the Nazis against social-democratic meetings.

He says "no". He says: "Between someone who poisons me in small doses and someone who wants to shoot me in the back, I'm prepared to ally myself with the devil and his grandmother, but without ever tying my hands". It's not a question of adopting models, but I think we need to draw on the great historical references to see what kind of strategic questions we're asking now. Because that's also what we've been dying of: abandoning strategic issues to the far right, which has done its job in its own camp.

You were talking about my generation. If you could warn a young left-wing activist, what would you say is the most worrying danger today?

Those who give advice (laughs). I don't have any advice to give, and you have to be wary of that. Your generation has to make its own experience. The only thing I can say is that it's not a sprint. Activism is a long-distance race. You mustn't exhaust yourself. This is a long-term battle. Activism is about highs and lows, but there are more lows than highs in this case, and it's precisely in the low periods that you need to hold on. Not to hold on for the sake of holding on, but to bounce back. So you have to catch your breath.

And what gives you hope for a better future today?

Young people. The night rallies we've had, with several thousand young people saying "Fuck the Front National", I tell myself that it's not dead. It's not the same waters as 2002, but something is happening. I think that the intuitive revolt of a section of young people, in the suburbs, educated, hard-working, who can't stand injustice and never will, whether it's against sexism, racism, the ecological crisis or fascism, can't be taught.

It's also a long history that creates the conditions that allow some young people to look us in the eye and say: "We're here to turn the tables, so if you're tired, leave us the room". But we mustn't indulge in demagoguery, we need all the different experiences to be able to mingle, to listen to each other, to understand that there is something new to be invented. And that's going to be hard. Whatever happens, it's going to be difficult, so now's the time to hold on. To hold together. You can't decree that, but it's precisely at the ebb that you have to hold on. In July, it won't be the same music. Right now, you can feel the momentum. Even locally, there's some great stuff happening in the campaign.

You've got some crazy things going on, groups of people coming together, people who aren't even organised... The more you look at the political apparatuses, the more you realise that it wouldn't have been a bad idea to keep the left-wing leaders in political confinement until the elections. Just learning to keep quiet for a fortnight is no mean feat. Unfortunately, that's not the case.

The formation of the Popular Front was seen as a bit of a miracle that was no longer expected, following the dissolution of the National Assembly. Of course, the social movement, feminists, trade unionists and so on were involved in the campaign, but don't you think that the popular classes had a rather external relationship with the New Popular Front?

I'd say there are both, it's contradictory as always. A political situation is never chemically pure, and when you're in crisis that's even truer.

On the one hand, it's not a left-wing cartel. We were dependent on that: I'm obliged to say that I was relieved when they came to an agreement in the negotiations of the leaderships - which we never took part in, we weren't invited, and in the end it's not a big deal - because if they hadn't come to an agreement it would have been all over anyway. But at the same time, if that's all it comes down to, it smells of mothballs right from the start.

And from the outset, there was more to it than that. First of all, the collectives said "We support the Popular Front". When Attac does it, when Tsedek does it, when we do it, in reality nobody asks us anything! In spite of everything, there's a logic that forces the parties to know that they've done something, but that it's not NUPES 2. It was a bit like that with pensions: the inter-union coordination set the tempo, the mobilisation went beyond that, but at the same time, it didn't get involved to the point of putting pressure on the coordination and imposing a different timetable for action. So, as always, we're in the middle.

And how do you apply pressure?

It's a bit too early to say, because it all happened very quickly. But I think that all the hard work we've been doing for years, it wasn't spectacular, but people got to know each other. It wasn't easy. I could take a thousand

examples: even the fact that we talk, it's stupid but it's also the translation of that. I'm not saying that we didn't have discussions at the time, but the whole campaign around Adama by Assa, with meetings and assemblies that were often improbable, between neighbourhood activists, trade unionists, LGBTI activists, or even collectives fighting transphobia in the pensions movement, behind trade union marches... Frankly, ten years ago it was more than improbable.

In fact, what I see locally, when Philippe [Poutou] says that there are PS teams campaigning for him in the Aude, is that these are people who have been waiting for just one thing for a long time: to work together. And they couldn't do it, or couldn't do it like this. Here, we're investing in a framework that's certainly shaky, but we're all investing in it. Without illusions, without the idea of keeping quiet: it's not a question of giving a blank cheque to those on the left who are responsible for the situation, because when they were in power they pursued right-wing policies! The opposite has never happened; we've never had a right-wing government that pursued a left-wing policy.

But here's the thing. For us, it was... We're very small now, but it was unanimous to join the Popular Front. We don't realise it, but it's historic for us! We've got a new world ahead of us, one of transition, and it's going to be a complicated one.

The solution lies with young people, so that the older generations, like ours, can give the current generations the chance to experience what it's like and overcome the quarrels and sectarianism. It's not a pious appeal, there are disagreements, and when there are we have to admit them, debate them, even when we know that the debate won't resolve them. But admit that they exist, because there's nothing worse than sweeping it all under the carpet.

That's what the left was all about: either we kill each other or we agree on everything at once. Are you sure the PS is really in favour of retirement at 60? Of course they're still not in favour of retirement at 60. It's an illusion, and it would be counter-productive to pretend otherwise.

In any case, if the Popular Front managed to win, to apply even one tenth of this programme, the world would come down on us! So the question that will immediately arise is: are you going to fall flat on your face or are you going to stand firm?

If you stand your ground, it's the balance of power. And the balance of power, it won't just be the words of this or that best 'prime minister' that will change anything: it will be the real balance of power. And that will shed new light on political discussions on the left, in the light of the class struggle.

Thanks to a massive mobilization of the Left the Far Right cannot control the government in France

11 July 2024, by **Éric Toussaint**

Their objective was not achieved because on 7 July voters of the Left mobilized in favour of candidates of the Nouveau Front Populaire that came together in four days after 9 June when Emmanuel Macron

dissolved the National Assembly following his rout in the European elections. Indeed his bloc had obtained only half of the votes garnered by the Rassemblement National and half of the votes that had

gone to the various parties of the Left, who had competed in scattered fashion.

How can the setback of the Rassemblement national and its

allies be explained?

The main reason for the far Right's setback can be found in the decision made by Left-wing forces after the 9 June European elections to build a united bloc under the name Nouveau Front Populaire (New Popular Front - NFP). This new front of the Left brought together La France Insoumise (LFI), the Socialist Party (PS), the Ecologists (LE), the Communist Party (PCF) and NPA-L'Anticapitaliste, with LFI as driving force. The Socialist Party and others soon understood that they had to join even if a number of senior executives were reluctant and some even refused to join. Unity of the Left was of the essence since the French parliamentary election is a majority election with two rounds. Unlike a proportional election in which alliances could be negotiated later, it was important to propose only one candidate of the Left in each constituency to secure the best possible chance of going through to the second round, and winning.

On media coverage of NFP during the campaign see:

Al Jazeera, 8 July 2024, "[The battle for the future of France is only beginning](#)"

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The Guardian, 3 July 2024
"France's 'hard left' has been demonised - but its agenda is realistic, not radical" by Julia Cagé and Thomas Piketty

-

Arrêt sur Images, 5 July 2024
"[Violences racistes : pas une minutes dans le JT post-législatives](#)" [Not a word in the media about incidents of racist violence between the two election rounds].

The Right and the major media, including public service media that are more and more closely monitored by the government and are favourable to big capital, harshly criticized the Nouveau Front Populaire, claiming that it included parties - namely the LFI and the NPA - that support "terrorism." Many commentators even

pointed to the alleged anti-Semitism of LFI and NPA. The slurs were extremely violent and outright mendacious. Despite this hateful campaign, the NFP managed to agree on a programme and put forward candidates everywhere. The violence was not only verbal, but included physical attacks by the far Right.

Many of the Left's voters were convinced that on this occasion it was necessary to pull together and go into the neighbourhoods, public squares, weekly markets and all places of debate. The awareness of the danger represented by a possible victory for the far Right made it possible for the Left to mobilize in large numbers.

What can be said about the NFP's programme?

[The programme on which the Nouveau Front Populaire stood for election](#) is not anti-capitalist, but it is resolutely anti-neoliberal and pro-working class. It is unambiguously opposed to Macron's policies. It clearly counters the expectations of corporations and the richest 10% of the population. A few of its key measures are: a minimum wage at €1,600 NET, reinstatement of the wealth tax (ISF) cancelled by Macron in 2018, taxes on superprofits, repeal of Emmanuel Macron's pension reform with the aim of reducing the retirement age to 60, repeal of unemployment insurance reforms, automatic indexation of wages to inflation, cancellation of the recent rise in the price of gas on 1 July, a freeze on certain prices, a 32-hour working week "in arduous or night jobs", a more progressive income tax scale (in concrete terms, this would mean a return to a scale with 14 brackets as opposed to the current 5), a moratorium on unnecessary major projects, a move towards completely free schooling and recognition of the State of Palestine.

The NFP's programme is a step back from the programme of the Union de la Gauche (Union of the Left) in France in the early 1980s, but 40 years of the neoliberal offensive have had a profoundly regressive effect.

What were the results of the European elections on 9 June

2024?

The Rassemblement National came in far ahead of any other party, with 31.4% of the vote (over 7.7 million votes), more than double the votes for Emmanuel Macron's list, which obtained just 14.6% (3.6 million votes). In addition, there was another far-Right list featuring Marine Le Pen's niece Marion Maréchal Le Pen and Éric Zemmour. Their list got 5.5% of the vote. There was also a list from the traditional Right, "La droite pour faire entendre la voix de la France en Europe" (the Right to make France's voice heard in Europe), which obtained 7.25% of the vote.

The Left was dispersed during the EU parliamentary elections. The list supported by the Socialist Party (PS) obtained 13.8% of the vote, that of La France Insoumise (LFI) 9.9% and that of the Ecologists (LE) 5.5%. In all, the Left won less than 30%. Voter turnout was low: 51.5%.

In light of the resounding defeat of the presidential camp's list, Macron dissolved the National Assembly and called early elections. The constitution allows the president to continue in office until his term expires in 2027, even if he has to cohabit with a government that opposes him.

What were the results of the first round of the snap legislative elections on 30 June 2024?

The Rassemblement National, which after the EU elections had succeeded in splitting the traditional right-wing party Les Républicains (LR) by forming an alliance with its president, Éric Ciotti, scored 33.22%, better than its score on 9 June. It won 10.6 million votes. The presidential camp obtained only 23% of the vote. The Nouveau Front Populaire (New Popular Front - NFP), which formed immediately in the wake of the European elections, united the majority of the Left and obtained 28% of the vote, not counting the votes won by various left-wing candidates sidelined by the LFI's leadership, as well as PS dissidents and others. The LR, which had expelled its president Éric Ciotti, obtained 6.6%. Voter turnout was very high: 66.7%.

The huge success of the Rassemblement National list and its allies came as a shock. There was a real risk of the far Right running the government (in cohabitation with President Macron). Young people and activists of the Left who began mobilizing on the evening of the European elections on 9 June stepped up their level of activity to avoid the worst happening. Not only is the programme promoted by the Rassemblement National inherently racist, but if the party came to power there would have been an increase in racist acts and attacks by far-right activists and the police, a majority of whom vote for the far Right.

In the minutes following the results of the first round on 30 June, the leadership of La France Insoumise, with Jean-Luc Mélenchon as their spokesperson, followed very quickly by the whole of the Nouveau Front Populaire, announced that in order to beat the far Right in the second round, it would withdraw its NFP candidate in every constituency where the NFP came third and the Rassemblement National came first.

The same was not true of the presidential camp, as a series of Macron allies, and even ministers like Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, said that they would never withdraw in favour of an LFI candidate to beat the far-right RN. The Prime Minister, Gabriel Attal, finally took the initiative of calling for a "republican front" to beat the far Right, but it did not lead to unanimity in the presidential camp or in the rest of the traditional Right.

Only seven days remained in which to avoid a takeover by the far Right. Many intellectuals of the Left, and the overwhelming majority of its social movements and citizens, issued numerous statements and held rallies calling for a "roadblock" against the extreme Right. The CGT labour federation union was very active, as was Sud Solidaires. The leadership of the moderate CFDT federation also got involved.

But at the same time, the majority of commentators with access to the major private and public media continued their attacks on La France Insoumise and the NFP, which

included the NPA (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste), led by Philippe Poutou, which they accused of being "pro-terrorist" and "anti-police". Moreover, the RN continued to be invited on all the media platforms, and many prominent journalists displayed empathy with them, whether actual or prompted by circumstances. The polls predicted victory for the RN. And admittedly, a significant proportion of the popular classes and the traditional working class had voted for the RN and were going to do so again. Nor was there any guarantee that, in order to block the far Right, left-wing voters would be prepared to vote for a candidate from the presidential camp or from the rest of the Right, whose actions had in fact encouraged the rise of the RN and who had passed anti-immigrant laws with the RN's support. Similarly, there was no guarantee that voters on the Right would vote for an LFI or far-left candidate to prevent the election of a candidate from the RN. In the working class camp, the desire to inflict another defeat on Macron's camp might well continue to take the form of a vote for the RN and not only for the NFP.

What were the results of the second round of legislative elections on 7 July?

- The big winner of the second round was the Nouveau Front Populaire, which won 182 legislative seats, plus 14 other MPs from various parties of the Left, for a total of 196 seats. In the interest of simplicity we can round the figure up to 200.

- The minority presidential camp was second with 168 MPs, a loss of 95 seats.

- In the end, the far-right camp won 143 seats (126 for the Rassemblement National and 17 for its allies, including Éric Ciotti and the other LR members who followed him and who were also expelled from the party). The RN gained 37 seats compared to 2022.

- Les Républicains (LR), the traditional right-wing party which is in fact closer to the rhetoric of the far Right, won 45 seats (a loss of around twenty seats compared to 2022).

Within the New Popular Front bloc, how is the weight of the different political forces

distributed?

La France Insoumise was first with 74 seats (compared with 75 in 2022), followed by the Socialist Party with 59 seats (up sharply compared to its poor result in 2022, when it won just 31 seats), the Ecologists with 28 seats (compared with 23 in 2022) and the Communists (PCF) with 9 parliamentary seats (whereas with its allies in 2022 it had 22). [4] A further 12 NFP MPs are not members of any of the parties mentioned above. The NPA, whose candidate was Philippe Poutou in the Aude department, won no seats.

Within the NFP, the LFI members are clearly the farthest on the left. There are also a few MPs of the Left who had been excluded from the official NFP lists by the LFI leadership and who were still elected on 7 July.

But within the NFP, even though the LFI is the leading force, the PS has made significant gains. What effect will that have?

It is important to consider what is ahead in the light of the gains made by the PS, because that party bears heavy responsibility for the social disaster and the disillusionment of the past ten years (and also the period that preceded). One of the new PS MPs is former president François Hollande, who personifies those heavy negative responsibilities. Recall that he was elected president in 2012 against the incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy on the promise to put an end to neoliberal policies. He had said that "his enemy was Finance." But in fact his action was only a continuation of those of the presidents of the Right who preceded him and of their neoliberal policies. He made gift after gift to the major banks, to "Finance" and to the wealthiest segment of the population. It was Hollande who recruited Emmanuel Macron into his government from the Rothschild bank. In 2015, when the Greek people voted Syriza (a coalition of the radical Left) to power, François Hollande and his government joined with Angela Merkel's rightist government and with the Troika [5] to make sure that austerity policies were kept in place, against the will of Greece's people.

In the end, in the 2017 elections that brought Macron to the presidency, the PS suffered a crushing political defeat. The party lost 286 legislative seats and was left with only 45 MPs. In terms of votes, in the second round of the 2017 legislative elections the PS took only 7.5% of the vote, whereas the Macron bloc won 49.1% of the vote and 349 seats. In the 2022 legislative election the PS lost even more seats and was left with only 31. At that time it was part of the NUPES coalition, formed at the initiative of LFI, which won a total of 151 seats, 75 of which were for Jean-Luc Mélenchon's LFI itself.

By comparison the 2024 results are a comeback for the PS, since it now has 59 seats.

Regarding the appointment of the prime minister, there is talk of an "unwritten rule" in the constitution of the Fifth Republic. What is it?

Normally, according to unwritten rule and customary practice under the Fifth Republic, the president appoints a prime minister from among the members of the bloc who came in first in the legislative elections. In this case the Nouveau Front Populaire came in first, and within the NFP coalition La France Insoumise was by far the leading political group. Therefore a member of LFI should become prime minister.

But that is precisely where all kinds of manoeuvres can take place.

Big capital wants to avoid having a member of LFI lead the government and determine the agenda. From their point of view, the lesser evil would be for a member of the Socialists to be appointed PM, which would provide more guarantees that the privileges of the wealthiest 1% and the major private corporations would be preserved. So it is more than obvious that the leaders of the Macron bloc want to split off the NFP and seek a compromise with the political forces that are closer to them and more "responsible" - meaning the PS and perhaps certain Ecologists.

Other possible developments from other quarters will also need to be

taken into account.

Under these conditions, since the NFP did not win an absolute majority in the Assemblée, it would be well advised not to take on governmental responsibilities, since the situation will not allow it to apply its programme. Their entering the government could cause new divisions and disappointments which could contribute further to abstention or to more votes for the RN. It is better to make a priority of building a social and political front on a foundation of unity in the popular neighbourhoods, in workplaces, etc. A social and political front capable of empowering mobilizations to build a favourable balance of power and use it to win victories, and in any case to push back against the offensive of the Right and Far Right.

Has the fact that France has already seen major social mobilizations in recent years, in particular against the (counter-) reform of retirement in 2022-2023, but also against police violence against racialized persons, played a role in the failure of the Rassemblement National?

There's no doubt that the fact that in recent years hundreds of thousands and even millions of people have mobilized against Macron's anti-social, anti-immigrant and repressive policies has helped to create a climate conducive to fighting back against the danger of the far Right.

During the major social mobilizations that have lasted over time without achieving victory, there has not only been frustration and disillusionment; an ability to debate, to organize protests collectively and to develop a collective spirit has also developed. This did not affect the whole population, which explains the real success of the RN, which won votes in some sections of the working classes, particularly in rural areas and in urban areas most affected by deindustrialisation, as is the case in Northern France. In most urban areas, there is greater resistance to the penetration of the ideas of the RN, the far Right and the Right in general. This is also clearly the case in urban areas with a high proportion of

racialized persons. The fact that LFI and other social forces were not afraid to express their deep solidarity with the Palestinian people and their rejection of racist and anti-immigrant policies convinced sectors of the population to vote for the NFP and against the RN as well as against Macron and the traditional Right.

Is the issue of public debt returning to the centre of the debate?

In all the statements from the Right and the Macronist camp, in a multitude of comments in the media, the argument of the unsustainable level reached by the public debt and the need for new budgetary austerity is constantly recurring. They stress the need to comply with the European Commission's injunctions to reduce the public deficit. The supposed threat posed by the arrival of the Left in government and the supposed dangers in the NFP's programme is constantly being brandished, along with the idea that any implementation of that programme would cause markets to panic, the cost of debt to soar and capital to flee. In other words, the same refrain we hear every time the Left is on the doorstep of government; and the aim is not only to frighten public opinion but also to convince the Left's representatives to abandon any desire not to continue bowing to the dictatorship of the markets and therefore of big business.

In the battle of ideas, it will be important to explain that governments, the Commission and the ECB were willing to increase public debt in order to finance expenditures in the face of the Coronavirus pandemic and the economic and social crisis that it exacerbated. The Macron government and European leaders have been unwilling to tax the super-profits of the big pharmaceutical companies - in particular vaccines producers - which have made scandalous profits at the expense of society. The same goes for retail companies - particularly those specializing in online sales and IT services - which have also made huge profits. Then, when gas prices rocketed in the wake of Russia's offensive in Ukraine, Macron's government and those of other

countries were unwilling to control energy prices and freeze them, allowing fossil fuel and energy companies to also make huge profits at the expense of society. Lastly, when food prices soared as a result of the war in Ukraine and speculation on cereals, cereal companies made super-profits. Just like the major retail chains, which have increased retail food prices disproportionately and abusively, causing a sharp rise in inflation and a loss of purchasing power for the working classes. The Macron government has refused to impose extraordinary taxes on their profits. Arms production companies are also reaping yet more profits from the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, with the full support of leaders of the NATO member countries.

Conclusion

In this situation, and with this refusal to levy taxes on the companies that benefited from the crisis and on the richest segment of the population, the States have increasingly resorted to debt financing instead of financing themselves via tax revenues, except for those from indirect taxes on consumption (Value Added Tax - VAT), which are extremely damaging for the vast majority of the population and in particular for the lowest income sectors.

In the battle of ideas, we need to show that for these reasons, a large part of the public debt is illegitimate and must be audited and cancelled.

The migration policies of European leaders and national governments will

also be hardened, and human-rights abuses will increase. Human-rights violations will increase, despite denunciations by the European Court of Human Rights and human rights associations. We will need to mobilize. If a powerful social and political front can be put in place from the base to the summit, resistance is possible and victories can be won.

The climate inaction of President Macron and the European institutions will also worsen. A powerful social movement is indispensable for the adoption of genuine measures to combat the environmental crisis. Rearmament will accelerate. We must also succeed in launching a movement to oppose it.

We must also mobilize in defence of the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ persons.

The rhetoric of the far Right and policies that support it are likely to continue to spread.

As a result, the antifascist struggle and protest actions against the rise of the Far Right will become increasingly important.

Post scriptum:

In the EU parliament, a new legislative group has just been formed, called "[Patriots for Europe](#)," and will be headed by [Jordan Bardella](#). It includes, on the one hand, MEPs from the party of Hungarian President Viktor Orbán and of the two far-right Czech parties [Ano](#) and [Oath and Motorists](#), who number 20, and the

former EU Parliament group led by Marine Le Pen, Identity and Democracy, which had 58 MEPs, plus the 6 members from Spain's Vox, who have left the other far-right parliamentary group ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists), led by Italian PM Giorgia Meloni. The new "Patriots for Europe" group will total 84 MEPs. The ECR group led by Meloni has been reduced with the exit of the Vox members and now totals 78 seats. The updated breakdown of legislative groups can be seen on the EU Parliament's Web site at: <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/tools/comparative-tool/>

During the parliamentary term that has just ended, the two far-right groups in the European Parliament totalled 118, whereas in the new EP, the two parliamentary groups have 162 members, to which should be added the 15 members of the German AfD, who are not currently part of any group. Breakdown of the Patriots for Europe EP group in order of importance: — Rassemblement national: 30; — Fidesz-KDNP: 11; — Lega: 8; — ANO: 7 — FPÖ: 6; — Vox: 6; — PVV: 6; — Vlaams Belang: 3; — Oath and Motorists: 2; — Chega: 2; — Danish People's Party: 1; — Latvia First: 1; — Voice of Reason: 1

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Translated by Snake Arbusto and Christine Pagnouille.

Source [CADTM](#).

A surprise victory and a reprieve from the RN

10 July 2024, by [Léon Crémieux](#)

This is a spectacular reversal of the situation meaning we have gone from the threat of a far-right stranglehold on the state apparatus to a relative left-wing majority in the Assembly, elected on a programme of rupture with neoliberal policies. This reversal

cannot be understood without looking at the massive mobilisation in recent weeks of the activist forces of the workers' and democratic movement in the face of the far right, leading first to the formation of this New Popular Front (with [la France insoumise](#) (LFI),

[Europe Ecologie Les Verts](#) (EELV), the [Socialist Party](#) (PS), the [Communist Party](#) (PCF) and others including the [Nouveau parti anticapitaliste](#) (NPA)), then to a major mobilisation at the ballot box and a very broadly supported vote to reject the RN.

Following on from its 31.34% result in the European elections on 9 June, the RN obtained more than 33% of the vote in the first round of legislative elections on 30 June, and everything suggested that it would obtain a very large number of deputies in the second round, with all the polls giving it well over 200 deputies and possibly even an absolute majority of 289 seats.

In France, MPs are elected in a first-past-the-post system in the country's 577 constituencies. Basically, if no candidate obtains 50% of the votes cast in the 1st round, there is a second round the following Sunday, in which candidates who obtained more than 12.5% of the votes cast in the 1st round may stand. Candidates may also withdraw spontaneously within two days of the 1st round. 76 M.P.s were elected in the 1st round. Of the remaining 501 constituencies, only 191 were automatically decided, as the other candidates fell below the 12.5% threshold. But three or even four candidates remained in the running in 310 other constituencies. The RN and its allies from Les Républicains (around Éric Ciotti, President of the LR) had won 39 seats in the 1st round and were leading in the 260 remaining constituencies.

There was therefore a good chance that, in the event of a three-way tie, the RN would win a large majority of these seats. On Sunday evening, the Nouveau Front populaire announced in a single voice that it was withdrawing its candidates wherever it was in third place, to prevent the election of far-right candidates. Throughout Sunday evening and Monday, the Macronist camp dithered, explicitly refusing to call for a barrage against the Rassemblement National, with several voices, such as that of former Prime Minister Édouard Philippe and National Assembly President Yaël Braun Pivet, maintaining a parallel rejection of the RN and LFI. Finally, on Tuesday evening, under pressure, 81 of the 95 third-placed Ensemble candidates withdrew, bringing the total number of withdrawals against the RN to 221.

Above all, in the days following the 1st round, there was a clear upsurge of activist forces, trade unions and

associations from the workers' and democratic movement, to block the RN and prevent it from taking power. This has manifested itself in appeals, demonstrations and, particularly on social networks, a spectacular denunciation of the reality of the RN, a far-right force that has its roots in French fascist currents and, like its European equivalents in the "Identity and Democracy" group, is developing a racist policy that undermines social and democratic rights. [6]

RN activists and officials were a little too quick to relax between the two rounds, confident of victory, and the veneer of respectability they had been brushing for months in the media began to crack. Racist comments and attacks increased in towns and neighbourhoods, and the RN declared that it would wage its first battle against French citizens with dual nationality, saying that they were ineligible to hold office. For example, Hollande's former education minister, Najat Vallot-Belkacem, should never have held the post in the first place, in their view, as she is Franco-Moroccan. Similarly, social networks and independent media have revealed the reality of dozens of RN candidates displaying Nazi symbols, responsible for violent actions or making openly racist comments.

In just a few days, Gabriel Attal, the outgoing Prime Minister, had to make a 180° turn. After stigmatising the NFP, criminalising la France insoumise as "anti-Semites refusing to call Hamas terrorists", after calling for a rejection of "the extremes", he had to clearly call for the RN candidates and the "threat of the far right" to be defeated everywhere.

The reality of the RN, a force that represents a danger not only to the rights and security of the racialised working classes, but also to the rights and security of women, LGBTQ+ people, democratic freedoms and all social rights, became clear. The profound anti-Semitic and anti-social nature of the RN was forcefully denounced, breaking with a climate of resignation and benevolence distilled in particular by the 24-hour news media in the hands of a few French billionaires.

If Macron and his candidates had appeared to be the only alternative to the RN, this groundswell would never have happened. Moreover, Macron was already positioning himself as the "heroic" president standing up to a government of the RN after having himself created the possibility of such an accession. The dynamic of rejection was made possible by the existence of the NFP, which emerged as an alternative to the RN, and the consolidation of the NFP was itself made possible by the dynamic of the social movement, particularly the CGT trade union federation. On the evening of the announcement of the early parliamentary elections, Sophie Binet, Secretary of the CGT, called for the creation of a popular front against the extreme right. This social mobilisation was reflected in an inter-union joint call from the CGT, CFDT, FSU, Solidaires and UNSA unions for people to vote against the far right.

The movement to vote against the RN candidates on 7 July exceeded all the forecasts and opinion polls, with withdrawals not leading to a drop in turnout and vote transfers largely to the detriment of the RN. The far right is still massively rejected in the country, and a majority of voters were not prepared to let them come to political power.

But even down to 143 MPs, the RN bloc nevertheless represents a very significant increase for this party, by more than 50 MPs, which is below its electoral weight, having only 25% of the seats after having obtained 33% of the vote.

The NFP is therefore the leading group in the National Assembly and together with the various left-wing parties represents around 190 seats. Nothing is settled, however.

The NFP has a legitimate claim to the post of Prime Minister, as the President of the Republic must, in accordance with institutional practice since 1958, appoint a representative of the group that came out on top in the legislative elections. This should not be open to challenge but, as always, Macron does not want to acknowledge his political failures, arguing that the NFP does not have an absolute majority in the Assembly,

with the left having only 190 seats. Yet he himself has governed since June 2022 with a relative majority of 250 seats, imposing his policies with decrees and 49-3 articles that avoid a vote in the Assembly. [7]

The Macronists would therefore like to stand in the way of the NFP by acting as if they themselves had a majority, by seeking to build, ex nihilo, out of odds and ends, a new fictitious coalition, with variable geometry according to different hypotheses put forward by the leaders of the Macronist party, Ensemble - an alliance of Ensemble (163 seats) with the small group of the LR (Les Républicains, 66 seats), or also the hypothesis of a centre-right and left front without LFI, with socialists and ecologists, allied with the Macronists.

Clearly, Macron is currently blocked in the National Assembly, but there is also a general seizure, due to the institutional functioning of the French Fifth Republic, created to avoid parliamentary coalitions and to weld majority camps around the president, based on the single-member constituency ballot. Since 1958, the Gaullist system has rejected the parliamentary alliances with which the Fourth Republic functioned, imposing majorities built around the presidential party. Then, from 1986 onwards, the system had to evolve, accepting "cohabitations" between a left-wing or right-wing president and opposing parliamentary majorities. But the system has never allowed coalitions formed by several parties negotiating around a government programme, relegating the President of the Republic to a secondary role. Moreover, Macron still imagines organising a pseudo majority in which he would remain the conductor of the orchestra. On Monday morning, he reappointed Gabriel Attal as Prime Minister. Having lost nearly 100 seats, a loss that would have been much greater without the carryover of votes from the left in the second round, Macron would like to appear victorious in these elections without acknowledging his own defeat. We'll see how this tug-of-war plays out in the days ahead.

The New Popular Front resists

Until now, the NFP parties have resisted the centrifugal forces that led to the break-up of the NUPES alliance a year ago. This is the result of pressure from the social movement and the threat from the RN. Despite all the efforts of the media devoted to Macron's regime, the representatives of the four parties forming the backbone of the coalition have been speaking with one voice for the last fortnight and avoiding any discordant initiatives. Clearly, in the coming days, maximum pressure is going to be brought to bear on the leaders of the PS, EELV and even the PCF, and on figures from LFI such as François Ruffin, to try to break this front.

Until now, the leaders of both the PS and EELV have understood that giving in to the siren calls of social liberalism or a dubious agreement with Macron would mean falling back into the ruts that made the far right flourish and led to the crisis of certain Green parties at the European level.

François Hollande's presence as an NFP deputy has not changed the nature of this. Without being a programme for breaking with capitalism, the NFP programme focuses on social demands on wages, prices and public services, in particular, which are an extension of the mobilisations of recent years and correspond to the demands of the social movement and the needs of the popular classes in the face of the damage caused by neoliberal capitalism. This is what the vast majority of the components of this social and trade union movement have understood, even its most radical components, and it is also the meaning given by the NPA to its participation in the NFP, with the candidacy of Philippe Poutou in the Aude. For reasons of identity, groups like Lutte ouvrière, the POID, Révolution permanente and the NPAR have placed themselves on the margins of the movement in recent weeks, but this did not correspond to a widespread posture in activist circles, even radical circles who understood the urgency and did not

mix up the stages. This was the case, for example, with the position of the Union communiste libertaire.

The NFP said that if it were able to form a government, its first decisions would be to raise the minimum wage (SMIC) from 1400 to 1600 euros net, increase civil servants' wages by 10%, index wages to prices, repeal the pension reform and increased retirement age of 64 imposed by Macron a year ago, introduce a freeze on essential prices, and increase housing benefit by 10%. This would obviously be a positive step.

No one can predict what the weeks ahead will bring in terms of government or new twists and turns.

On the other hand, certain points are important, starting with the maintenance of the Popular Front as a unified political coalition around a political project and a programme to break with the system, even if this programme is limited in its proposals to challenge the system (nothing, among other things, about public ownership of key sectors of the economy). Similarly, there will be no social advances and no resistance to all the blockages that will be put in place by the neoliberal forces if the NFP does not extend beyond the electoral framework to a rally, a political front in the towns and neighbourhoods, particularly where the RN has succeeded in deceiving the popular classes by claiming to be the defender of their living conditions.

The social movements will also have to continue to play a direct political role and help build a common front of political and social forces capable of thwarting the RN's advance. Of course, the RN's advance has been halted in the Assembly, but that doesn't mean that its influence in society has diminished. Anti-fascist action, anti-racist mobilisation and denunciation of the real nature of the RN are essential in the months ahead, but uprooting the RN from its popular base will require a political and social project based on social needs to be built, heard and organised to combat the ideas of neoliberal capitalism and the neoliberal, security-oriented and racist policies on which the far right thrives in France and Europe. If an

anti-neoliberal, anti-capitalist
alternative does not make itself heard

among the popular classes, there will
be no lasting barrier to the
Rassemblement national.

9 July 2024

A Labour landslide?

9 July 2024, by **Terry Conway**

But while Labour's Sir Keir Starmer claims a landslide the reality is different if you look at votes cast. His left-wing predecessor Jeremy Corbyn, whom Starmer detests, motivated more people to vote Labour than he did. Turn out at this election was low. This was an election the Tories lost rather than one Starmer won.

Total Labour votes in last three General Elections

2017 (Corbyn)	12 877 918
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2029 (Corbyn)	10 269 051
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2024 (Starmer)	9 634 399
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And that matters because there will be challenges to the new Prime Minister, even electorally. Not only was Corbyn, banned by Starmer from standing as a Labour candidate, re-elected as an independent but four other independents standing on a pro-Palestinian platform also defeated their Labour opponents. It will particularly rankle that one of the scalps that was taken here was that of arch-Starmerite and shadow cabinet member Jonathan Ashworth, deeply implicated in the witch-hunt against the left. And the fact that the even more dangerously neoliberal MP Wes Streeting, predictably appointed as Health Secretary, came within 500 votes of losing his seat to Leanne Mohamed, a British Palestinian

woman, leaves no room for complacency. We should also note that the Green Party - which while it has weaknesses is definitely well to the left of Labour under Starmer, went from a single MP to four. Then there are a small number of reliable left MPs who did manage to stand for Labour, not by any means least Diane Abbott, the first Black woman to be elected to Westminster. Starmer attempted to block her from standing but was forced to back down by a huge campaign in her support.

And it is not only from the left that there will be tests for the new Prime Minister. Nigel Farage, the leader of the far right party Reform finally won a seat in parliament at his eighth attempt - and is joined by four other MPs. And what is as much of a concern to anyone worried about the shift to the right in the centre of British politics, they came second in many other places. As good news from France about the electoral defeat of the National Rally (Rassemblement National) percolates across the airwaves, the fear is that it is not only the Tories who are responding to their growth by accommodating to their ideas, but the new government itself.

It is true that Starmer has said that the deeply reactionary scheme to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda is dead - but only because he argues it would not be effective. Labour's rhetoric on migration is within the same ideological framework as

Reform, the Tories and indeed the French NR - that migrants are a 'problem' that need to be managed, rather than human beings fleeing war, poverty and climate chaos that are created by the driving search for profit and for power regardless of the cost to others.

And migration is not the only policy on which the new government needs to be challenged. Public services are in crisis after a decade and more of austerity and living standards have fallen disastrously both for those in and out of employment. But Labour's insistence to religiously stick to spending limits will do nothing to change any of this meaning that it is unlikely there will be much of a honeymoon period before unions and campaigners begin to organise systematically to demand change.

A similar pattern may well be repeated on other key questions from climate - where Labour has significantly diluted earlier promises, to the National Health Service where they want to deepen private sector involvement and many more areas than there is scope to explore in this article. Meanwhile the genocide in Gaza continues and the Palestine solidarity movement, despite both post-election exhaustion and appalling weather, has made it clear it intends to keep the pressure up on this government as much as on the last.

7 July 2024

The far right has been pushed back by popular mobilization - now we must implement the programme of the New Popular Front

8 July 2024, by **NPA - Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste**

This is already a victory for the New Popular Front, which was made possible by the rallying of the entire left - political parties, trade unions and campaigning groups - , but also and above all by the grassroots mobilization of large sectors of the working classes, in particular racialized people and young people, who committed themselves everywhere to blocking the RN. This made it possible for a very large number of New Popular Front MPs (including a relative majority for LFI) to be elected to the National Assembly on the basis of a programme that breaks not only with Macronism in the service of the ultra-rich, but also with the liberal left of the Hollande mandate, which had followed the policies of the right.

The defeat of the RN should not hide the fact that it has increased its number of MPs very significantly and remains a threat to racialized people, social rights and democratic freedoms. Nor should it obscure the defeat of the

Macronists, who lost a third of their seats. If they still have so many MPs, they owe it only to left-wing voters, who largely switched to them in the second round to block the RN. This blocking vote in no way changes the electoral results: in both the European and legislative elections, Macron and Attal were clearly disowned and therefore no longer have any legitimacy to claim to lead the country. Macron now has no option but to submit to the will of the people and allow a left-wing government to implement the programme of the New Popular Front, which now has the legitimacy of the ballot box. Otherwise, he must leave.

This rejection is also a rejection of the Fifth Republic and its authoritarian and undemocratic institutions. The popular mobilization, marked by a turnout unprecedented in decades, also raises the need to move towards a Constituent Assembly, for a genuine democracy of the majority.

From now on, the commitments made must be honoured, and all the

emergency measures set out in the New Popular Front programme must be applied, starting with the repeal of the pension and unemployment insurance reforms.

This can only happen if the popular momentum is maintained and extended. That means building New Popular Front collectives at grassroots level, open to everyone, which can help to amplify the movement and build mobilizations and strikes over the coming months. No government of national unity can respond to the aspirations expressed in the ballot boxes today. We must remain united to act, to debate and to map out an emancipatory perspective that will push back the far right in the long term, around a left that fights and breaks from the system, a left that can radically transform this society!

Montreuil, Sunday 7 July 2024

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

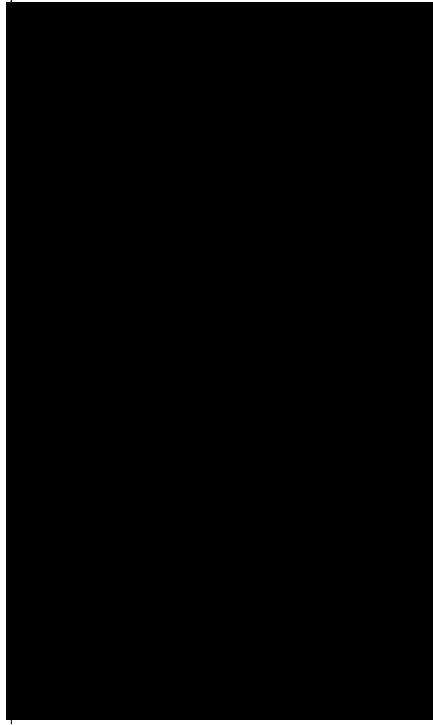
U.S. Supreme Court Decision Makes the President a Virtual King

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

The United States Supreme Court, in a six to three decision, ruled on July 1 that U.S. presidents enjoy immunity in their official acts, complete immunity

in their core presidential duties and presumptive immunity in other official acts. Exactly what constitutes unofficial or personal acts is left open

to interpretation by the courts in the future. Justice Sonia Sotomayor in a powerful and passionate dissenting opinion wrote:



She concluded her statement, "the President is now a king above the law."

It was Trump who brought the case to the court claiming immunity from indictments brought against him for his role in the January 6, 2021 insurrection and attempted coup. The decision means that both that case

and another case against Trump for mishandling official documents will be delayed until after the presidential election, since their will have to be hearings in both cases about what can be considered official acts or unofficial acts.

Trump, who had always claimed "absolute immunity," praised the court's decision calling it a "big win for the Constitution," and he immediately demanded that all court cases against him be closed. The judge in the documents case has already paused proceedings.

The Court's decision came shortly after Biden's disastrous performance in the first presidential candidates' debate with Trump on June 27, a debacle that caused panic in the Democratic Party. Since then Trump has gained in the polls while several Democratic congressional representatives have called on Biden to step down. But while party leaders, donors, and advisors hold meetings, they have not been able to come to a decision about replacing Biden with another presidential candidate. Though as of now (July 7) Biden has said he is staying in the race.

The Progressive Caucus and the

Squad, which stand on the left of the Democratic Party, have kept quiet about Biden and the question of replacing him, fearing retribution. Then too the Squad was recently weakened by the defeat of Jamaal Bowman in his bid for reelection to the House.

The Democratic Socialist of America issued a statement saying, "Tell the Democratic Party leadership that Biden must step aside!" which echoed many mainstream and progressive publications, but the socialist left has no weight in these matters.

If the Democratic Party quickly replaces Biden with another candidate at the party's national convention in Chicago from August 19 to 22 there is still a chance that Trump could be stopped. Maybe.

With summer here, some people on vacation and 130 million sweltering under extreme and dangerous heat caused by global warming the beaches are full, the streets are quiet, and the movements have for the moment subsided. At the moment things look very bleak.

7 July 2024

After the Landslide: Resistance and Realignment

6 July 2024, by **Anti*Capitalist Resistance**

1 - The overwhelming majority of people will be glad to see the humiliation and annihilation of the Tories. They have lost the greatest number of seats in their history. Conservative governments have given us 14 years of misrule, corruption, and dishonesty. Cameron and the Lib Dems' austerity ended or devastated the lives of millions. In 2010 there were 35 foodbanks; in 2024 there are 3,572. Our health service, education, local services, utilities, and much else has been starved of vital funds or

pillaged for private gain. Our rivers and seas stink and are unfit for swimming while water company shareholders have been lavishly rewarded. Johnson's callous disregard for public health resulted in thousands of needless Covid deaths. Rules were imposed on us and not followed by the government. He gave millions to Tory cronies to provide unsuitable PPE. Liz Truss's extreme neo-liberal budget led to millions suffering massive mortgage rises. Getting Brexit done has hit growth hard and stopped European

freedom of movement. On Sunak's watch, energy prices have soared and we have experienced the worst cost of living crisis for decades. The demonisation of migrants, asylum seekers, and trans people has been stepped up. We can at least savour for a moment the political defeat of the politicians responsible for it all. Truss, Shapps, Mordaunt, Gullis, Rees-Mogg, Jenkyns and other ministers are all gone. Sunak has suffered a reverse 2019, this time the Farage party damaged the Tories, not Labour.

2 - Starmer's new government has been welcomed by big business. The Economist, the Financial Times, and the Murdoch press have supported Labour at this election. When Starmer said he changed the party so that he could change the country he was half truthful. One sure way to get into power is to destroy any possible left challenge to the power of the capitalist class who really runs things. Yes, he changed his party but his new partnership with capital for 'wealth creation' will not change the country for the many. It will help streamline profit-making for the few. Public money will be lavished on business to encourage 'growth' that will supposedly magically trickle down to improve wages and social spending. Corporate staff have already been embedded throughout his cabinet team to ensure this vision will be implemented.

3 - Labour's big election victory follows the vicious counterattack of the Labour Party's right and centre against any hint of a moderate left challenge to the power of capital. Starmer's hold over the workers' movement has been strengthened. Any re-run of a Corbyn-like left majority inside Labour is dead in the water - and will be for the foreseeable future. For a while, the new government will probably enjoy a honeymoon period in which it may be difficult for tensions or conflicts with the unions or the left to emerge.

4 - However, this result is a Conservative collapse as much as a Labour win. One journalist has correctly called it a 'loveless landslide'. The unfair First Past the Post system massively distorts the degree of Labour's triumph. Yesterday it got 9.6 million votes and around 34% of the vote. The Corbyn party he claimed was preventing any electoral victory got 13 million votes and 40% of the vote in 2017 and 10 million and 32% in a 2019 election that was distorted by Brexit and the de facto Johnson/Farage electoral coalition. In Cymru, there was little enthusiasm for Starmer. In fact, despite winning 27 out of 32 seats, Labour received nearly 150,000 fewer votes than in 2019 when Jeremy Corbyn was leader. In the poorest communities, such as Ely and Caerau, the turnout was only

23%. Everyone has noted the lack of enthusiasm for the Starmer project. Turnout is down seven percentage points on 2019 at around 60%. Workers' struggles are more likely to develop in this climate where there is not a strong identity with the government. There is less enthusiasm than with Blair in 1997. However, this new government has already indicated that it will not pay public sector workers a decent wage, nor will it raise taxes on the rich to pay for Health, Education, Social Care, or local council spending needs. It is very likely that workers will strike against this government, and many others will campaign against the limits of its programme. It is unlikely to break with US imperialism with regard to Israel's apartheid state. Unlike Spain and Ireland, it will not recognise the Palestine state now. The significant vote to Labour's left shows there is potential for resistance to its moderate policies.

5 - We must support every struggle or resistance to the policies of this social-liberal government. We do not recognise any honeymoon. To start with we demand the immediate implementation of its very limited programme with no further backtracking - increased rights for workers from day one, the progressive taxes they have proposed on private schools and non-doms; ditching the Rwanda project, its measures for education, health, and the environment.

6 - But this is just the starting point for the workers' movement to force the government to take much more radical measures - extending labour rights by abolishing all of Thatcher's repressive legislation; a wealth tax and increased capital gains tax to pay for our NHS, education, and local services; taking the energy and utility companies into common ownership and using any surplus generated to develop a much more ambitious energy transition plan to tackle the climate and ecological crises in ways that ensure the polluters pay; removing the two-child cap and other benefit caps immediately and strengthening the 2010 Equality Act to better protect the oppressed (including trans people) while ditching the repressive Public Order laws.

These are just a few examples, but such proposals go alongside the mobilisation of workers in these sectors to draw up action plans. We do not just put pressure on Labour but try and develop independent self-organisation on all these issues.

7 - Yesterday's general election results show that up to 3 million voted to the left of Labour, either for a Green manifesto more radical than Labour's or for left independents or candidates challenging Labour on Palestine. The Greens alone got 6.8% (up by 4), nearly 2 million votes, and now have 4 MPs. Independent pro-Gaza candidates won four seats and ran Labour close in seats like Wes Streeting's in Ilford North. Andrew Feinstein got over 8,000 votes in Starmer's constituency, Faiza Shaheen in Chingford got 25%, and would have won if Labour had not split the vote against Duncan Smith. Corbyn, in the end, won comfortably. We have never seen so many independents in parliament. A weakened left still remains inside Labour like the Grassroots Alliance, Momentum, and the Socialist Campaign Group. These thousands of activists inside and outside Labour provide the basis of a more structured network or movement of ecosocialist and climate activists who are prepared to resist Starmer's failure to put forward the change we need. The direct action current of the green movement such as Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion occupy this political space too. The greater-than-expected performance of all these forces provides us with some hope that a triumphant Starmer government will not steam ahead without any opposition. At the beginning of the campaign, he wanted to dump Britain's first black woman MP. He was stopped by a grassroots campaign linking up with Left MPs, unions, and the world of culture. There is no reason that such alliances cannot be constructed on other issues. The big majority may make it easier for MPs to defy the Labour leadership - their rebellions will not bring down the government. Every commentator and poll have pointed to both a very strong desire to get rid of the Tories but combined with little enthusiasm for Starmer and his project. So people may be willing to challenge the

government much sooner than we may imagine. Even the big success of the Lib Dems, up to 71 seats, partly reflects a desire to properly fund health and social care which goes beyond Labour's limited spending plans.

8 - Farage's racist Reform party was, after Starmer, the surprise winner of the night. It has 4 seats and over 4 million votes. The score is over 3 points better than its previous high point in 2015. Reform came second in hundreds of seats, including in some Labour ones. Farage's main message after the vote was that he aimed to overtake the Tory party and become the main opposition to Labour. He is in a position to play a role in the realignment of right-wing politics, either through a reverse takeover of the Tory party or through a new movement that will confront traditional Toryism and win over some of its base and MPs. This process has already started. It is also a threat to the Starmer government. Farage has said he wants to be the real opposition leading mass protests. Given the small

number of his MPs relative to the millions of votes he is in a good place to exploit the frustrations of his base who feel alienated from the political process. Labour, for narrow electoral reasons, did not challenge Farage, thinking he would wound the Tories more than Labour. Starmer even withdrew its candidate from the battle in Clacton. Labour, as much as the Tories, bear responsibility for the rise of Reform. Labour has normalised the racist framework of the debate on migrants. It will be up to the left and the workers' movement to confront a rising Farage current. His success will also strengthen the confidence of neo-fascist street gangs led by Tommy Robinson and others.

9 - Ecological issues were mostly absent from the campaign. Labour had already diluted its Great British Energy project campaign and did not foreground it - being terrified that voters might be scared off by its costs. Both the Liberal Democrats, who soared beyond even the exit poll to 71 seats, and the Greens benefited from putting the environment on the

agenda. The left needs to step up and lead on an eco-socialist strategy. The other great absence from the electoral campaign was Gaza. The mainstream parties barely mentioned it but the standing of independent candidates completely disrupted this. We salute the work of all those activists who succeeded in getting the voice of Palestinians heard in this election.

10 - The ACR will put itself at the service of building resistance to Labour's social liberalism. We will support every campaign to defend trans, women's, and democratic rights, Palestine, workers' living standards, and public services and to push for strong measures to tackle the climate and ecological crisis along with a just transition to green jobs. Within the broad movement, we will argue for the need for an anti-capitalist eco-socialist current that can provide the basis for a strategic alternative to Labourism.

5 July 2024

[ACR statement, General Election 2024.](#)

Time for a new united left alliance to topple Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael

5 July 2024, by **Paul Murphy**

A general election is looming. If the local election results are repeated, it will mean a return of this Government but with the Greens replaced as the third wheel by right-wing Independents. The 100-year rule of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael will continue.

This would be a disaster.

Another five years of their rule would mean a deepening of the crises in housing and health, with more children growing up in emergency accommodation, more adults trapped in their childhood bedroom unable to move out, as well as growing hospital

waiting lists. It would mean continued inaction on the climate and biodiversity crises and large numbers of workers in low-paid, precarious employment without the right to collectively bargain.

In fact, this would be one of the most right-wing governments in decades. Having ditched the Greens for right-wing Independents, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael would further ratchet up their scapegoating of asylum seekers. This would embolden the far right even more, creating a hostile environment for people of colour, migrants, trade unionists, LGBTQ+ and disabled people.

Left parties and Independents need to act now to stop this happening.

Rather than seeking coalition with the establishment parties, it's time to come together and pose a radical alternative: Ireland's first-ever left government. The "Vote Left - Transfer Left" slogan which emerged organically during the 2020 general election should now become a formal pact which parties and Independents sign up to.

I lost count of the number of times people said to me during the recent election that no matter who they vote for, nothing seems to change. I can't

blame them. People have voted for change many times in the past, for Labour, Greens or Independents, only for their vote to be used to put Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael back in power.

However, when the possibility of ending the rule of the Civil War parties emerged during the general election of 2020, it drove enthusiasm and turnout among working-class and young voters. Now that energy and momentum must be recaptured.

We should take inspiration from the Nouveau Front Populaire (NFP) in France. At extremely short notice, parties of the left have come together in a formal alliance. It's not perfect but it has firmly challenged the Macronists and the far right of Marine Le Pen. They have made a clear commitment not to rule with either and to offer an alternative.

After the local elections, there was a possibility of a council ruling group excluding Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in Dublin city. However, Labour chose to join with the three Government parties instead of entering a "progressive alliance". In councils right across the country, Labour jumped at the opportunity to coalesce with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. That should give the public fair warning of what it intends to do after the next general election as well.

In contrast, both Sinn Féin and Social Democrat councillors voted for the People Before Profit nominees for mayor and deputy mayor on South Dublin County Council. Elsewhere, they correctly criticised Labour for joining with Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

This is to be warmly welcomed. Will they now follow through and join a pact for a left government?

A left pact could consist of a commitment not to join any coalition with Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael, to oppose any scapegoating of asylum seekers, and instead to fight for public investment in housing, healthcare, public services and climate action that would prioritise people's needs over corporate profits, as well as enhanced workers' rights. Beyond that, parties and Independents could be free to put forward their own election manifestos and to run their own election candidates.

Such a pact would present a clear choice to the electorate: stick with Fianna Fáil/Fine Gael or vote for a left government. It would offer a clear route to ending the rule of these two parties. Strong transfers between left parties and left Independents would increase the prospect of a left majority being returned to the next Dáil.

Contrary to the jibes of our opponents, we in People Before Profit do want to be in government. We have given a guarantee: if there is an opportunity for a government excluding Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, we will vote for that nominee for taoiseach, as we have done before. But we won't join a government for ministerial mercs and perks or the illusion of power. We want to be in a left government which would actually take on the corporate landlords, private health profiteers and big polluters who stand in the way of change.

The crises that people face are not accidental. They are the product of a

government and economic system that work for the very rich at the expense of the rest.

The corporate landlords and private developers are enjoying soaring profits because the majority face unaffordable rents and house prices. If we had a properly functioning public health service, there would be no profits to be made from private health insurance and private hospitals. The enormous influence of big agribusiness interests as well as Big Tech explains why, even though the Government has signed up to legally binding climate targets, we are on track to miss them by a country mile.

To overcome their opposition and actually implement the ecosocialist change necessary to resolve the crises faced by people would require a left government basing itself on people-power mobilisation from below. It would require a commitment to implement measures such as public ownership of the private hospitals in order to build a National Health Service, the development of a State construction company to replace reliance on the private market and build 150,000 social and genuinely affordable homes, and an end to the use of Shannon Airport by the US military.

A government that serves the interests of the many instead of the few is desperately needed. Time is running out. The left needs to come together.

4 July 2024

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When the accusation of antisemitism becomes a weapon in the hands of neofascism

4 July 2024, by Gilbert Achcar

What is new in recent years is the expansion of the scope of those targeted for antisemitism to include a wide spectrum of left-wing critics of the State of Israel, whose critical position has a long political history, and who have been convinced, during decades of blaming Israeli governments for their colonial racist acts towards the Palestinians, that they were sharing this stance with left-wing Israeli Jews. This expansion went along with the increasing drift of the global political scene towards the right and the far right, pushed and stimulated by the latter.

Benjamin Netanyahu has been a pioneer in this drift. In more than one way, the Zionist Prime Minister is a pioneer of the global far right. He played this role in particular after his return to power in 2009 and his persistence in government, setting the record for the duration of the tenure of prime minister in the State of Israel, as he held the position for more than twelve years until 2021, only to return and reoccupy it at the end of 2022. During those years, Netanyahu has been a role model for the global far right for his brazen opportunism, his ability to lie shamelessly, and his ability to unhesitatingly resort to the vilest political methods against his Israeli opponents and to outbidding everyone in practising a Zionist excommunication of adversaries of unprecedented scope, which he turned into his ideological weapon of choice.

Netanyahu has become the darling of the global far right, not only as a role model for them, but also because of his tireless efforts to clear his mates around the world from the accusation of antisemitism and attach it to those they hate. This was very much consistent with the coincidence between the rise of the far right on the international scale and the rise of Islamophobia, through the combination between racist hostility towards immigrants coming from Muslim-majority countries and the ideology of the "War on Terror", stimulated by the criminal attacks carried out by Al-Qaeda and ISIS in the Global North.

In his endeavour to clear the accusation of antisemitism from the sources of traditional antisemitism on

the far right in order to pin it on everyone who criticizes Zionism, Netanyahu went so far as to attempt to partially absolve Adolf Hitler of responsibility for perpetrating the genocide of European Jews, blaming it on Amin al-Husseini in a way that led to protest and denunciation of all Holocaust historians. Netanyahu's intent was not only to amplify racist hostility towards Arabs and Muslims through the character of Al-Husseini - the favourite argument of Zionist propaganda for more than eighty years because of the harm he did to the Palestinian cause by collaborating with German Nazism and Italian Fascism during World War II. Netanyahu's intent was also to exonerate the antisemitic European far right through the character of Hitler.

Thus, Netanyahu became the favourite pretext for the leaders of the global far right to cover up their antisemitism, even when still blatant. From Viktor Orban, the Hungarian prime minister whose hatred for Jews is no secret, to Donald Trump, who believes that it is the duty of American Jews to be unconditionally loyal to the State of Israel and its government, to Vladimir Putin, another role model for the global far right, to Marine Le Pen who is eager to conceal the antisemitism that is historically inherent in the movement it leads, a long line of figures of the global far right have become the best friends of Netanyahu and his Zionist far-right government which is so similar to them. They outbid everyone in supporting them because it is a cheap way to hide their antisemitic past and present, especially that the number of European Jews has become very limited since the Nazi genocide, while immigrants from the Global South have become the far right's new favourite scapegoat in the Global North.

A very telling case in relation to all this is the announcement by Amichai Chikli, one of Netanyahu's ministers and a member of his Likud Party, that the entire Israeli government rejoiced for the victory achieved by the Le Pen's party in the first round of the French parliamentary elections last Sunday. Chikli holds a ministerial

portfolio specialized in "Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism"!

What is worse is that the political "centre" parties have decided to benefit from the instrumentalization of the accusation of antisemitism for right-wing purposes in their fight against their leftist opponents, as in the heinous campaign waged in Britain by the Conservative right and the right of the Labour Party ("the centre"). to politically eliminate Jeremy Corbyn, and the similar campaign waged against Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France by the "centre right" led by current President Macron, and the right of the left, that is, the "centre left".

By participating in these slander campaigns without even directing their fire at the same time against the far right and exposing its hypocrisy on the subject of antisemitism, the "centrist" forces contributed to covering up the far right and giving credibility to its claim of innocence from antisemitism. They thus prioritized this consideration over the condemnation of anti-Black and anti-Muslim racism and xenophobia in general, which the far right does not claim to have overcome but is rather proud of and uses as a central ideological argument in its activity. Thus, the "centrist" political spectrum, from right to left, ended up participating in joint demonstrations against antisemitism with the antisemitic far right, as happened in France in the wake of the operation led by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The bottom line is that making the accusation of antisemitism an absolute evil to the point of belittling all other aspects of racism and accepting that "the Jews" are represented by a Zionist government led by a party of fascist origin and in which "neo-Nazi" ministers and Jewish religious fundamentalists participate, a government that has brought the "Jewish State" closer to the "management of savagery" along the model embodied by the "Islamic State", such a stance adopted by the "centrist" forces has greatly contributed and continues to contribute to strengthening the global far right, as they also do by tail-ending it in other matters, especially racist

An election without electors in Iran

3 July 2024, by **Babak Kia**

The real power is in the hands of the Leader, those close to him and the Guardians of the Revolution. The Council of Guardians of the Constitution has validated only six of the eighty candidatures submitted.

A second round for the second time in history

Ali Larijani, former Speaker of Parliament, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, former President of the Republic, were not authorized to stand. Similarly, the main candidates from the so-called "reformist" current were rejected.

On the other hand, the Council of Guardians of the Constitution validated the candidacy of Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, former mayor of Tehran and former president of parliament, famous for massive embezzlement of public money and corruption, as well as that of Saïd Djalili, an ultraconservative, former nuclear negotiator, one of the Guide's two representatives on the National Security Council and a supporter of a tougher regime, particularly with regard to the street and women. Facing these two candidates, Mahmoud Pezeshkian represents the "reformist" current. He is supported by former presidents Rohani and Khatami.

The two candidates who qualified for the second round are Mahmoud Pezeshkian and Saïd Djalili, the

"reformist" candidate having obtained around 1 million more votes than his opponent. It should be noted that this is the second time in the history of presidential elections that there will be a second round. Coming a distant third, Ghalibaf called on his voters to vote for Djalili on Friday 5 July.

"We've got the results, we just don't have the voters"

The real news lies elsewhere. The first round saw a record abstention rate, marking a massive rejection by the population.

The official results show a national turnout of 39%. While abstention was even higher in outlying regions, notably Sistan-Baluchistan and Kurdistan, it was also higher in Greater Tehran, where the turnout was less than 25%. Even in the holy city of Qom, the turnout did not exceed 25%... To this must be added the percentage of spoilt ballots, which was close to 5%.

Yet the main issue for the Leader, Ali Khamenei, and the dignitaries of the regime is the legitimization of their power. Everything was done to encourage a high turnout. The authorities even extended the opening of polling stations until midnight.

Calls to vote from the highest levels of government went on and on. There

were many "incentives" to turn out. Even in prisons, where inmates were put under extremely strong pressure to vote. But following the example of Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi and imprisoned trade unionists, prisoners of conscience called for a boycott.

The Iranian people know that elections in Iran are nothing but a parody of democracy. A popular joke has the authorities saying: "We have the results, we just don't have the voters".

A referendum against the Islamic Republic

One year after the "Women, Life, Freedom" uprising, against a backdrop of deep economic crisis and ongoing repression, this turnout is a referendum against the Islamic Republic. The people of Iran have only one objective: to put an end to the capitalist and religious dictatorship that is the Islamic Republic as quickly as possible. The "Women, Life, Freedom" movement has shown the way. Social and political change will come about through massive mobilization of young people, women, national minorities, workers and the unemployed, in the streets, places of study and workplaces.

3 July 2024

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

Combating the major risk

2 July 2024, by **Léon Crémieux**

Whatever the absurd scenario imagined by Macron in announcing of the dissolution of the Assembly on the evening of the European elections, the practical effect is rolling out a red carpet under the feet of the Rassemblement National, giving it the chance to win a majority of seats on 9 July.

Since last Monday, the whole of the workers' movement and the social and political forces committed to democratic rights have been up in arms to prevent the extreme right of Pétain and the fascists of the Militia from returning to power in France 80 years after their emulators were ousted, and from applying a policy of "national preference", racist discrimination and the undermining of social and democratic rights, while at the same time being subject to the interests of the big capitalist groups, like the regimes of the same ilk in Argentina, Italy and Hungary.

In the coming weeks, it will be time to draw all the political lessons from the last few years, which have seen a steady rise in the far right, but the first observation is simple:

The Rassemblement National and its allies from the Républicains and Reconquête won 33.18% of the votes cast, more than 10 million votes. The Nouveau Front Populaire won 28.1%, and Macron's candidates 21.60%.

This result came three weeks after the European elections in France, which saw the RN list already well ahead with 30.5% of the vote, more than double the list of the presidential camp, with 14% of the vote (led by the president of the Renew Europe group, Valérie Hayer). The lists of the four parties of the former NUPES (LFI, PS, Greens and PCF) came in behind in scattered order, even though they totalled 30.7% of the vote.

Faced with a fractured left, the RN

has been able to capitalize on its place in the French political landscape over the last two years.

Like many other far-right forces in Europe, it has applied the "respectabilization strategy" to appear as a force that respects the institutions and, above all, is prepared to govern in compliance with European rules, following the example of Giorgia Meloni. This does not prevent the RN from making an intensive effort to inculcate in its cadres the fundamentals of defending the European identity of the New Right and GRECE, with the Iliad Institute.

All this smoothing work went hand in hand with the desire to appear as the only force in opposition to Macron during the social movements that have marked the last two years, in particular the mobilization against pension reform in the first six months of 2023 and the farmers' movement last winter. This was accompanied by an editorial line in the major press organs that played to the full this demonization.

On the other hand, for various reasons, for the past two years the components of NUPES have not built this alliance of left-wing parties as a common militant force, accompanied by the search for militant convergence with the forces of the social and trade union movement.

Since 2022, even during the mobilization against pension reform, the left was present on the streets and in the assembly to block the extension of the retirement age, but without coming forward united around a plan of social measures commensurate with the most powerful mobilization in 20 years and without taking any united initiative to assert itself politically during the movement.

Worse still, the parties making up the

NUPES openly announced the end of their alliance at the very moment when, after pensions, inflation and growing job insecurity made it even more urgent to build a front for a policy in line with social needs. As a result, neither in working-class neighbourhoods nor in rural areas, and independently of the grassroots work carried out by many activists, did the left emerge as a national force capable of changing everyday life and claiming to embody a political alternative to Macron and the far right.

What's more, the government never stopped trying to legitimize the RN as a respectable opposition and to demonize France insoumise as a threat to democracy, even pushing part of the left to "break with Mélenchon".

The concerns of the working classes are obviously first and foremost purchasing power, wages and energy prices, health and housing, and the loss of public services, particularly in rural and suburban areas and in the working-class neighbourhoods of large conurbations. All this at a time when social injustice, a tax policy and budgetary choices that benefit the upper classes have further accentuated inequalities. At the same time, gender-based violence and state violence continue to make themselves felt on a daily basis, with the only response being a police presence and an Islamophobic, security-oriented discourse targeting the racialized working classes.

The far right was therefore at ease in developing its discourse, often developing the themes put forward by the government itself on immigration and insecurity (the RN itself set the tone for the latest immigration law last January). What's more, it has surfed on the anxiety-inducing climate distilled by the 24-hour news media, whose editorial line echoes the far-

right's theses on the insecurity-immigration nexus.

A suicidal dissolution

Macron was blocked in the National Assembly by his lack of a majority, limiting his room for manoeuvre, but faced with the disavowal of the European elections he made a suicidal political calculation.

At the moment when the RN was riding the wave of its electoral victory and his own party had just suffered a magisterial disavowal, the choice of dissolution was quite simply suicidal, offering the RN an ultra-short campaign for which they could benefit from the same breath of air that the president's parties have often benefited from in France. Since 2002, the presidential election and that of the assembly have been held in quick succession, a few weeks apart giving an almost automatic advantage to the president's party. Macron was offering a similar situation to the RN on a platter. He might have hoped, with a disunited left, to play the saviour once again against the far right, himself provoking the electroshock of the threat of Bardella and Le Pen taking the helm of state.

But from Sunday evening, the reaction came from social movements, trade unions and in particular Sophie Binet [leader of the major trade-union confederation the CGT], calling for a Popular Front against the RN. While various calculations were still at work, this unitive pressure from militant networks imposed unity on the left to fight the threat together.

Against all expectations, given the problems and tensions accumulated over the previous months, the union was built with a programme taking up part of that drawn up for the NUPES and also echoing a joint declaration by the CGT, Solidaires, FSU and CFDT trade union forces. In less than a week (there were only five days in which to submit candidacies in 577 constituencies), the agreement, the programme and the distribution of constituencies were completed. The pleas from Macron's camp for the

Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the Greens not to put this new Popular Front into practice had no effect.

From then on, Macron's scenario collapsed like a house of cards, and it only took a few days for his "primed grenade", as he described it to someone close to him, to explode in the middle of the Macronist camp.

Popular Front only alternative to RN

The Popular Front emerged as the only alternative to the threat posed by the RN, thereby appearing as the incarnation of its rejection by the vast majority of trade unions, social movements and associations. Destabilized by its defeat at the European elections and the lack of understanding of the presidential manoeuvre, the candidates of Macron's coalition Ensemble went into the campaign without conviction.

On the right, the LR (Les Républicains) party exploded in mid-air, with its own president, Éric Ciotti, rallying to the RN as did Marion Maréchal, the spokeswoman for Reconquête (the party created in 2022 by Éric Zemmour), accentuating the polarization of the far right.

In just a few days, the high stakes of this election led to an unprecedented mobilization of the electorate. Turnout was 66.71% of registered voters, the highest since 1997.

This surge in turnout was reflected in a high level of mobilization, albeit divided between the three blocs. Two contradictory phenomena emerged:

Although there was no surge in the RN vote which, having absorbed the bulk of the Renaissance (Macron's party) electorate and two-fifths of that of the LR, nevertheless garnered 33% of the vote; there was a territorial homogenization of the Rassemblement national, clearly more marked in rural areas: out of 577 constituencies, the RN and its allies elected 39 deputies in the first round, led in 260 constituencies and were present in the second round in a total of 443

constituencies.

Macronism collapsed, with only two deputies elected in the first round, leading in the second round in 68 constituencies, and in a position to stand in a total of 321 constituencies (before the withdrawals on Tuesday evening).

The New Popular Front elected 31 MPs in the first round, are leading in 128, and qualifying in a total of 413, far more than in 2022. What is most notable is the urban concentration of the vote for the NFP. Twenty-one of the 31 elected in the first round were in the Paris region, particularly in Paris (where it should win two-thirds of the 18 seats) and the neighbouring districts. Similar successes, albeit to a lesser extent, were recorded in Marseille, Bordeaux, Lyon, Toulouse, Nantes and Strasbourg. The vote was otherwise concentrated in Brittany, the South-West, the Massif Central, Martinique and Guadeloupe and Réunion, with 6 out of 7 constituencies.

These results therefore show strength in the working-class districts of major cities and weakness among working-class populations in rural and suburban areas.

The second round poses the problem of building a democratic front to prevent the RN from obtaining an absolute majority of 289 seats in the National Assembly.

The Front populaire has clearly positioned itself by withdrawing its candidates who had come third against the RN.

The LR, who came out on top in the second round in only 19 constituencies, generally refused to position themselves between the Popular Front and the RN, while being clearly courted by the RN.

The Macronists, meanwhile, are split down the middle, from the point of view of their leaders, between the Ni Ni position of Edouard Philippe, the former prime minister, and those of voting for the Popular Front put forward by former ministers such as Clément Beaune. Gabriel Attal, the outgoing prime minister, said he wanted to "block the FN". A new

splintering, a sign of the movement's agony. Tuesday saw a succession of withdrawals by Ensemble. By 4 p.m., the number had risen to 75, out of the 325 candidates standing for the movement in the second round. This would leave around 100 constituencies with three candidates.

During this week, tens of thousands of activists have been mobilized and the trade union movement has multiplied its statements against the threat of a RN majority.

We must not rule out this possibility,

because in all cases the number of RN elected representatives will be between 250 and 290, even if the upper range falls with the withdrawals. It is therefore the task of the moment to avoid this risk and – even if the worst is avoided, to maintain the mobilization on the left and not dissolve into a new combination in which Macron no doubt hopes, one last time, to be in the driving seat.

Thus there remains the question of mobilization and building a social and political front of resistance to the far

right and all the combinations that would apply its policies. The worst thing we could do would be to repeat the splintering seen in recent years. The primary responsibility will therefore lie with the social and trade union movement to maintain a front of national and local unity of militant forces in workplaces and neighbourhoods, to oppose the abuses of the extreme right and, more than ever, to assert the demand for a united and radical alternative based on social needs.

2 July 2024

Against Macron and the far right, unity in the streets and in the ballot box

1 July 2024, by **NPA - Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste**

The result of this election, while not a real surprise, has forced our social camp to position itself rapidly in an unprecedented political situation. Several months ago, the polls were already predicting this catastrophe, which is notably the delayed result of the defeat of the mobilisation on pensions. The latter has in fact led to resignation among the working classes and renewed energy on the part of the far right. Those in power are not benefiting from their victory because it does not allow the ruling class to consolidate its positions in the overall context of the crisis of the system.

The results of the European elections were a continuation of those of the last presidential and legislative elections. In the 1930s, Trotsky predicted about France: "The displacements which have been noted have for us an importance not in themselves but only as symptoms of changes in the consciousness of the masses. They show that the petty-bourgeois centre has already begun to give way to the two extreme camps. That means that the remnants of the parliamentary regime are going to be increasingly eaten away. The extreme

camps are going to grow. Clashes between them are approaching. It is not difficult to understand that this process is absolutely inescapable." [8] The situation seems similar: the Macronist centre is weakening, the far right is strengthening considerably, while the left is trying to rebuild itself.

This general trend is mirrored across Europe, although we won't go into that in this article.

A danger that comes from afar

To make the popular classes pay for the crisis, the bourgeoisie may be ready to switch from authoritarian liberalism to a fascist solution (like Bolloré), while the proletariat is disoriented, partly demoralized and poorly organized, and the middle classes are increasingly looking to the far right, or even joining it.

The danger of a fascist ascent is growing, and it is possible that the far right will win a majority of deputies, or create the conditions for a grand coalition between the right and the far

right to run the country. We need to be aware of this danger, which could accelerate the building of a neo-fascist force, with a series of measures attacking democratic and social rights head-on, physically attacking the workers' movement and accelerating racist, LGBTIphobic and anti-women attacks.

All this is intimately linked to the situation of capitalism, which is in deep and multi-factorial crisis, and to the difficulties faced by the ruling classes in maintaining their profits, and by the imperialist powers in retaining their spheres of influence, particularly France, Russia and the United States. So the economic crisis continues, with inflation now combined with what was presented as the solution to the problem, higher interest rates. As a result, economic stagnation is intensifying, with growth of 0.1% in the third and fourth quarters of 2023, productivity and overall purchasing power stagnating, and social inequalities exploding. The economy is threatened by a crash, particularly in property, a sector in which bubbles have formed in China, while in the USA only 1/3 of loans were repaid in 2024 (compared with

99% in 2021), the Treasury is borrowing at rates above 4.5%, Standard & Poor's has cut France's rating from AA to AA- and the deficit is 5.5% of GDP instead of the expected 4.9%.

In such a context, the dominant classes are tempted by authoritarian solutions that allow them to increase exploitation tenfold and maintain their colonial domination. Faced with this, the solution can only come from rebuilding the proletariat's confidence in its own strength, reconstituting the class for itself, so that it is capable of opposing the various representatives of the bourgeoisie and moving towards a confrontation with it, first to defend its rights, resist and win social victories, then to pave the way for an anti-capitalist break.

This perspective is our strategic line and determines our entire tactical orientation.

The dangerous game of dissolution

Macron's response, with his gamble on dissolving the National Assembly, is accelerating the current process and increasing the fascist danger. The logic of this policy leads to a campaign for a republican front from Les Républicains to the left, in an attempt by the Macronists to regain a social and institutional base that will allow them to continue implementing its policies.

The Republican front is a dead end. By bringing together organisations from different classes with a view to conciliating and stabilizing the system, it demoralises the workers' movement, the popular classes and their organizations, and sooner or later paves the way for fascism. Macron's calculation could even be to lose the legislative elections and appoint Bardella as Prime Minister, hoping to counter-attack in the presidential elections. This kind of process is frighteningly dangerous.

However, Macron seems to have underestimated the capacity of the

working class to react. Indeed, the experience accumulated over the last few years in the mobilizations and its unitary translation with the Nouvelle Union populaire écologique et sociale (NUPES), has pushed the most right-wing sectors of the left that are conciliatory with Macronism, such as the PS, to refuse at this stage a republican front in order to ally themselves with the whole of the left.

Macron's party seems to be in trouble, with the splintering of Les Républicains and the relative cohesion of the left, even if the latter is very fragile due to the deep disagreements that exist within it, between a Socialist Party (PS) that is very much integrated into the system, and La France Insoumise (LFI), which is much more anti-establishment and is trying to rally the most popular classes. However, the sequence is not over, and it is possible that the sirens of the Republican front will be heard again, between the two rounds or after the elections, particularly in the likely event that the Assembly does not have a majority.

A united front in the streets and at the ballot box

In this context, our party has thrown all its forces, however small, into the battle for a united front. The decline in the balance of forces between the classes and the dynamics of the current sequence - with the spontaneous demonstrations or those called by the workers' movement against the far right and Macron - intimately link electoral unity and unity in the struggles. For the masses, it is totally coherent to demonstrate against the far right and to mobilise in an electoral campaign, hoping to achieve victory or, at the very least, prevent the arrival of the far right.

For us, unity at the ballot box is essentially tactical: we want to contribute to a defeat of the far right and Macron, or even enable a victory for the left, but we know deep down that the essential thing is played out in the self-activity of the masses and in social struggles. And, particularly, the

ability of workers and working-class neighbourhoods to emerge as a political force. It is the mobilizations that produce the political balance of power, and that determine both a possible electoral victory and the possibility of continuing afterwards, against bourgeois policies and for a counter-offensive by the proletariat.

We have little control over the electoral agreement on the left, over its programmatic content and its major dynamics, even if we defend our policies at this level. What's more, we are not even invited to the discussions! The major left-wing leaders essentially want to use us so as not to lose the votes of the most contentious sectors of the left. They have nevertheless managed to find a small place for us, with Philippe Poutou's candidacy in the Aude. The space we will have, overall, we will have to find by elbowing.

Unity without losing our compass

We need to keep our bearings clear in terms of class struggle and strategy... all the more so as part of an alliance where the most right-wing sectors of the PS are represented, even Carole Delga and François Hollande!

But we note that the organizations that refuse to join this united dynamic (like LO, RP or the NPA-R) appear marginal and sectarian in view of what's at stake in the situation, and consequently useless to our social camp.

The battle for a united front is opposed to the republican front, and combines the building of a balance of power on the streets with electoral unity. The challenge is to exert maximum influence through street mobilizations led by all the organizations of the workers' movement, in particular the trade unions. The frameworks for electoral and fightback mobilization are not separate.

It is therefore within coalitions combining struggles and elections that

we defend our policies and that we combat electoral illusions and point out the betrayals of the neoliberal left in power. We argue that the only guarantee for the working classes is to remain mobilized, to build social opposition in order to put elected deputies under the control of the social movement. We're in a period where class contradictions are driving not towards conciliation but towards confrontation, and we need to explain this. The link between the actions for Palestine and the current movement is a very important point, with these connections being the presence of working-class neighbourhoods in the mobilization, the action against racism, against fascism and all forms of colonialism, both here and there.

Four essential objectives

We are pushing, wherever possible, for mass demonstrations, mobilizations in workplaces, among young people and in popular neighbourhoods so that the rejection of Macron's brutal, anti-social policies and those of the far right are expressed in the streets and, where possible, through strikes.

We are helping to build a united front that brings together the entire political and social left without exception, in the streets and at the ballot box. To do this, we talk to all the organizations, from the bottom to the top, proposing general assemblies, meetings, everything possible to mobilise the proletariat. This concerns trade unions, but also associations and collectives, while respecting their autonomy, and political parties. We are in favour of all the organizations of

the workers' movement, of the social movement, taking part in the battle, going beyond the social and political divide. It is the movement of the proletariat that will determine victory or defeat, because it will or will not create a dynamic that will convince passive voters.

As part of this front, we are leading the battle to ensure that the programme is as radical as possible: we need measures of rupture to turn our backs on the capitalism that is destroying our lives and the planet, to break with anti-social, racist and repressive policies, and to stand in solidarity with the rights of peoples, particularly the Palestinians and the Ukrainians. We are also leading the debate on the need for mass mobilization and self-organization, with a view to building a counter-power.

We are continuing to develop our orientation of anti-capitalist rupture: capitalism is in deep crisis and is bringing us the worst, from wars to the extreme right in power. "Socialism or barbarism!" We need to break with this system, starting by implementing the demands made by social movements and the workers' movement in recent months, which represent the basis for an alternative imposed by our mobilizations: retirement at 60; wage increases of 400 euros; a minimum wage of 1,800 euros; extension of free public services for all common goods (energy, transport, housing, but also health and education); an end to productivism and extractivism; the right of peoples to self-determination and the right to resistance in Palestine, Kanaky and Ukraine in particular; the opening up of borders; equal rights for all... To achieve this,

we defend the need to organise over the long term, constructing a great political force "for rupture and the social transformation of society", embodying a practice both unitary and revolutionary.

Action!

Our organization is ready for battle, either by taking the initiative or by participating in the collectives organizing action. We are not naïve, we know that the solution to the situation is not electoral, that it will be determined by class confrontations for which the electoral sphere is not the essential place, but rather an obligatory point of passage, given the illusions, hopes and aspirations of a large part of the popular classes, to go further. We are therefore publicly developing our orientation, our explanations, our programmatic axes, convinced that in this election there are nonetheless important issues at stake. There is, of course, the issue of who will win, and the possibilities that may or may not open up as a result. But with this sequence, we are also seeing the beginnings of elements of the recomposition of the left. At the moment, it is essentially in the struggles between the parties that these are perceptible. But who knows, a major movement of activist sectors, shaking up the balance of power and the apparatuses, could also open up prospects for the construction of a party for rupture and the revolutionary transformation of society.

** This text is an updated version of that which served as the basis for the discussions at the National Political Council on 11 June 2024. Translated by **International Viewpoint**.*