



IV599 - December 2024

Political Review of 2024 - a view from Britain

31 December 2024, by **Dave Kellaway, Terry Conway**

We explore and expose a dominant narrative that reproduces a capitalist world as the only one possible. A world where the overwhelming majority are exploited, oppressed and alienated from their better selves. A world where our rulers refuse to accept the planetary limits and threaten us with human extinction. A world ruled by states that divide us from one another – migrant, native, straight, gay, trans, cis, Black, white, men and women – to prevent a unity in struggle that threatens their power.

Rather than look at 2024 chronologically we have selected the main political processes and events.

Palestine

The genocide unleashed by the apartheid Zionist state has continued unabated. Israel has not only turned Gaza into a dystopian wasteland but invaded Lebanon, bombed and killed in the West Bank, Yemen and Iran. No longer able to rely on the 'stability' of the Assad regime it has taken the opportunity in the last weeks to degrade the Syrian military and occupy more territory on the Golan Heights. However, Israel's military success has provoked a huge solidarity movement, and it has become a pariah state in the eyes of world public opinion.

Our solidarity movement has drawn

tens of thousands of new people into political action. Disgracefully. Palestinian solidarity activists engaged in peaceful non-violent direct action have been imprisoned. Activists like Tony Greenstein have been threatened with anti-terrorist legislation.

[ACR Statement on Palestine](#)

[Solidarity with Palestine and the Struggle from Below](#)

[76 years after the Nakba, let's build an international movement for Palestine!](#)

Ukraine

If 2024 saw many massive mobilisations in support of Palestine in every corner of England and Wales/Cymru, it's undoubtedly been harder work continuing to act in solidarity with the people of Ukraine against the Russian occupation, with the full invasion passing its 1000th day in late November. Living under occupation and bombardment, as well as under Zelensky's neoliberal policies, is harder still, as is the fate of the Russian opponents of the war.

We have had small successes here in Britain; for example, strengthening the support of the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign in a number of trade unions such as UNISON and UCU and

continuing a vigorous campaign of practical solidarity with workers in dire situations on the front line.

At a political level, throughout the year there has been the organisation of small contingents on Palestine marches in London behind the banner 'From Ukraine to Palestine, occupation is a crime', together with the dissemination of leaflets with the same message. Welcomed by many other protestors, this challenges those 'leaders' who deny agency to the people of Ukraine while rightly demanding it for the Palestinian people.

Over the months ahead we will work to deliver ongoing solidarity and continue to put the case against any unjust, imposed 'peace' deal that leaves parts of Ukraine under Russian occupation.

[Meeting: Making sense of Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#)

[Palestine, Ukraine and the crisis of empires](#)

[Ukraine under Russian occupation](#)

Syria

We can finally celebrate the overthrow of one of the most repressive Arab regimes as the Assad dynasty is ousted following the unexpected velocity of the HTS military campaign

and the complete disaggregation of the regime's repressive apparatus. Damascus and some other areas fell to the people even before the armed HTS resistance arrived.

For many years campist currents on the left basically supported the lesser evil of Assad against what they claimed was a purely reactionary ISIS/Jihadist opposition. US and British intervention were uniquely condemned, and the repressive role of Russia and Iran were whitewashed. Today these currents suggest that the overthrow of Assad is entirely an Israeli/US/Turkish plot where the agency of the Syrian people is unrecognised. They call it a big political defeat.

We think that despite the risks involved in any new political situation that today it is easier to face those problems after the overthrow of Assad. There is a political space within which the most progressive and secular forces, including returning exiles, can operate.

[Understanding the Rebellion in Syria](#)

[What is Happening in Syria?](#)

[The Syrian Rebellion and Palestine](#)

Trump triumphant

One of the most negative changes this year has been the return of Trump which expresses the continued rise of the new far right internationally. His victory has to be seen alongside the success of Milei in Argentina, Meloni in Italy, Orban in Hungary, Modi in India, Le Pen in France and the increasing electoral success of hard right formations elsewhere such as in Germany, Holland or Britain. Certainly the failure of the Democrats to respond adequately to working class interests, Biden and Harris's inept candidatures and their reliance on cultural personalities all helped Trump win.

The two failed assassination attempts and his sexist, anti-trans embrace of toxic masculinity all contributed to a much bigger victory for Trump than in 2016. It seems likely that Trump will carry out more of his reactionary

programme than in his first term.

[ACR Statement: Trump's Second Term](#)

[Fascism has Gone Beyond Creeping... We are in Big Trouble](#)

[Disaster Nationalism: A Glimpse into the Far Right's Apocalyptic World](#)

Starmer's 'thin' landslide

Most people were relieved that 14 years of Tory misrule came to an end this July, but there was no great enthusiasm for Starmer's very moderate Labour party. This was reflected in Labour's popular vote being lower than under Corbyn in 2016. Reform and the Liberals took huge chunks out of the Tory vote. On the other hand this election saw a surprisingly big vote for candidates we can define as to the left of Labour's manifesto - the Greens, Corbyn, the four 'Gaza' independents and the votes for Feinstein, Leanne Mohammed and Fazia Shaheen among others. The government honeymoon was short-lived as it cut the pensioner heating allowance, refused to move on the two child benefit cap, increased bus fares, backtracked on its green policies and retreated on Trans rights.

Just this week, Starmer reneged on promises to compensate the WASPI women, who were shabbily treated when their pensionable ages were changed at the drop of a hat. Despite some welcomed increased spending on health and education the big budget failed to tax the wealthy or big corporations. Reeves has ruled out new taxes for the rest of the parliament and is looking for 5% spending cuts in each department. Corporate managers are supposedly going to be introduced to improve the public sector's efficiency.

We have been there before, and we saw how it worked with the post office and water. Labour's strategy boils down to faith in a partnership with big business for growth as opposed to any sort of redistribution or radical green policies. Already there is evidence that growth is not arriving soon, and Labour's business partners are even

not confident they can deliver the housing programme target.

[General Election 2024: End the Tyranny of Conservative Rule](#)

[Starmer's First Hundred Days](#)

Anti-migrant riots and the threat from Reform

Given the vicious anti-migrant narrative that has been promoted for years by much of the mainstream media, the Tory party, Reform and the Labour party leadership, it is a surprise that the near pogroms we saw this summer had not taken place earlier. Starmer and his ministers reduced the riots to a question of policing rather than accepting the clear link to this racist political narrative. The rightward shift of the Tories - exemplified by Kemi Badenoch's victory - and the four million plus votes for Reform has given the street thugs marshalled by people like Tommy Robinson the green light.

John McDonnell MP has correctly raised the threat of Farage's Reform capitalising on dissatisfaction with this government to win a significant number of local and national representatives. Reform is second in 80 odd constituencies to Labour. It now has over a 100,000 members. Trump's victory will give Farage more credibility and money if Elon Musk delivers on his promise to fund it. A recent poll put them second in the national voting intentions, in front of Labour. Starmer's ratings are off a cliff and there are even rumours inside Labour of him being replaced in the future.

Resisting the far right and developing anti-racist campaigns will be key tasks for the left in 2025,

[Solidarity and Unity Now](#)

[Fascists Blocked by Mass Protest](#)

Attacks on trans people

Trump spent over \$40 million in attack ads against Harris claiming she was for them and they were for 'you'. Previously Labour conferences have voted some positive policies for trans rights. Both pre-election and since July the tone has changed significantly. The pseudoscience of the Cass review has been entirely adopted by the Labour leadership and now puberty blockers have been outlawed by Wes Streeting, the health minister.

Even fringes of the radical left have allied themselves with some radical feminist positions that insist on a purely biological definition of gender. But trans activists and their allies are fighting back. A large pro trans demonstration took place this summer and there was an action organised against West Streeting

[Cass Means Social Murder](#)

[On the Cass Review](#)

[Be Realistic – Demand the Impossible!](#)

Women fight back against male violence

Internationally the denunciation of

male violence against women has been one the main themes for mobilisation of women and their allies. Huge demonstrations were held in Rome, Paris and Madrid this November.

The case of Gisele Pelicot in France, who was drugged and then raped by her husband and seventy other men over a number of years, has galvanised public opinion. Many publications have installed her deservedly as woman of the year for her bravery in going public. It may well lead to legislative change in France over the question of consent. As she says, shame has changed sides.

In the USA women mobilised against Trump's attack on abortion rights, winning some ballots but losing the presidential election. In Iran repression of women and their resistance continues.

[Mazan, rape as a political fact](#)

[Abortion at the Centre of American Politics](#)

[International Women's Day 2024](#)

Ecosocialism

Trump's victory is bad news for the planet. He has already rejected the Paris agreements and is unlikely to engage with the COP process. His slogan is 'drill baby drill'. In practice it also means federal support for

environmental regulations will be slashed. This year's COP in Baku saw little advance in the phasing out of fossil fuels. The amount offered to the Global South to compensate for the capitalist world's assault on their environment was pitiable and was mostly structured in loans rather than grants. In any case the promises often never materialise in practice. In Britain Labour has drastically cut back on its £28 billion green energy project.

Moreover, it has invested billions in a carbon capture programme that gives big subsidies to corporations but fails to radically alter carbon emissions. Resistance to fossil fuel companies by activists has continued this year with the courts using the reactionary measures devised by Tory home secretary Suella Braverman to imprison dozens of activists. There was a victory with the Cumbrian coal mine project being abandoned after mass protest. Labour has done nothing to rescind these draconian laws against non-violent protests. Recently the second Ecosocialism conference which ACR helped to organise drew about 200 activists.

[Ecosocialist Revolution: A Manifesto](#)

[Defining Ecosocialism](#)

[Who Wants Degrowth?](#)

30 December 2024.

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

“There is now a space... to try to rebuild popular civil resistance”I

30 December 2024, by [Joseph Daher](#)

How does the fall of Bashar al-Assad fit in with the Arab Spring?

The fall of Bashar al-Assad is part of the continuity of the revolutionary processes that began in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, because the despotic Syrian regime

has many of the same characteristics as other authoritarian states in the region, i.e. an absence of a democratic framework and a neoliberal political economy that has led to the growing impoverishment of the masses, in a climate of corruption and growing social inequality. Over 90% of the

Syrian population lives below the poverty line, and Syria's wealth was concentrated in the presidential palace and businessmen affiliated to Bashar al-Assad and his family.

As a reminder, in Syria, large sections of the population took to the streets

with the same demands as those raised by other revolts in 2011: freedom, social justice and equality. The vast majority of the democratic organisations and social forces behind the Syrian popular uprising in March 2011 were bloodily repressed. First and foremost by the Syrian regime, but also by various Islamic fundamentalist armed organisations. The same applies to local alternative political institutions or entities set up by the demonstrators, such as coordination committees and local councils, providing services to the local population. There are nonetheless a few civilian groups, albeit mostly linked to NGO-type organisations, throughout Syria, and particularly in north-western Syria, but their dynamics are different from those at the start of the uprising.

In this context, there are many challenges ahead, but at least hope has returned. After the historic announcement of the fall of the Assad dynasty, which has ruled Syria since 1970, we saw videos of popular demonstrations all over the country, in Damascus, Tartus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Qamichli, Souïeda, etc. of all religious denominations and ethnicities, destroying statues and symbols of the Assad family. The slogans of the early days of the popular uprising were sung again: 'Syria wants freedom' and 'the Syrian people are one and united'. And, of course, there is great joy at the release of political prisoners, in particular from Saidnaya prison, known as the 'human massacre' and which could have held 10,000 to 20,000 prisoners.

What is your assessment of the nature of the forces at work?

HTS (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) is now the dominant player in the regions of Idlib and the main cities - Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus and Deir ez-Zor. HTS has embarked on a relatively significant political evolution since its break with al-Qaeda in 2016 and has demonstrated a great capacity for adaptation and pragmatism according to the existing material conditions in order to maintain and extend its power. HTS has also clearly demonstrated in recent years a desire to present itself as a rational force vis-

à-vis regional and international powers in order to normalise their dominance. This continues today, with some initial success.

Nevertheless, HTS remains an authoritarian organisation, with an Islamic fundamentalist ideology, and still has foreign fighters in its ranks. In recent years, numerous popular demonstrations have taken place in Idlib to denounce its regime and its violations of political freedoms and human rights, including the assassination and torture of opponents.

HTS is now seeking to consolidate its power over the above-mentioned areas and central government. In particular, it has appointed a Prime Minister from the National Salvation Government. HTS's civilian administration has been running Idlib for the past few years, with a conservative Islamic government made up entirely of men from or close to its ranks. The new Prime Minister will in any case hold office until 1 March 2025, pending the launch of the constitutional process.

HTS enjoys relative autonomy from Turkey, unlike the SNA (Syrian National Army), which is controlled by Ankara and serves its interests. In recent military campaigns, the SNA is once again primarily serving Turkish objectives by targeting areas controlled by the Kurdish-led SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces), which have large Kurdish populations. The SLA, for example, captured the town of Tall Rifaat and the Shahba region in northern Aleppo, as well as the town of Manbij, previously under the governance of the SDF, resulting in the forced displacement of more than 150,000 civilians and numerous human rights violations against the Kurds, including murders and kidnappings.

For their part, the SDF, despite their overtures to HTS, are under ever-increasing threat from Turkey, whose influence has grown in Syria following the fall of the Assad regime. Turkey has two main objectives. Firstly, it wants to force Syrian refugees in Turkey to return to Syria. Secondly, to deny Kurdish aspirations for autonomy and, more specifically, to undermine the Kurdish-led administration in

north-eastern Syria, the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria (AANES), which would set a precedent for Kurdish self-determination in Turkey, a threat to the regime as it is currently constituted.

There are also various armed opposition groups in southern Syria, separate from HTS and the SNA, which played a role in capturing the capital Damascus before the fall of the regime, while HTS's control of the Syrian coastal regions, notably Latakia and Tartus, is not complete.

What does the future hold for Syria?

Everything will depend on the ability of democratic and progressive groups to organise themselves in the face of both internal threats from authoritarian armed organisations such as HTS and the SNA, and external threats from Turkey, Israel, the Gulf monarchies, Western powers and others. The fact that HTC and SNA forces are stretched is a potential advantage for organising at local level. Only the self-organisation of the popular classes fighting for democratic and progressive demands will create this space and pave the way for real liberation. To achieve this, many obstacles must be overcome, from war fatigue and repression to poverty and social dislocation. To advance these demands, this progressive democratic bloc will have to build and rebuild popular organisations, from trade unions to feminist organisations, community organisations and national structures to bring them together. This will require collaboration between democratic and progressive actors across society. In addition, one of the other key tasks will be to tackle the country's main ethnic divide, that between Arabs and Kurds.

There is now a space, with its contradictions and challenges, for Syrians to try to rebuild popular civil resistance from below and from alternative power structures. And that is already a great hope compared with

The will for change in Mauritius

29 December 2024, by **Paul Martial**

Shameless manoeuvres

These elections were marked by a wiretapping scandal where the government organised a large-scale spying system targeting dissident voices, journalists, lawyers and community activists. This authoritarian drift was amplified when the government prepared to cut off the internet. In a country known for its democratic stability, the government changed its mind in the face of the outcry.

Pravind Jugnauth, the outgoing Prime Minister, thought that the agreement reached with Great Britain on the Chagos Islands would give him a bonus. This agreement, presented as the return of Mauritius's sovereignty over the archipelago, is open to criticism. It was drawn up in the absence of the Chagossians, despite their repeated requests to be involved. They were driven off their island by the British government in the late 1960s. In addition, Great Britain retains sovereign rights over the main

island of Diego Garcia, with a ban on the return of the inhabitants to their land and the maintenance of a military base granted to the United States.

At the same time, the economic situation is marked by weakening growth, a level of inflation impacting the poorest populations, a youth unemployment rate of almost 20% and a high level of inequality.

Dynasty and ecosocialism

The vast majority of Mauritians rejected the government and voted Navin Ramgoolam to power, a politician who has twice been Prime Minister and who has himself been accused of money laundering. Politics in Mauritius is primarily dominated by two dynasties, the Jugnauth and Ramgoolam families, who have presided over the country's destiny since independence. Their policies are similar in that they have accompanied the country's transformation from a sugar-based economy, followed by

manufacturing and the garment industry, to an economy focused on finance and tourism.

The country's two radical left-wing organisations, Lalit and Rezistans ek Alternativ (ReA), have made different political choices. Lalit fielded six candidates on its own, while ReA joined the progressive alliance by negotiating three mandates as MPs. Its leader, Ashok Subron, has been appointed Minister for Social Affairs. One of his first official speeches was on International Disability Day. On this occasion, he advocated a change of approach by targeting the social, economic and environmental causes that contribute to disability, such as poor diet, occupational illnesses and accidents, pollution, and so on.

An eco-socialist Minister for Social Affairs in a government is sufficiently rare in Africa to be cause for celebration, although vigilance is still called for.

26 December 2024

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

A government that won't last

28 December 2024, by **Fabienne Dolet**

Of course, Bayrou has probably overestimated his ability to unite on the basis of his name alone, after thirty years of wanting to accede to the position. He has also underestimated many aspects of the

situation: taking a Falcon to go to Pau at a time of climate emergency; forgetting the cyclone in Mayotte at a time of social and democratic emergency and announcing the government on the day of national

mourning; defending the accumulation of mandates, after having voted for the non-accumulation of mandates ten years ago; measuring that he has not been elected for more than twenty years to the National Assembly.

Above and beyond his personality, it's an entire project that's taking on water. The country is divided, and the National Assembly that emerged from the polls in July reflects this. The cause: the project of the bourgeoisie embodied by Macron, and all those leaders who don't want to let go of their anti-social policies and gifts to the bosses when the social and ecological situation demands a different way of thinking. They dismantled and denigrated solidarity in the name of 'trickle-down' and set themselves up as a bulwark against

the far right... only to end up as a fortress defending social inequalities and racist policies. The boat is sinking, and it will take a lot more than a Bayrou to overcome the chaos they have sown. This 'government of returnees', as *Libération* puts it, is looking more and more like a 'government of puppets' in the hands of the RN!

The national unity achieved around the special law passed on 18 December does little to disguise the fact that the bourgeois order, however

enlightened, is being undermined, giving ever more power to tycoons like Bolloré and Musk, who are ready to saddle up the far right and the worst defenders of a racist and unjust social order. However long the Bayrou government lasts, we need stronger resistance and, above all, victories so that an emancipatory social project for all can see the light of day.

24 December 2024

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

A nightmare ends, towards what hope in Syria?

27 December 2024, by **Thomas Rid**

No one expected the regime to fall in this way, so quickly. This proves that it was rotten to the core and that it could no longer stand on anything. Only on the fear it could still produce in those who were supposed to be protecting the state, and by the grace of its allies. When the HTS (Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham) offensive took place, Hezbollah, which had fought alongside the Syrian army against ISIS, and Russia, which had saved the regime on many occasions, were no longer there. As for the soldiers of the Syrian army, they laid down their arms rather than die for Caligula.

A divine surprise for Netanyahu

Of course, not everyone is delighted for the right reasons. For the Israeli government, it was a surprise, no doubt a divine surprise. The day after the fall of the Assad clan, the Israeli army launched a bombing campaign that was as illegal as it was unprecedented since the end of the Second World War, aimed at destroying Syria's entire military infrastructure, carrying out more than 600 strikes in less than a week. The

most recent strike on an arms depot in the military port of Tartus caused an explosion and an earthquake measuring 3 on the Richter scale. How many people died? We have no idea.

Today, Syria is essentially a demilitarised country. Above all, the Israeli state has reneged on the 1974 agreements and pushed into Syrian territory, occupying Mount Hermon in the Rif Dimashq to the north, some twenty kilometres from Damascus to the west, as far as Quneitra, and to the south in the first villages of the Daara Governorate near the Jordanian border. At the same time, Netanyahu announced to the whole world that Israel would occupy the Golan Heights for eternity, while his government proposed a law to double the population of Jewish settlers in this area.

Israel's colonising machine

For the Israeli government, the genocide in Gaza, the destruction of part of Lebanon and now the occupation of new parts of Syrian land are just the continuation of one and

the same policy, i.e. the implementation of the messianic and fascist project of Greater Israel, the return to the biblical borders of the land of Israel. Never mind that the biblical cadastre is not very precise, and that even messianic Zionists find it difficult to agree on where to place the borders. To Sinai, to the Jordanian desert, to the Litani river in Lebanon and Mount Hermon in Syria, or to the Euphrates in Iraq? What matters is that the colonising machine does not stop, and neither does the war against the 'Arab jungle'. Netanyahu, who knows that if the war stops, his regime will fall, will continue as long as he can.

For Syria and the Syrian people, it's all just beginning. They will have to emerge from the civil war in a ravaged country, try to find hope for a new life, and create a democratic space for all Syrians and all their communities. A compromise will also have to be found with the Kurdish people. On the other hand, Israel, supported by the United States, and Erdogan's Turkey, which already has a presence in Syria and is massing its troops on the border just outside Kobane, are looking forward to the dismemberment of Syria.

The looters' ball in Africa

26 December 2024, by **Paul Martial**

Circulation of goods

This involves the construction of a railway linking Zambia to the Angolan port of Lobito via the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). With its route serving the main mining towns, it would become a major transit route for the main minerals needed by the energy transition industry. These include copper from Zambia, cobalt, tungsten and coltan for the DRC.

The USA and the European Union have financed this project to the tune of 4 billion and 6 billion dollars respectively. It involves the renovation of more than a thousand kilometres of rail track and the construction of a new 800-km section to link up with Zambia, the purchase of locomotives and wagons, as well as road infrastructure, storage areas and, for Angola, a number of primary refining units. This also involves harmonising customs and trade policies between

the three countries. The stated aim is to reduce transport times from 45 days to 45 hours.

Inter-imperialist competition

The Lobito Corridor is also seen as a tool to challenge China's supremacy on the continent. China ships most of its minerals to the Indian Ocean via the Tazara (Tanzania Zambia Railway), built in 1975 by the Chinese.

Although the USA and the EU are touting the Lobito Corridor as an environmental project, there are serious doubts because it is part of an extractive economy that relegates African countries to the role of mere mining reserves. What's more, the concession to operate this line was won by the Swiss multinational Trafigura, which in 2006 had no qualms about dumping tonnes of chemical waste into the Abidjan

lagoon, poisoning tens of thousands of people.

While the Angolan side is fully prepared, this is far from being the case for the DRC, which is facing a security crisis linked in part to the Rwandan aggression. Angola is trying to find a lasting peace solution between the two countries. The opening up of these critical resources to the Atlantic Ocean reflects the West's desire to free itself from the hegemony built up by China over the processing of minerals.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Belgian and Portuguese colonisers built this corridor to export African resources to Europe. One hundred years later, the objective remains the same, meaning that the rich countries' relationship of economic domination over Africa has hardly changed.

19 December 2024

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

The Chaos Known and Unknown

25 December 2024, by **Against the Current** Editors

The factors behind the Democrats' debacle in the presidential election are explored in depth by Kim Moody in this issue of *Against the Current*. We won't dwell on those here except to remark that if the swing-states margins had been as razor thin as expected, the Biden's unequivocal enabling of Israel's Gaza genocide, and the Kamala Harris campaign's

refusal to distance her from that policy, all by itself could have tipped Michigan and likely the presidency into Trump's column.

The election ultimately turned on core economic issues, especially the impact of inflation, and on alleged "insecurity" — skillfully exploited by Trump's anti-immigrant scare

rhetoric, and rightwing appeals to (mainly male) fears of job and status loss. When he pardons the convicted January 6 rioters, we'll find out whether they fade into obscurity or reform their goon squads for future use.

In any case, goodbye and good riddance to Genocide Joe with his lasting legacy of the destruction of

Gaza. What next then for 2025 and beyond?

Greed on Steroids

We won't dwell on the sexual predators, crackpots and creatures from the white-nationalist lagoon who make up many of Trump's Cabinet nominees. There might be just enough Republican Senators to save Trump from the consequences of his most ghastly choices — Pete Hegseth, Kash Patel, Tulsi Gabbard — and God forbid the outbreak of a new pandemic with RFK Jr. in charge of public health. But first things first.

It's clear that Trump's core agenda aligns with "traditional" Republican policy, but this time on steroids: corporate enrichment and deregulation, tax cuts for the affluent, cuts in essential services and social safety protections, reversal of the modest recent gains in unions' right to organize. Things like removing federal oversight that might restrain murderous racist police brutality also come with the territory.

This is all predictable, but the full extent of the right wing's sadistic savagery remains to be tested and fought over — things like drastic cuts and unachievable "work" requirements for SNAP (supplemental nutrition) benefits. Already under Biden, the end of expanded Child Tax Benefit that had famously cut child poverty in half during the COVID emergency, resulted in those rates rebounding right back to the deplorable rate of 13.7% as of 2023.

For another example, we also can't yet predict whether the privatization of Medicare envisioned by Dr. Mehmet Oz, to force all recipients into ruinous "Medicare Advantage" schemes, will actually be attempted against the public and institutional firestorm it would provoke. (Certain recent events have thrown a gruesome spotlight on popular attitudes toward the U.S. health care and insurance industry.)

While the toxic combination of greed and hard-right ideology propels the tax-and-program-cutting drive, more extreme measures threaten to destabilize the whole project. Right

away, the biggest economic and financial "unknowns" include the extent and consequences of Trump's promised tariffs on "all imports."

One assumes that economically-literate professionals with access to Trump might explain how 25% tariffs would threaten to crush the Canadian and Mexican economies which are inextricably bound to the United States, to say nothing of those of European and Asian countries, and highly inflationary in the U.S. economy itself.

Among those hard hit immediately would be many of those same U.S. middle and working class people who voted for Trump from inflation resentment — a self-destructive consequence. But as a display of the kind of "strength" that Trump loves, tariff threats might be leveraged to extract concessions he's demanding from U.S. partners.

There's panic in the Canadian political establishment evidenced in the clamor, not just by the governing Liberal but also Conservative and leftwing New Democratic parties, for a billion-dollar cost for increased border control personnel, surveillance and drone technology. Ostensibly Trump is demanding that Canada crack down on "drugs and illegal migrants" crossing to U.S. territory, but these issues in fact are marginal to nonexistent. His real more likely goals are trade and other concessions from Ottawa, and perhaps separate deals with Canadian provinces.

Tariffs also have their use in the growing economic (and potentially military) conflict with China, a bipartisan cause, which is why Biden maintained Trump's initial anti-China measures.

Immigrants Under Reign of Terror

We do know what's coming is a literal reign of terror facing immigrant and refugee communities. Right off the bat, this is a crisis demanding preparation for resistance on multiple levels. Immigrant and civil rights organizations are preparing various

legal, political and sanctuary measures.

In Michigan, for example, activists are putting pressure on the lame-duck Democratic legislative majority to pass access to drivers' license, which would give undocumented folks at least a measure of protection from being swept up in racial-profiling traffic stops.

"Mass Deportations Now" was a prominent sign on display during the Republican convention. The incoming administration promises to do so by the "millions." While the capacity, staffing, logistics and financing to pull off such an operation rapidly are in question, there's little doubt that intimidation and high-profile sweeps are coming for televised effect at least — and the terror they produce will push many people into the shadows, and others to "self-deport" (as the firmly establishment Republican Mitt Romney used to happily advocate).

The promised "largest deportation in our history" might turn out to be mainly a higher-publicity version of what the Biden and "deporter-in-chief" Obama administrations preferred to do under the radar. Keep in mind that under Biden, 1.1 million people were "repatriated" in 2023 and 411,000 in the first half of 2024.

That would be vicious enough of course, but the potential also exists for police-state methods on a much expanded scale. By some accounts there are some tens of thousands of undocumented people in prisons and local jails — often on minor charges like driving without a license — vulnerable to being swept up and summarily deported if ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) can get its hands on them.

That's why one point of conflict will be whether municipal and state officials, willingly or by coercion, will implement extended detainment of prisoners for ICE to seize them. The fate of those awaiting immigration or asylum hearings, who might be swept into Stephen Miller's planned privatized mass detention centers, is also frightening — and a profit carnival for the contractors who will

build and run them.

Will there be mass workplace raids? Sweeps of immigrant communities? Instantaneous revocation of Temporary Protected Status for people from 16 countries (e.g. Haiti, Venezuela, Ukraine) living and working legally in the United States — such as the large Haitian community in Springfield, Ohio brutally scapegoated by the Trump-Vance campaign? Peremptory deportations of those now held in detention centers? A new round of the family separations that became so infamous in the first Trump round?

Notoriously, Texas is furnishing land for a detention-deportation concentration camp to expedite removals with minimal or no due process. How to finance and fill such a facility for Trump's intended crimes against humanity isn't clear. And although not adequately covered, severe economic disruptions could result from truly mass deportations — particularly in agriculture, construction and meatpacking for example. In Michigan, farmers are already petitioning for workarounds.

Plans seem afoot to "investigate" the possibility of stripping naturalized citizens of their status. At the far extreme, ending birthright citizenship has been advocated by Trump and most aggressively his house fascist Stephen Miller. As that would entail cancellation of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, such a measure can't be accomplished by "normal" means — it would require some kind of executive and judicial coup that could shake the entire institutional structure of law and government.

U.S. capitalism objectively does not need any such destabilizing crisis, nor for that matter deportations "by the millions." One expects in normal circumstances that capital in its own interests would impose some restraints. But in today's political climate what's "normal" cannot be assumed. We certainly can't count on

the Democratic Party to effectively resist a far-right assault that its own policies have enabled.

If one target more centrally than any other, is in the crosshairs of repression, it's the Palestine solidarity movement — both for the cause it represents, and as a wedge for systemic assaults on progressive social activism across the board. Further, this attack on pro-Palestinian advocacy is bipartisan, both from the racist right wing and "progressive except Palestine" liberals. We have seen that all-out support for Israel is so deeply embedded in U.S. politics that the Democratic leadership would rather lose an election than break with it.

This is occurring at the very moment when the Israeli state's U.S.-enabled and armed genocide in Gaza, and military and settler violence in the West Bank, not only isn't ending but is escalating. What has happened in the past horrible year is both a quantitative and qualitative leap in the long history of ethnic cleansing, entailing not just mass murder by the tens of thousands but also targeted killing of journalists (192 and counting), medical and aid workers, and the drive to depopulate northern Gaza.

Every single day produces new world-class Israeli war crimes in Gaza, with the clear intent of destroying that society. And now whole cities in Lebanon and districts of the capital Beirut lie in ruins, shattered far beyond the destruction in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. And while both Hamas and Hezbollah remain as political forces in Palestine and Lebanon, their destruction as strategic military factors in the "axis of resistance" gives U.S. imperialism enhanced power in the Middle East and raises the enhanced possibility of an assault on Iran.

The menace to our movements ranges from victimizing immigrant communities, to attacking transgender rights (which the Supreme Court looks ready to wipe out), abortion access and racial justice, and from policing the right to read to crippling labor's right to organize, all the way to "Project Esther" — the Heritage Foundation's plan to target and defund Palestine solidarity and all progressive advocacy, brought to us by the same authors of Project 2025.

The tip of the Project Esther spear has been launched in Congress (HR 9495 and companion bills in the Senate). Incredibly, this would authorize the Secretary of the Treasury, without process or appeal, to designate any organization as a "material supporter of terrorism" and remove its tax-exempt status.

"Material support of terrorism" in this context can mean anything, including expressing the principle of oppressed people's right to resist. It is unlikely to be applied, for example, to the Jewish National Fund whose "tree planting" directly finances Israeli apartheid and ethnic cleansing, or the fundraising organizations for the violent West Bank settlers.

Although not likely to pass even with some craven Democratic support in the lame-duck legislative session of the fading Biden administration, this blatantly unconstitutional effort will be tested when the Republicans take over the government trifecta on January 20.

All this — and more to come — touches on some of the chaos, known and unknown, facing our communities and movements in a new political moment. In the face of a vicious and empowered right wing, unity from the outset will be critical. Division will be deadly.

22 December 2024

[January-February 2025, ATC 234](#)

Stand Together!

Closure of the Israeli embassy in Dublin: good riddance!

24 December 2024, by **Awena Connolly**

This announcement follows on directly from the decision taken a few days earlier by the Irish government to intervene in the complaint lodged by South Africa against Israel before the International Court of Justice. The Israeli minister justified his decision on the grounds that the Irish government was pursuing an 'anti-Israel' policy. For its part, the Irish government explained that it wants to influence the proceedings before the International Court of Justice so that it considers that Israel's actions in Gaza since October 2023 constitute genocide.

Pressure from the solidarity movement

Let's be clear: the Dublin government's participation in the proceedings initiated by South Africa was not only belated, it was above all due to the pressure exerted for months by the powerful solidarity

movement with Palestine in Ireland. The closure of the Israeli embassy represents a major victory for the movement, which had long been calling for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Ireland. Activists for the Palestinian cause in Ireland explain it well: although the Irish government has indeed taken a stand in favour of a ceasefire in Gaza, is taking part in the complaint before the International Court of Justice and has officially recognised the state of Palestine, this is only symbolic.

Israel is closing its embassy in Dublin while Ireland has not taken any concrete action against it. Meanwhile, Irish airports continue to be used to transport military equipment to the Israeli armed forces, under the complacent gaze of the government, the Irish Central Bank continues to finance genocide and Ireland continues to be one of Israel's biggest economic partners.

Economic relations with Israeli

settlements

Not forgetting the issue surrounding the proposed Occupied Territories Bill, which would make all economic relations with Israeli settlements on the West Bank illegal. Discussed in the Irish Parliament since 2018, it is regularly blocked by the two main parties in government. The fact that this bill could finally be adopted in the near future as a result of developments in Palestine is probably not unrelated to Israel's decision to close its embassy, as an additional means of pressure on the components of the Irish government.

The fact remains that the closure of the Israeli embassy in Dublin is a victory that strengthens the solidarity movement with Palestine in Ireland, and as the activists on the ground are saying: good riddance!

19 December 2024

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

Elon Musk Goes Full Fascist

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

Musk, who contributed \$277 million to Trump's campaign, has virtually camped out at Mar-a-Lago, where the president-elect had the tech billionaire listen in on calls with foreign leaders such as Volodymyr Zelensky. Accompanying the president-elect, Musk has also had access to French President Emmanuel Macron at the

ceremonial reopening of Notre Dame and to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at a formal gathering in New York. At the moment Musk seems to be on every call, to be commenting on every decision.

Musk originally gained his wealth from PayPal, then from the Tesla car

and the SpaceX rocket ships, and he was once a liberal with a vision of a utopian environmental future based on electric vehicles. But when back in 2021 President Joe Biden called a meeting of automakers that included GM, Ford, and Stellantis, as well as the United Auto Workers to discuss the future of EV cars, Musk wasn't

invited because he was anti-union. Snubbed, Musk began to turn right. He bought Twitter, opened it up to rightwing extremists and used it to influence his 208.5 million personal followers.

Last week Musk did two things that brought him to the center of attention. First, as the U.S. Congress was about to pass a budget bill compromise in order to prevent a government shutdown, Musk actually intervened before Trump, calling on the Republicans to stop the compromise budget bill. Trump then also opposed it because it had a debt ceiling that might tie his hands when he comes into office, since he wants to cut taxes and carry out expensive programs like deporting 11 million immigrants. So, Republicans killed the first compromise bill.

Musk's motivation was not primarily about the debt ceiling, but because it contained language that would have made it more difficult to invest in China, where Musk's Shanghai Tesla Gigafactory produces a car every 30

seconds. In less than four years, Tesla exported a million cars from China. Now Musk is constructing a second factory, a battery plant, in Shanghai as well.

Republicans and Democrats in the House finally agreed on a new budget bill—but left the debt ceiling in place, but without the restriction on foreign investment. A defeat for Trump, but a victory for Musk. This all suggests that Trump will face challenges in the new Congress, because he cannot control the Republican budget hawks who oppose any budget increase.

Second, with Germany in the midst of a political crisis because of the collapse of the government of Olaf Scholz, a Social Democrat heading a centrist three-party coalition, Musk tweeted his support for Alternative for Germany (AfD), a neo-Nazi party. Interviewed by CNN, Senator Chris Murphy, Democrat of Connecticut, said, "What Elon Musk thinks tends to eventually be what the president of the United States thinks. And if the

United States takes an official position in favor of neo-Nazis in Germany, I mean, it is absolutely catastrophic." Musk's support for the far right in Germany is not unique. He also supports Italian deputy prime minister Matteo Salvini, head of the anti-immigrant League party and Nigel Farage's Reform U.K. party, also anti-immigrant, and is planning to make a big donation to it. Musk could influence Trump, but it may not be necessary

Already on election day, Trump had welcomed his "German friends," who included Phillipp-Anders Rau, a candidate for AfD. Trump's advisor Steve Bannon—recently out of jail after serving four months for contempt of Congress for failing to respond to a congressional subpoena—has been working for years to build a brown international.

All of this suggests that fascism will be a factor and may even have a future in America.

22 December 2024

The National Security Law (NSL) in force: The NSL 47 trial an important landmark in Beijing's annihilation of Hong Kong's autonomy

22 December 2024, by [Au Loong-Yu](#)

Can you summarize what this new wave of repression involved? Who was targeted and what were the sentences for these people?

Benny Tai, the main "culprit", was handed ten years imprisonment, the highest sentence among the 45 found guilty under the National Security Law (NSL), which is so vaguely worded that in essence it is arbitrary. Two other defendants were acquitted.

This [BBC report: Who are jailed?](#) gives

a briefing to the NSL 45. On top of that, I recommend the [report](#) of American Chinese activist Promise Li which highlights those activists either in the now disbanded Confederation of Trade Unions or those in the new trade union movement 2019. The latter include Carol Ng and Winnie Yu, who were sentenced to 4 years 5 months and 7 years 9 months respectively. Lee Cheuk-yan was the chief leader of the CTU but he is prosecuted under different charges. Promise's report also mentioned

Leung Kwok-hung, or "Long Hair", the left veteran since 1970s, who was sentenced to 6 years 9 months.

Both Winnie and Long Hair, along with 14 defendants, pleaded not guilty, while the 29 others pleaded guilty. Some international leftists have asked me why so many pleaded guilty. Are they repenting of what they did in the primary election? I do not know the answer to the second question, but I guess the best approach to this question is to look at it individually.

As to the first, we may start from a more general picture – their pleading guilty is quite similar to the 1936 Moscow trial, a show trial where the rule of law was totally absent, and where the old leading Bolsheviks pleaded guilty after being tortured and had their families threatened. One should not forget that all 47 were remanded in custody for three years before the kangaroo court sentenced them. A second factor for their plea is that all of them had been active under a relatively liberal environment and never been prepared to undergo such a level of state brutality. Amongst them there are also new hands in political activism who only got involved in 2019, so are inexperienced and untested.

The revolt was very much a spontaneous one, where hundreds of thousands of people became active for the first time. This makes the 16 of who refused to confess, and were even more severely punished for that, even more outstanding.

We were surprised at the severity with which the so-called troublemakers were prosecuted. At that time there was no significant unrest in Hong Kong to which the government had to react. Is there a reason for this timing?

The sentenced 45 were punished simply for doing a primary election, which is a normal thing to do in any part of the world, including Hong Kong before Beijing crushed it. But this is unforgivable from the point of view of Beijing and Xi as autocrat. The primary citizen referendum on the list of candidates was the first ever in Hong Kong. 600,000 citizens came out to vote, showing the public eagerness for democratic participation. This, however, was enough to annoy Beijing.

What was even more annoying to Beijing was that Benny Tai, the mastermind of the primary, publicly announced his intention to continue to challenge the Hong Kong government through voting down its budget if the yellow camp won the election. In Beijing's eyes this was nothing but treason. This accusation is of course nonsense in any country with some semblance of democracy. The point,

however, is that Beijing is the antithesis of democracy, especially after since Xi got his thirtd term.

The self-governing Hong Kong under the regime of “one country two systems” was always meant to be provisional – according to the Basic Law it is only valid for 50 years. But Xi doesn't want to wait for another twenty plus years before he or his successors finish off Hong Kong's autonomy. All the evidence show that after Xi came to power in 2012, he has been deliberately curtailing Hong Kong's autonomy, which then kick started a vicious cycle of provoking Hong Kong people's resentment and resistance which in turn prompted Xi to be even more hard-line, This is what culminated in the 2019 revolt, its suppression and then the big purge.

By March 2020 the mass mobilizations had ceased to exist, but Beijing's agenda is not to merely suppress revolts, but to crush Hong Kong's autonomy once and for all, so as to be able to evade all its promises to Hong Kong for ever. This is not just about making Hong Kong safe for the regime per se. It serves a broader purpose – by the great purge in Hong Kong this eliminates the potential of Mainlanders imitating Hong Kong's democratic movement and rising up again. One of the lessons which Beijing learnt from the 1989 democratic movement is that the moment when the Mainlanders and Hong Kong democratic struggles joined hand in as they did them must never be repeated. With the 2019 revolt, the CCP now see Hong Kong's autonomy as threatening to its rule in the Mainland. Only by crushing Hong Kong totally could Xi Jinping sleep well.

Thus the November trial and sentencing is just one of the episodes of an ongoing process of breaking Hong Kong's opposition and civil society as a whole. The fact that right now there is no unrest in Hong Kong to rationalize the harsh sentencing has no bearing on Beijing's long term agenda.

Can you summarize the development from smashing the mass movement until today?

By spring 2020 the mass protest had already been completely suppressed first by the implementation of lockdown under Covid (where the Hong Kong government also seized the opportunity to make things even more difficult for the protesters), followed by arresting all the 47 organizers of the primary in January 2021, banning the June Fourth Memorial vigil, and finally the inauguration of the National Security Law on 30 June. Freedom of the press was crushed in June when the government forced the Apple Daily to close down, and its boss, Jimmy Lai, was arrested. The next victim was the Stand News. From then on the NSL was used to attack many influential organisations and people, many of whom had nothing to do with any “illegal” protests in 2019.

The disbandment of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China in September 2021 is a typical example. First the Hong Kong government banned its 2021 memorial vigil, arrested its leaders whose only crime was holding an annual candle vigil in memory of the June Fourth Massacre, which it had been doing for more than 40 years.

It appeared that the alliance disbanded itself. In fact it was accused by the government as “colluding with foreign forces”, and then its leader Chou Hangton was arrested, and other leaders were being harassed and threatened, until the government broke their will of resistance and disbanded.

In the past five years Beijing's repression against protesters has been very severe. As of the end of March, 2024, around ten thousand had been arrested, among them four thousand students. Seven thousand are still remanded in custody. The whole process of retaliation implies that Beijing is not satisfied with just suppressing the 2019 protesters, rather its full agenda aims at the total destruction of civil liberties and associations, a process still in progress today.

The labour movement was struck hard by the authorities. Some trade unions were smashed. What

is left?

While the government targeted the Alliance, it was also simultaneously turning against two very important labour organisations - the CTU and the Professional Teachers' Union. Targeting the CTU should come as no surprise because it was heavily involved in the 2019 protest in a non-violent way. The latter however participated in the protests only marginally and very law-abiding. Yet both were forced to disband. But the teacher's union was the largest union in Hong Kong, with a membership of 100,000 and the only mass union in the sector, then it should not surprise us why Beijing wanted to smash it as well.

One of the most surprising developments of the 2019 Hong Kong revolt was the sudden rise of a new trade union movement. The revolt started with strong suspicions against all types of organizations. From October onward, however, the tide turned and there were louder and louder calls for union organizing among young activists as well, and soon actions were taken. Between the end of 2019 and the end of 2020, the number of newly registered unions grew explosively. Between 2012 and 2018 the annual net growth in number of registered trade unions never exceeded ten. According to the Registry of Trade Unions, 2019 first saw a sudden net rise of 20 new registrations, followed by a 56.5 percent jump in the net growth rate in 2020 (or 489 newly registered unions) and then a further 8.6 percent rise in 2021.

No one knows exactly how many of them belonged to the pro-democracy camp, because the Beijing supporters, in competition with the former, also launched their "new unions". But beyond numbers there is also the aspect of public advocacy and militancy, from their leadership to their rank and file, something which only the former possessed. But with escalating repression in the later half of 2021, 74 unions disappeared in 2022, and another 21 in 2023. Some of the pro-democracy unions were forced to disband after being accused by the authorities of conducting affairs unrelated to their charters.

There are still many unions left but the most influential or most militant have gone. For example, the new Hospital Authority Employee Unions had 18,000 members and had conducted a five days strike against the government's initial refusal to lockdown the city under Covid. No wonder why it was also forced to disband after the implementation of the NSL. The emergence of new trade unions was initially promising as it showed the potential to steer the revolt to an even more labour based struggle. Their disappearance under suppression is a tremendous loss to both the labour and the democratic struggle there.

Another example; just one month after the passing of the NSL, Cathay Pacific, now clearly aware of their power over the union, declared they would cancel all collective bargaining with their unions. The Cathay Pacific Airways Flight Attendants Union, with more than 7000 membership and a long history of standing up to their employer, is now being robbed of their right to collective bargaining. This also shows the real agenda of Beijing's move in relation to Hong Kong.

Are there signs of new social tensions and open conflicts, of labour unrest and maybe new independent structures or organisations?

Very few. The Foodpanda delivery workers had struck in protest against the management cutting of their wages twice, once in 2022 and then this March, but they also did it carefully, for instance intentionally avoiding assembly. They are also un-unionized. They are mostly South Asian and less connected to local politics, which might partly explain the police's tolerance. But in general the space for social resistance keeps on shrinking; no sign of new organisation that can effectively and partially resist the repression. Small protests of five or six people in solidarity with the Ukrainian and the Gaza Palestinian might be tolerated, or a similar size of non-political protests. There are still activists engaging in internal gatherings or relief work (for instance supporting those imprisoned activists, attending and reporting on trials, writing letters

to prisoners etc) which is of course very important in this situation. Calling larger open protests is just too risky however.

The protest movement was huge in 2019 and brought over a million out on the streets. Especially the youth became radical and militant. They didn't all leave Hong Kong. What are they doing today? Are there attempts to break out of the silence?

Two hundred thousand, including most of the young people, left for Britain. Thousands had fled to US, Australia, Taiwan etc. We do not know how many are young. Surely most of the young activists have stayed. No matter where they are, most of them are now demoralized. This is understandable. The suppression in Hong Kong, although not comparable to the level of violence and bloody as the June Fourth Massacre, in terms of consequences it is similar, that is, the annihilation of hope among the young generation and instill enough fear into them to stop them thinking independently and acting politically.

We are now in a dark long tunnel with no light in sight. We should not lose hope, because at the same time the CCP is also facing mounting social and economic and, in the future, possibly political crisis as well. As I said before, China is entering the most dangerous period, and under this situation one serious mistake from the top leaders may also create a new opening, just like the 2022 White paper movement. But a long period of calm is also possible. To sum up, for those who still place hope for a democratic transformation, this is a period of caution, patience, intensive reading, learning and debate, not the period of bold actions.

There were left wing magazines that showed protesters waving American flags during the 2019 revolt. This makes all attempts to organize solidarity for the movement from here difficult. Without getting the facts right, it will be difficult to raise interest and solidarity for Hong Kong people suffering under repression.

I totally agree with you. But don't take individual facts out of context. As I

write in my book on the revolt, there was waving of American flags, but also flags of Barcelona, in defiance of those right wing protesters who, in line with some Western allies' were hostile towards the Catalan independence movement, There were of course right wing voices in the protest, but in a movement of 2 millions, the multitude were united on the five demands which were all basic democratic

rights. What defined the movement were these rising masses and their demands, not the few hundreds who waived the US flags. We should fight the right while appreciating the fact that the masses started to take matters into their hands. If the left in Europe refused to be in solidarity with this popular movement and their subsequent repression, abandoning

the Hong Kong people and their workers in their fight for basic rights just because their movement had not been neatly leftist enough, dare I say that this is not what internationalism have taught us.

15 December 2024

*Translated from the German publication **World of Labor**.*

New left-wing wind on the shores of Lake Geneva?

21 December 2024, by **Thomas Vacchetta**

And, although the right and the far right joined forces to form a reactionary and neoliberal majority, the municipal parliament in the City of Geneva remains on the left thanks to the contribution of the radical left of which solidarités is a member.

Maintain a left majority

For the 2025 elections, there was a risk that successive splits within the movement would prevent this majority from being maintained, but also the role of left-wing compass vis-à-vis the pink-green executive!

Until very late at night, the day before the lists were to be submitted, the comrades negotiated an agreement between the Labour Party (the local communist party), whose president comes from a first split from solidarités and will be our candidate for the executive (also elected by direct universal suffrage) —, the DAL (a small local group) and the UP (Popular Union, also from the last split from solidarités). In addition to the financial aspect negotiated in recent months (UP debt on the non-payment of attendance fees), solidarités had vetoed the candidacy of people who had participated in attacks on the personality (acts or words that

undermine the physical and mental health, moral integrity and social reputation) of members of the movement.

Support the struggles at the city council

Once the agreement has been reached, our 51 candidates are united in their assault on the Municipal Council! To do what? Continue the work carried out by our elected representatives to support the struggles in the neighbourhoods, at the union level, those of the City employees , sometimes support projects of the left-wing majority and try at a local level to counterbalance the neoliberal projects of the cantonal parliament, or even the federal one.

For example, in the Pâquis district, the most densely populated and popular in the city, our elected representatives were able, in addition to participating in actions by local associations to remove asphalt, to support greening projects within the Council, and to alert people to the situation of buildings left abandoned in a city whose main problem is finding housing. It is also reminding the pink-green executive that the annuity paid

to city employees is not a bonus at the employer's discretion but rather a right of employees, but it is also allying with these same pink-greens to vote for a deficit budget that allows the creation of 108 jobs against the opposition of the right and the far right. It is supporting the left-wing projects of this same executive when they meet the needs of the population, such as the municipalization of daycare centres, or supporting the demands of the Feminist Strike when it asks for premises or the feminization of street names. This is in addition to participating in an occupation with unaccompanied minors of a public building, bringing to the Council the demand of their collective struggle in its request for a municipal identity card. And also participating in the strong mobilizations in Geneva (several thousand participants in each demonstration) in support of Palestine, against the federal policy of "pro-Israeli neutrality", voting 200,000 francs in subsidies to UNRWA to try to compensate for the disengagement of the Confederation.

Beyond this Geneva issue, solidarités will continue to fight on all necessary terrains, in the streets as well as in parliaments, from an anti-capitalist, eco-socialist, internationalist, feminist and anti-racist perspective, notably with our comrades from the NPA-

"The strike of 29 November is a sign of the resumption of social conflict, after a long period of passivity"

20 December 2024, by **Gigi Malabarba**

After more than two years of Meloni's government and the apparent lethargy of the social movements, does the general strike of November 29 indicate the beginning of a new phase of struggle?

The strike of November 29 is in fact the sign of the resumption of social conflict, after a long period of passivity that goes back to well before the birth of the far-right government of Giorgia Meloni, a passivity that has also helped her rise. The trade union movement had never adequately responded to the hard blows inflicted by the liberal policies implemented by all the governments that have succeeded one another for more than ten years, such as the repeal of Article 18 of the Workers' Statute on trade union rights, the Fornero law on increasing the retirement age (much worse than that attempted in France), privatizations and draconian cuts in the health and education systems, the extreme precariousness of labour relations, penalizing tax measures in

the face of plummeting wages, etc. The few strikes declared were at best the expression of a symbolic disagreement, never of a desire to oppose these measures.

Today, we have reacted, albeit very late, with the only effective instrument: the general strike. It is undoubtedly the result of a growing awareness of the abyss that is looming on all fronts, with the current government challenging democratic and constitutional rules, as well as the economic crisis that is affecting the entire productive apparatus of the country, without the shadow of an industrial policy appearing. The general strike has also given an outlet to company or sectoral struggles that had remained isolated for too long and incapable of changing the balance of power that was very unfavourable to workers.

Would you say that the working class is coming back to the forefront not only in a conjunctural way, but that it could also begin to reorganize itself

for a long-term struggle?

When Maurizio Landini, leader of the General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), Italy's largest trade union, spoke of the need for a "social revolt", even drawing accusations of subversion from the right, he appeared to have little credibility within his own apparatus, which is no longer willing to organise resistance struggles until a goal is achieved, and prefers to devote itself to finding an institutional mediation table, the so-called "concertazione", an option that has long been a losing one.

On November 29, almost all the unions in the localities declared a strike, together with the CGIL and the UIL. It was the first time, and fortunately! even if with separate contingents. And some sectors of the social movements participated in the day of struggle with the aim of "generalizing the general strike". However, these positive signals are unfortunately not of a nature to allow the maintenance of the degree of mobilization necessary for the current level of confrontation.

For the moment, only the FIOM (Federazione Impiegati and Operai Metallurgici) and the metalworkers, who have opened their own national contract dispute and are at the centre of dramatic struggles in defence of jobs (think of the Stellantis crisis, the entire automotive supply chain and German industry on the brink of recession), seem able to give

continuity to the struggles, having maintained an organised structure in the workplace and a clear combativeness, on 29 November.

What role do feminist struggles, international solidarity (particularly with the Palestinian people) and the climate emergency play in this resurgence of social mobilizations?

The role of social movements is decisive, especially in terms of their strategic value in the face of the so-called ecological transition that capitalism is unable to face. The ecological movement, which had experienced an extraordinary surge, especially among young people, has not regained the same momentum after the pandemic. However, the convergence between the workers' movement and the ecological movement has seen extremely high levels of development, common platforms and initiatives around the struggle of the former GKN [automotive components plant] in Florence which, in the face of lay-offs, has been able, for three and a half years, to continue the fight for an ecological conversion and for the resumption of production under workers' control aimed at relaunching a movement for climate and social justice on a national scale.

The feminist and LGBT movement also

remains on the terrain with participatory mobilizations that have brought tens of thousands of women into the streets, again this year, around the deadline of November 23-25 [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women]. Equally significant is the duration of the internationalist mobilization against the genocide in Gaza, especially in universities. Finally, this December 14, there will be the first national demonstration to combat Decree 1660 on security, which is preparing repression against all social and union struggles. Let us think of the more than 3,000 denunciations of unionists in Lombardy and Emilia! This is an aggravation of the infamous Rocco Code of the fascist era. Fortunately, a wide range of forces will be present in this mobilization.

How do you see the capacities of resistance of the working classes in the face of government policies (cuts everywhere, decree on security, autonomy, presidentialism, etc.)? What are the forces capable of organizing popular anger, but also of outlining a horizon for the struggles?

The ingredients for a change of phase are all there, and at the same time. However, the long wave of defeats of the radical left and the reformist left over the years shows no sign of remission. On the contrary, the ambiguities of the "anti-war" positions - between an exasperated Atlanticism on the one hand and a campist logic cut off from reality on the other - are the lead in the wing of the possible reconstruction of an alternative. There have been too many setbacks and too many losses of bearings to imagine a resumption of political initiative in the near future by the combative left. We must start again from "convergence", from the reconstruction of a social and political fabric of resistance that has been broken for decades: the seeds are there, but it will take a long time to make them develop.

Interview by Stéfanie Prezioso for the newspaper of the Popular Union (Geneva)

Gigi Malabarba, a worker for over thirty years on the Alfa Romeo (FIAT) assembly line in Arese, a former union leader of the FIOM and then of Sin.Cobas and then a senator elected twice on the lists of the Communist Refoundation Party, he has been involved in recent years in two workers' self-management projects, first with RiMaflow in Milan and now with GKN in Florence. Self-management in Movement - Fuorimercato is the socio-political organization in which he is currently active and which has begun a common journey with other forces, starting with the GKN factory collective, to organically sediment the strong impact of this conflict.

12 December 2024

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<https://anticapitaliste.org/opinions/international/italie-la-greve-du-29-novembre-est-le-signe-de-la-reprise-du-conflit-social>

France-Chad, the end of the affair...

19 December 2024, by **Paul Martial**

As soon as he returned from Chad, Jean-Noël Barrot, Minister of Foreign Affairs, learned that the Chadian authorities had decided to break the defence cooperation agreements with France, without this subject having been discussed during his visit. This decision surprised everyone, first and foremost the Quai d'Orsay, even though the statement by Abderaman Koulamallah, government spokesman, explaining "that Chad is a sovereign state and very jealous of its sovereignty " could have suggested it

That's it, it's over

The irony is certainly rather bitter for the ruling circles in France, which has never ceased to support the successive dictatorships of this country. While Macron himself travelled to attend the inauguration ceremony of Mahamat Déby following his coup d'état, learning from the press that Chad considers it necessary to "redefine its strategic partnerships" must be hard to swallow.

This country plays a key role in the French military system in Africa. Since its independence in 1960, the French army has always maintained a

presence there. Sometimes, it even conducted wars there, with the operations "Manta" and then "Epervier" against Libyan troops in 1978 and 1987. On several occasions, this same army saved the day for the dictator Idriss Déby, the father of the president now in power.

Chad's importance was demonstrated during Operation Barkhane, where its headquarters was established in the capital N'Djamena, while Chadian forces on the front line suffered a heavy toll during clashes with Islamist militias in northern Mali.

Go away, and above all don't come back

The reasons for the decision to expel the thousand French soldiers are being discussed in the press that specialises in Africa. On a personal level, Mahamat Déby is said to be not very appreciative of the investigations by the National Financial Prosecutor's Office concerning him and his family. The cause is ill-gotten gains, luxury homes and also clothes totalling 900,000 euros.

N'Djamena criticized France for its refusal to share information on the attacks by the jihadist group Boko Haram, which caused the death of around forty soldiers, as well as its opposition to the triggering of air cover during the counterattack led by Chadian troops. Finally, Mahamat Déby reportedly took badly Jean-Noël Barrot's criticisms of Chad's support for General Hemedti in the war in Sudan, as well as his advice to postpone the legislative elections scheduled for the end of December in order to promote greater inclusiveness in the electoral process.

So hardly had Jean-Marie Bockel 's report on the French military presence in Africa been submitted to Macron than it became obsolete.

Finally, let's be a good sport. Hats off (or rather, caps off) to the Barnier government, which in three months has managed to put an end, quite unintentionally, to more than 60 years of French presence in Chad.

10 December 2024.

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

New Delhi is suffocating

18 December 2024, by **NPA Ecology Commission**

The most important measure, closing all schools, does not solve anything. Quite the opposite, since the housing of the vast majority of the population does not allow for effective confinement. This measure also deprives the mass of children of a daily meal usually provided by the

school. And when this pollution diminishes, we remain well above the limits that can be tolerated by human organisms. Babies are particularly vulnerable and hospitals are completely overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster.

Agricultural burning, industry and vehicle traffic

Traditional burning of rice fields throughout the region has been

pointed out, but alternatives to these practices are only in the draft stage. The high industrial density is to blame. The vast majority of this industry remains linked to coal, with all the well-known consequences. And here, as everywhere on the planet, private cars and motorized two-wheelers congest everything. The exceptional population density obviously makes the situation worse. The inhabitants of New Delhi are suffering greatly. The poorest are on the front line.

Health disaster in India and Pakistan

Globally, in 2019, the WHO (World Health Organization) estimated that 4.2 million premature deaths were caused by outdoor air pollution in

cities and rural areas. The health effects of aerosols vary depending on the size and chemical composition of the particles. The largest (2.5 to 10 μm) impact respiratory health. The finest (2.5 μm or less) can penetrate very deep into the respiratory system and even pass into the bloodstream, causing cardiovascular diseases. The entire region of India and Pakistan is suffering the double whammy: increased aerosols in the atmosphere and extreme heat wave.

Modi's climate inaction

Modi is displaying the goal of carbon neutrality by 2070, which means he is postponing any significant action indefinitely. However, the Indian economy is more than 70 per cent

linked to fossil fuels, 45 per cent to coal alone. And India will further increase its carbon emissions (+8.3 per cent in 2023, +4.6 per cent forecast for 2024). There is no doubt that Modi will feel strengthened in his options by the re-election of Donald Trump.

The latest COP in Baku further buries the 2015 Paris COP and its stated objective of containing global warming to +1.5°C, its inoperative character, with its restricted and non-binding recommendations.

But everywhere, including in New Delhi where families are organizing, there is a growing demand to break with climate inaction. The race is under way.

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US Attack on its Youth

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

President-elect Donald Trump's pick for Secretary of Health, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., has asked the food and drug administration to revoke the approval of the polio vaccine that has protected millions from paralysis or death. RFK, who has said that "no vaccines are safe and effective," will encourage state governments to end vaccination requirements for public school children, which could unleash epidemics of measles, whooping cough, and meningitis. He also opposes putting fluoride in public water systems, a practice that has protected children's teeth. Scientists and physicians have said that RFK's policies put children's very lives in danger.

At the same time, sexual and reproductive rights of girls and women are also under attack from Republicans and Evangelical Christians. In 2022 the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the *Roe v. Wade* decision which had given federal protection to women seeking abortion.

Since then, abortion has been banned in 13 states and made more difficult in others. Ten states have limited access to abortion pills. And in June several Republicans voted against a federal law that would have protected access to contraception.

Sex education in schools is also being threatened. Only the three West Coast states provide comprehensive sex education, that is, age-appropriate education in kindergarten through high school classes. Such education helps prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Seventeen Republican rules states in the Midwest and the South only provide "abstinence only" sex education. Across the country, politicians have introduced some 137 bills to stop or restrict sex education. Any discussion of gender or sexual orientation in schools is banned in three states and restricted in five.

Turning to higher education, the cost makes it prohibitive for many. Today

the tuition at a public institution is \$10,940 plus living expenses. At private institutions the average cost is more than \$60,000 for tuition, room and board. These costs make college difficult if not impossible for many, which may be why attendance has fallen by 5% since the COVID pandemic of 2020-22.

Black students face greater obstacles than in the recent past. The Supreme Court ruled in 2023 that a college applicant's race could not be taken into account as it had been before because of affirmative action programs. Even before the Court's decision, between 2010 and 2020 undergraduate Black student enrollment in colleges declined by 25%, from 2.67 million to 1.99 million. Today 40% of white children will graduate from college, but only 19% of Black children will. And the gap is widening because of poorer schools, discrimination, and cost. The result will be lower incomes for Black working people. The recent court

decision will make it even harder for Black people to get college educations, and Black enrollment is falling.

Young people's social and political rights are also threatened. Historically, colleges were bastions of free speech and scenes of progressive

social protest. But during campus protests against Israel's genocidal war on Palestine this past year, university administrators had guards or police shut down protests and take down campus encampments, during which some students were arrested. Palestinian speakers were canceled and Palestinian organizations harassed. New rules often now limit

protests and inhibit free speech.

Young people are being attacked at every level, and when people are attacked, one can expect they will fight back. We socialists will be with them.

15 December 2024

The South Korean crisis seen from France

16 December 2024, by Pierre Rousset

The reasons that led President Yoon to initiate a very poorly prepared putsch remain obscure (like Emmanuel Macron's decision to dissolve the National Assembly in a very unfavourable situation).

Mobilization against illegal acts

The bad news is that the army (or a fraction of the general staff) started by supporting the president, even though he was acting illegally (the Constitution requires the agreement of Parliament). Special forces with considerable resources (armoured vehicles, helicopters) were to invade Parliament and arrest opposition leaders. The number of soldiers involved in the operation was limited, which explains why, faced with an unforeseen situation, they were overwhelmed.

The good news is that this attempted coup was thwarted in record time thanks to the fierce resistance of civil servants and opposition personnel on the terrain, as well as a massive citizen mobilization that came to their aid in the middle of the night, bringing together different generations, many young people, activists and trade unionists. This allowed 190 elected

representatives to enter Parliament and repeal martial law, with the support of a small number of members of the government party.

The springs of this mobilization show the liveliness of South Korean democracy, where the memory of the times of dictatorship has not been dissipated. The intervention of the army shows that its stability is not as assured as it might have seemed (martial law had not been imposed since 1979). The mobilizations continue today, for the resignation or dismissal of President Yoon. The president refuses, but the mobilizations can last for days, weeks, or even months, as was the case in the past.

Economic crisis, budget cuts and government corruption

Why is this crisis occurring now? South Korea has long experienced rapid development, thanks to an interventionist state policy, favouring the formation of conglomerates, which Japan and the United States have both tolerated and integrated, for geopolitical reasons in particular: the

division of the Korean peninsula, the proximity of China and Russia. It now massively exports electronics, and is the second largest producer of semiconductors (in particular printed memory storage circuits →). However, after the Covid crisis and in a less buoyant global market, growth is running out of steam. The economic situation of the population is deteriorating, as is the quality of public services. The presidential couple is credited with numerous cases of corruption. The political crisis erupted when Parliament was due to reduce the budget that President Yoon can use at his discretion, in the name of national security.

In short, South Korea is facing a situation that, beyond its specificities, is not foreign to that of many Western countries. It has something to tell us, particularly in France where the army occupies a major place at the heart of our regime, where Macron and those around him (among others) show very little respect for parliamentary institution or the results of elections. We must not take an "exotic" view of this Far Eastern country. Its turbulence should be a warning to us.

14 December 2024.

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

Africa: oil means blood for blood profits with the EU

15 December 2024, by **Paul Martial**

The peril of youth

This militia, known as Ash-Shabab, meaning 'the youth', has pledged its allegiance to Islamic State. Beyond the religious dimension, their propaganda denounces government corruption and the appropriation of villagers' land to plunder natural resources. In addition to the religious and economic causes of this guerrilla warfare, there are also community motivations. Over the years, the jihadists have grown stronger thanks to the support, forced or otherwise, of a section of the population.

This situation is the main obstacle to exploiting one of the largest gas deposits. Companies from the United States (Exxon Mobil), Italy (Eni) and France (TotalEnergies) have positioned themselves in the region. The latter has invested more than 20 billion dollars in the installation of infrastructures that have led to the expulsion of local people from their land.

Serving the multinationals

The Mozambican government has refused any dialogue or reforms that might have defused the conflict. It chose the hard way by using the army to settle the matter, to no avail, followed by the use of Wagner's mercenaries, which turned into a disaster. The authorities appealed to SADC, the Southern African Development Community. It deployed a military mission that ended in July 2024 with mixed results. The Rwandan forces, who were also present, only managed to establish a protective cordon around the industrial facilities.

The European Union helped finance all these military interventions through the European Peace Facility (EPF) and through military training missions under EUMAM-Mozambique, financed to the tune of over €80 million.

Financing an

invading country

Rwandan troops also received €20 million last year. France and Italy successfully insisted that this aid be renewed despite Rwanda's military aggression in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The recent Human Rights Watch report documenting the systematic practice of torture in Rwandan jails did nothing to alter this decision. Although this payment is subject to formal conditions, they can be ignored if the European Union has the will to do so.

As for TotalEnergies, it is participating in the security policy by paying bonuses to the Mozambican soldiers of the Joint Task Force, a structure dedicated to protecting the gas site. TotalEnergies has also been involved in serious human rights violations on the multinational's own premises, but business is business.

5 December 2024

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

Israel does not want peace!

14 December 2024, by **Édouard Soulier**

Since 8 October 2023, Israel has targeted Lebanon, in particular the south, claiming to be attacking Hezbollah 'terrorists' but waging the same style of war as that on Gaza. This policy accelerated at the beginning of August 2024 and, following the so-called pager attacks, Israel waged war on the whole of

Lebanon: flights at the speed of sound, threats to airspace, widespread bombing in popular and populated neighbourhoods in both the north and the south. The aim was clear: to create the conditions for a civil war in order to bring about a regime change that would be more favourable to Israel.

A fragile ceasefire and no halt in Gaza

The initial conditions of the ceasefire included an end to the offensive in Gaza: these clauses are no longer

demanding by Hezbollah, which has agreed to withdraw north of the Litani River. Israel did not really have to withdraw since its offensive never succeeded in establishing a lasting position in southern Lebanon.

The temporary ceasefire offers respite to the Lebanese people who had fled the south because of the bombardments. Several thousand people returned to the south of the country to find their villages and homes devastated. The damage is extremely extensive: dozens of villages almost completely razed to the ground, infrastructures devastated and another 4,000 deaths to be deplored. All this for a temporary and fragile ceasefire, since several violations of the agreement (52 in total, at the time of writing) by Israel have been recorded. For the moment, there has been no escalation, but it is to be feared that this will only be temporary.

Indeed, in operational terms, Netanyahu was somewhat forced into a ceasefire: an army of exhausted

reservists, no victory either tactically (on the ground) or politically in Lebanon and an expectation of rearmament.

Nevertheless, the Gaza front was not interrupted at all. The massacres in the north of Gaza continue amid general indifference and blindness. Particularly since October 2023, the Israeli army has killed 192 journalists in Gaza. The death of aid workers from the American charity World Central Kitchen, which caused a scandal in April, has this time gone unnoticed by the media.

Destabilisation of the region

UNRWA has decided to halt all deliveries of humanitarian trucks through the northern entrance to Gaza. The UN organisation accuses Israel of allowing armed gangs to attack the lorries, either by demanding ransoms or by stealing the goods directly. Some of these groups

have clashed with Hamas. Hamas accuses the Israeli army of complacency with the thieves. The disastrous consequence is that the whole of northern Gaza is left to fend for itself without any means of subsistence. Even if a Hamas delegation was received in Cairo to resume ceasefire negotiations in Gaza, it is clear that Israel has no intention of stopping the destruction and massacres.

Israel has profoundly destabilised the region. Palestine, Lebanon, but also Syria, with renewed fighting between armed factions in the Aleppo region. For decades, the presence of the colony in Palestine has been the main cause of instability in this region of the Middle East. It is high time for this breathless and increasingly dangerous colonial state to collapse and become a state free of apartheid, occupation and military expansionism.

5 December 23024

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Uruguay: Frente Amplio wins presidential election

13 December 2024, by Latin America Commission, New Anti-Capitalist Party

On Sunday 24 November, the Frente Amplio (FA) won the second round of the presidential elections in Uruguay. The pairing of Yamandú Orsi and Carolina Cosse won 49.8% of the vote against 45.8% for the right-wing Partido Nacional. A clear victory. The coalition-movement, as it statutorily defines itself, won in 5 of the 19 departments, whereas previously it had only won in the 2 largest cities, Montevideo and Canelones. The FA won 16 out of 30 senatorial seats and 48 out of 99 deputy seats.

Social security at the heart of the debate

The first round of parliamentary elections took place on 27 October, and above all the plebiscite against social security reform. The majority current of the FA, the MPP (Movimiento de Participación Popular) led by former president Mujica, received the most votes. In October, this sector had opposed the referendum in defence of social

security organised by the PIT-CNT, the central trade union confederation, and supported by the PC, PS and PVP, all parties with working-class bases. The plebiscite against pension reform failed to win a majority, but almost 40% of Uruguayans voted 'Yes'.

These results - parliamentary elections and plebiscite - imply a 'distance' between the leadership of the FA and the aspirations of the workers. This estrangement is not yet formal because the popular classes still have hope in the Orsi-Cosse government, which is natural just after their victory. The number of blank votes,

around 38,500 (bearing in mind you need around 24,000 votes to be elected as a deputy), is undoubtedly a first expression of this. Some of the spoilt votes may reflect the desire of some left-wing voters to put in a 'Yes' ballot paper on 27 October, as a way of expressing their rejection of the two candidates.

Recomposition of the left

Yamandú Orsi has confirmed his willingness to open a dialogue on social security, but the statements made by the future Minister for the

Economy, Gabriel Oddone, have set the tone for the next government: 'between the economic proposals of the Frente Amplio and those of the Republican Coalition (the right) there are not two radically opposed models of the country, but rather differences in priorities' (*El Observador*, 25 November 2024).

There is the beginning, albeit rather timid, of a recomposition of the popular movement and the left. Will the popular movement stand still while the government solves the problems? Will it continue to take initiatives like the plebiscite on social security if its expectations are not

met? Will social movements behave in the same way as they did under previous left-wing governments? Will there be political space for the recomposition of an anti-capitalist left?

These are all unanswered questions. The answer will depend on the measures taken by the FA government and the balance of power that political activists within and outside the FA, as well as the workers' and people's movement, succeed in imposing.

4 December 2024

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GE24: Changing of the Mudguard

12 December 2024, by **Diana O'Dwyer**

After the last election in 2020, escape from a century of FF-FG rule seemed not just possible but probable. The cycle of alternation between the two frenemies had finally been broken with the identical twins of Irish capitalism forced into a grand coalition, propped up by the Green Party with external support from right-wing Independent TDs. [1] The 2008 economic crash and the decade of social upheaval and struggle that followed had enabled Sinn Féin (SF) to steal the mantle of the largest party in the Dáil for the first time and it looked certain to lead the next government.

But now, almost 5 years later, FF and FG have returned with an extra 13 seats and are only one seat short of a majority - compared to 7 short last time. They are not any more popular than they were in 2020 - their share of the vote actually fell slightly (by 0.4%). But in a situation with little in the way of class struggle and where no clear alternative was posed, they were able to maintain and even improve their position. FF topped the poll at 22%, followed by FG on 21% and SF on 19%.

All that stands between FF-FG and

another 5 years in office is a little negotiation with "gene pool" Independents and/or the coalition-loving Labour Party. Eleven of the 16 Independent TDs are ex-FF or FG and only jumped ship because they failed to advance themselves within those parties, or needed to disassociate themselves from an unpopular government decision. Veteran broadcaster, Vincent Browne, caustically observed that "There is no reason why we can't have a new government next Tuesday. FF/FG need to lock in 8 Independents, which should take an hour and a half". Left Independents who in recent elections have made up a sizeable chunk of the Independent vote fared badly: longstanding TDs like Joan Collins and Thomas Pringle lost their seats and former MEP Clare Daly failed to make an impact in Dublin Central. Veteran 74-year old Seamus Healy winning back his seat in Tipperary South was a rare bright spot.

Despite the numbers pointing towards a FF-FG government propped up by right-wing Independents, speculation is continuing about the possibility of a coalition with Labour or the Social Democrats, who won 11 seats each.

Both parties increased their vote largely off the back of the collapse of the Green Party, which was punished for its role as a junior party in the outgoing coalition. Overall the vote for this "centre-left" bloc fell slightly, from 14.4% to 12.5%.

Leaving aside the careerism of the centre-left parties, the reason a tripartite coalition is still being contemplated is that the 20-year routine of FF/FG coalescing with parties or Independents to their centre-left has served them so well. The last government was a FF-FG coalition with the Greens, the previous one a FG minority coalition with centre-left and localist Independents (with confidence and supply from FF) (2016-2020), the one before that was FG and Labour (2011-2016) and the one before that was FF and the Greens (2007-2011).

In each case, the smaller centre-left component has been an excellent mudguard, taking most of the shit for the government's decisions while allowing it to change colouring slightly every few years - from lightest Green to palest pink to washed out rainbow to lightest Green again. Eventually the

mudguard falls off and takes a further kicking from voters at the next election. The bike beneath remains clean and dry and ready for a new mudguard.

In many ways, this composition of the last few governments is an accurate political reflection of the economic base of Irish society. High levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) off the back of massive corporate tax breaks are pivotal to the Irish economy, which remains completely dependent on US multinationals - not only for corporate and income tax revenue but for high earning jobs that support Ireland's large low paid service sector as well as the public sector. Official statistics show that foreign multinationals employ 27% of private sector employees (623,128 people) but pay 37% of total Irish wages and account for 71% of private sector Gross Value Added. The phrase "account for" is used advisedly as much of this GVA is made up of intellectual property and overseas contract manufacturing domiciled in Ireland for tax purposes.

In this context, FF and FG represent a hardy comprador capitalist class whose main concern is to maintain a model of economic development based on high levels of FDI and multinational corporate tax avoidance. Maintaining this base provides continuous flows of capital they can mediate and siphon from, in particular in the housing and property markets but also through high paid employment for lawyers, accountants, IT consultants and the rest of Ireland's professional managerial classes - whose socially concerned left flank makes up much of the social base of the centre-left mudguard parties.

The rise of SF, whose support base is far more rooted in the working class, had threatened to upset this sturdy Apple cart. [2] For several years after the 2020 election, SF had posed a real threat to the permanent rule of FF and FG. They won 24.5% of the vote in 2020 and as recently as April 2023 had peaked at 37% support in the opinion polls. Yet in this election they received only 19% of the vote.

So what happened to SF?

The proximate cause for the collapse in SF's support was the relentless attacks on them from the far right, who identified SF as their main rival for working class support. They incessantly spread outrageous lies about them on social media (like fake online ads for SF-branded burkas) and succeeded in problematising the rise in immigration from 2022 onwards and blaming SF for it, even though they were not in government. [3]

The reason SF were so vulnerable to being blamed for the government's actions was that since 2020 they had come to see themselves as a government-in-waiting and to act accordingly. Frontbench SF reps were shadowing government departments in preparation for becoming ministers, meeting with industry stakeholders in areas like housing and health and signalling their reasonableness at every opportunity. SF strategists saw moving to the middle ground as the way to broaden their support base beyond their blue collar base to white collar workers and the middle class.

SF reps increasingly sought to reassure the capitalist class and big multinationals in particular that a SF government would pose no threat to business-as-usual. Its finance spokesperson, Pearse Doherty, promised international investors at a meeting last May that SF would not make any significant changes to the State's approach to corporation tax or FDI. A briefing from Davy's Stockbrokers confirmed this, reassuring investors that "Overall, Sinn Féin's approach from an economic standpoint is more 'New Labour' than 'Corbyn Labour'".

Consistent with this rightward shift, SF moved away from presenting themselves as the core of an alternative government that would exclude FF and FG. After the 2020 vote, they had approached PBP and the centre left parties about forming an alternative government without FF and FG and even held large public rallies to galvanise support. However, they soon reverted to talking about a

"SF-led government", phrasing that left the door open to coalition with FF if SF were the larger party. They repeatedly refused to rule out coalition with FF and rejected repeated calls from PBP for a left alliance for this election.

All this meant that SF were observably in the process of selling out their supporters before they even got into government. They took their core working class support base for granted and the far right ruthlessly exploited this to their own advantage, pointing working class anger at the housing and cost of living crisis and suspicion of SF in the wrong direction - towards hostility to immigrants and the so-called "woke agenda". An exit poll carried out on the day of the election found that living standards had worsened for almost half of SF and PBP voters in the past year, compared to 71% of "other party" supporters, which are mainly far right. But even this understates the impact of the cost of living crisis for the hardest pressed sections of the working class and among young people, who were least likely to vote. Turnout in the election was the lowest ever at 59.7% - compared to 62.88% in 2020 when SF topped the poll for the first time. It was much lower in working class areas like Jobstown in PBP TD Paul Murphy's constituency of Dublin South West, where turnout was 39%. It is difficult to accurately measure the turnout among young people but it was certainly nothing approaching the Repeal referendum in 2018, when thousands of young people forced to emigrate by the housing crisis flew home to vote.

Over the last five years, left wing and progressive social movements have been thin on the ground. The only real exception has been the movement on Palestine, which is part of a vital anti-imperialist movement internationally but probably has the least purchase in the hard pressed working class areas targeted by the far right. The same has been true internationally - with a discernible downturn in progressive movements beginning in 2020. The pandemic played a role in dampening the climate and women's rights movements and in Ireland the far right spread its spores for the first time under Covid. Aside from the

movement on Palestine, there has been little sign of any widespread resurgence in progressive struggle in the years since. This wasn't for the want of trying. PBP participated in (and often helped to organise) virtually every progressive movement or protest in the last 5 years, including countless demonstrations on Palestine, the cost of living, disability justice, housing, anti-racism and far right counter-protests. Yet ultimately, the persistently low level of struggle was an objective factor we had little control over.

The destructive role of the far right

Into this void, the far right flowed. Despite their tiny core activist base, they have succeeded in shifting politics to the right with the help of thousands of international far right supporters and social media bots. This has included the far right billionaire Elon Musk, whose takeover of Twitter in 2022 was instrumental in disseminating their message of hate - or in the words of Steve Bannon - of "flooding the zone with shit". Last April, a Sky News analysis of anti-migration hashtags concerning Ireland found that the majority originated in the US. This international social media support has made them seem like they have far more popular support than they actually do. Localised protests against accommodation for asylum seekers, including dozens of arson attacks likely carried out by a small core of extremists, also gained them huge media attention and made it seem like they had support across the country.

In retrospect, the far right riots in Dublin on November 21st 2023 were a key turning point for SF's support - and hope of an alternative government excluding FF and FG. The riots caused millions of euro worth of damage and turned Dublin city centre into a no-go area for many hours. There were arson attacks on buses, police cars and refugee accommodation and mass looting of shops. SF attempted to exploit the situation to gain respectability, responding with a

reactionary law and order approach and attacking the government for its record on policing and anti-social behaviour. They moved a motion of no confidence in the Justice Minister - who was a target for the far right for introducing hate speech legislation. Instead of joining PBP in attacking the far right for deliberately fomenting the riots on social media and the government for creating the social deprivation that led so many young people in the inner city to gleefully join in, SF leaned into the right wing narrative that Dublin had become a dangerous place that needed a massive increase in policing. That narrative was substantially rooted in racist fears being whipped up around black and brown immigrant men, so it paradoxically strengthened the far right at a time when they should have been seriously undermined.

SF's law and order posturing also failed to convince the middle ground. Their history of violence and criminality was exhaustively exhumed in the media and by the government parties who portrayed them as cynics attempting to exploit the riots for political gain. From then on, SF's popularity began to plummet. It took a further hit following their support for a yes vote in the massively defeated Family and Care referendums last March - which were successfully exploited by the far right on social media as more fronts in the culture war. They had a terrible result in the local elections in June, winning less than 12% of the vote, while several far right councillors were elected in traditional SF strongholds.

Since then, SF had been scrambling around, taking rearguard actions to try to neutralise the impact of far right and anti-immigration sentiment on their vote. They reversed their stance on hate crime legislation they had previously supported and were widely criticised for dog whistles about opposing "open borders". Last July they published "a plan to fix our broken international protection system" that promised faster deportations and opposition to siting accommodation centres in working class areas on grounds of resources. This pandering to far right and anti-immigrant sentiment failed to revive their support as it fed into a pre-

existing perception by many working class voters that SF were flip flopping and untrustworthy. It may have stopped them from hemorrhaging even more support to their right, but this was likely counteracted by losing support to their left. Then, from September onwards, SF went into further freefall after wall-to-wall media coverage of several internal party sexual harassment and child abuse scandals. SF's support bottomed out at 16% in October 2024, closing out an "Annus horribilis" for the party right before the election.

Refusal to rule out coalition with the Right

SF's campaign slogan, "Vote to Change the Government", would have been a banal truism in any other liberal democracy - aside perhaps from 20th century Mexico. In Ireland with its 100 year-reign of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, it appeared radical. And yet, it was also immediately undermined by SF's refusal to say what that "changed government" should be. Despite FF ruling them out as coalition partners, SF steadfastly refused to do the same and rule out coalition with FF and FG. This would have given voters a clear choice between more of the same and an alternative government without any of the establishment parties that had ruled the country since independence.

SF were not the only ones at fault for this. The experienced and potential mudguard parties - Labour, the Greens and the Social Democrats - also refused to rule out coalition with FF and FG. Labour and the Greens were openly gagging to get back into bed with them and the Social Democrats refused to support the call to vote left- transfer left until the day before the election - after SF had belatedly done so. In reality, both these last minute outbursts of left unity were more about mopping up transfers from opponents than any serious attempt to present an alternative left alliance to the electorate. SF and the Social Democrats could have supported PBP's calls for a left electoral front

last July and presented people with a clear left alternative like the NPF in France. Had they done so, the outcome of the election may have been different.

Over the last five years, the issue with the most potential for sparking a mass working class movement was probably the cost of living crisis. Unlike the housing crisis it had a sudden, rather than gradual, onset from 2022 and it affected a broader swathe of society. By 2023, a third of the population were living in energy poverty and grocery prices were up 20%. The emerging movement had its high point prior to the Budget in October 2022, when PBP helped to organise a protest of 30,000 people in Dublin city centre under the banner of the Cost of Living Coalition. However, the Government's unprecedented multinational corporate tax bonanza - running at €35 billion for the year in November, compared to a previous peak of €24 billion last year - enabled it to cut across any emerging movement quite effectively. Billions of euro were doled out in one-off payments, ranging from energy credits to double social welfare benefits. The same trick was played again in last October's Budget, with double child benefit and social welfare payments given to millions of people in November and again in December, right before and immediately after the election.

This ability to temper the cost of living crisis helped FF-FG to buck the so-called incumbency curse that has toppled so many governments this year, including in the US. The latest Eurobarometer poll carried out in late October/early November found that 79% of Irish respondents rated their household financial situation as good. 63% rated the national economy as "good" compared to 35% across the EU-27. Those results would look very

different for PBP's support base which is rooted in harder pressed sections of the urban working class - the same demographic that makes up the neglected core of SF's support but which makes up a fifth of the population at most. As mentioned above, half of SF and PBP voters had seen their living standards decline in the last year, compared to 35% of voters generally.

The incoming Trump administration has identified Ireland as a major tax haven for US multinationals and threatened to bring them back home for tax purposes so it is unclear if Ireland's corporate tax bonanza will continue. This threat ended up being another important factor in the government's return as in the final week of the campaign, FF and FG stepped up "Project Fear", warning voters not to risk the economy by voting for SF - even though it had also pledged to protect Ireland's corporate tax haven status.

People Before Profit's election campaign

Faced with this combination of low levels of struggle and fears about the future of the economy, both SF and PBP struggled to make ground. PBP-Solidarity managed to slightly increase our share of the vote to 2.84% nationally by running candidates in almost every constituency, allowing us to easily surpass the 2% threshold for state funding of political parties. This also revealed that there is now a small "party vote" for us right across the country that we had not tapped into previously. In future local elections in particular it could make sense to run strong campaigns in several parts of

Dublin and the surrounding commuter counties where we have never had TDs or councillors elected but where we increased our vote in this election.

Unfortunately, it was in our traditional strongholds that we struggled the most, causing us to lose more than a fifth of our vote in areas where we had TDs and 2 of our 4 Dáil seats. In Dublin Mid West we were squeezed by the far right and lost Gino Kenny's seat. In Dublin South Central we were squeezed by SF and the Social Democrats and also lost our seat. In Dun Laoghaire where Richard Boyd Barrett had the safest seat going into the election, we lost 29% of our vote.

The only TD area where our vote increased was in Dublin South West but even there it was a very hard fought campaign. Paul Murphy had been badly affected by a redrawing of constituency boundaries that removed our best area but managed to hang on to the last seat and was re-elected on the last count. Preliminary tally data suggests we were able to resist the general fall in turnout in working class areas by getting our voters out to vote at a higher rate than voters for other parties.

The lessons from this election for the future point to the necessity of providing the working class with a clear left alternative to "FF-FG forever". However, they also demonstrate the difficulty for socialist organisations of swimming against the tide in conditions where there is a low level of struggle combined with an economy and a government that can mitigate the worst effects of the cost of living crisis for most of the working class.

10 December 2024

Source: [Rupture](#).

Where is Syria headed?

11 December 2024, by [Gilbert Achcar](#)

Now, as the Arabic saying goes, the time has come for meditation after elation. Let us reflect on what has happened so far to try to foresee what the future may hold. First of all, it is worth pointing out to those who supported the hateful Assad regime and claimed that it was representative of the Syrian people's will and that everyone who opposed it was but a mercenary for some foreign power, whether regional or international, and who also claimed that this regime, which had not moved a finger for half a century against the Zionist occupation of its own land, and which had intervened in Lebanon in 1976 to suppress the forces of the alliance of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Lebanese National Movement and rescue the forces of the Lebanese Christian sectarian right, and which had joined the camp of the war on Iraq led by the United States and the Saudi kingdom in 1990, was the beating heart of the "axis of resistance" – it is worth point out to those that reality has conclusively proven that the hateful Assad regime was standing only thanks to two foreign occupations, out of the five foreign occupations across Syrian territory.

The truth is that if it were not for the Iranian intervention that started in 2013, especially through Lebanon's Hezbollah, and for the Russian intervention that started in 2015, and also for the US veto that prevented the Syrian opposition from receiving any type of anti-aircraft weapon for fear that it might be used against the Israeli Air Force – if it were not for these three factors, the Assad regime would have fallen more than a decade ago, as it was on the brink of the abyss in 2013, and again in 2015 despite Iranian rescue. The plain fact is that once external support dried up, the regime collapsed like any "puppet regime" that is abandoned by the power that used to hold its strings. The latest striking example of such a collapse was what happened to the puppet regime in Kabul in the face of the Taliban's advance, after US forces gave up propping it in 2021.

Thus, after Russia had withdrawn most of its forces from Syria due to getting bogged down in the quagmire of its invasion of Ukraine (Moscow left only 15 military aircraft in Syria,

according to Israeli sources), and after the Lebanese Hezbollah had suffered a severe defeat, which its new Secretary-General desperately tried to portray as a "great victory... that surpasses the victory achieved in 2006" and which prevented it from being able to rescue its Syrian ally this time, all this while Iran carried on with its cautious approach terrified at the prospect of an escalation of Israel's aggression against it and the possibility that the United States might join it directly, after Donald Trump's return to the White House – in the face of these facts combined, when Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) seized the opportunity thus created to launch an offensive on the areas under the control of the regime and its allies, starting with the city of Aleppo, the Syrian puppet regime collapsed like its Afghan counterpart.

The big difference between the Afghan and Syrian cases, though, is that HTS is much weaker than the Taliban were when they completed their control of their country. The forces of the Assad family's regime collapsed not out of fear of a mighty enemy, but because they had no incentive to defend the regime any longer. The army, constructed on a sectarian basis through the Assad family's exploitation of the Alawite minority to which they belong, no longer had an incentive to fight for the Assad family's control over the entire country, especially in light of the collapse of living conditions that led to the nosedive of the purchasing power of soldiers' incomes. The regime's miserable last-minute attempt to raise their salaries by fifty percent could not change anything. As a result, the current situation in Syria is very different from that of Afghanistan following the Taliban's victory. HTS only controls some of the Syrian territories, and its control is fragile in part of them, especially the area surrounding the capital Damascus, where the regime collapsed before HTS reached it, preceded by the forces of the Southern Operations Room.

Syria is now divided into several areas under the control of heterogenous, even hostile, forces. First, there is the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, where the Zionist state has seized the

opportunity to expand into the buffer zone that separated the territories it occupies and did formally annex in 1981 from the territories controlled by the Syrian regime, while its air force has begun to destroy some of the key military capabilities of the defunct regime to prevent whoever succeeds it from seizing them. There is also the vast area that HTS now controls in the north and centre, but the extent of this control in general, and especially in the coastal region that includes the Alawite mountain, is highly questionable. Then there are two areas on the northern border under Turkish occupation, accompanied by the deployment of the "Syrian National Army" (which should rather be called the "Turkish-Syrian Army"); a considerable area in the northeast, east of the Euphrates River, under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces dominated by the Kurdish movement, allied with some Arab tribes (which HTS will certainly seek to win over to its side) under the protection of US forces; a large area in the south, west of the Euphrates River, under the control of the Syrian Free Army, also linked to the United States and centred around the US base at al-Tanf inside Syrian territory, close to the borders with Jordan and Iraq; and finally, the southern region, where forces in the Daraa region that rebelled against the Assad regime, some of which were under Russian tutelage, and forces emerging from the popular movement in the Suwayda region, have gathered together to form the Southern Operations Room, which is the Syrian Arab armed faction the most closely linked to the popular democratic movement.

Now, where might things go from here? The first observation is that the possibility of all these factions agreeing to submit to a single authority is almost nil, even if we put aside the Kurdish movement and limit ourselves to the Arab factions. Even Turkey, which has a longstanding relationship with HTS, and without which HTS would not have been able to hold out in the Idlib region in northwest Syria, will not abandon its occupation and its puppets as long as it does not achieve its goal of curtailing the Kurdish movement. The second observation is that those who hoped or believed in the

transformation of HTS and Ahmed al-Sharaa, aka al-Julani, from Salafist jihadism to non-sectarian democracy have begun to realize that they were delusional. The truth is that HTS would not have been able to spread in place of the forces of the collapsed regime had it not pretended to change its skin and open up to a democratic, non-sectarian future. Otherwise, local forces from Homs to Damascus would have fiercely resisted it, whether under the wing of the defunct regime or after emancipating from it. Now, al-Julani's haste to claim that he has turned the "Salvation Government" that ruled the Idlib region into the

new Syrian government, frustrating the hopes of those who expected him to call for a coalition government, highlights a fact that should have remained in people's minds: the fact that the residents of the Idlib region themselves demonstrated only eight months ago against HTS's tyranny, demanding the overthrow of al-Julani, the dissolution of his repressive apparatuses, and the release of detainees in his prisons.

Last but not least, the joy over the tyrant's fall should not make us overlook the haste of various European governments to stop

considering Syrian asylum applications, and the beginning of various countries, especially Lebanon, Turkey, and some European countries, to consider expelling the Syrian refugees and forcibly returning them to Syria under the pretext of the Assad regime's termination. Syria has not yet emerged from its long historical ordeal that began 54 years ago (with Hafez al-Assad's 1970 coup) and tragically worsened 13 years ago (after the 2011 popular uprising). All countries must keep respecting the right of asylum granted to Syrians, and continue to consider granting it to Syrians who demand it.

Assassination of Insurance Executive Brings Little Sympathy but Much Criticism of Health Insurance Companies

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

While Thompson's shooting led to the mobilization of hundreds of police officers and detectives, there has been no sympathy from the public but rather an outpouring of criticism and expressions of frustration, anger, and disgust with the industry he represented. A New York Times headline read, "Torrent of Hate for Health Insurance Industry Follows C.E.O.'s Killing," The article began, "The fatal shooting on Wednesday of a top UnitedHealthcare executive, Brian Thompson, on a Manhattan sidewalk has unleashed a torrent of morbid glee from patients and others who say they have had negative experiences with health insurance companies at some of the hardest times of their lives."

UnitedHealth posted a condolence message, but it had to be taken down because 84,000 people—no doubt many of them customers—sent a laughter emoji. One person wrote on TikTok, "I'm an ER [emergency room] nurse and the things I've seen dying patients get denied for by insurance makes me physically sick. I just can't

feel sympathy for him because of all of those patients and their families."

Unlike most advanced industrial countries, the United States doesn't have a national health system providing universal access to health care. There is neither national health insurance coverage nor national hospitals and clinics. The system is largely privately owned and for-profit. According to the U.S. Census, 8.2% of Americans, or 27.1 million people, largely old and poor people, have no health insurance coverage whatsoever. Some 65.4% of Americans had private health insurance, while 36.3% have public coverage through government programs, such as Medicaid, Medicare, and various military and veteran programs. Some people have both private and public insurance. Most Americans (57%) have health insurance through their employers. The Affordable Care Act, known as Obama Care, offers insurance to household what earn too much for Medicaid or don't have employer insurance coverage. The

insurance companies' bureaucracies work to reduce claims and increase profits. UnitedHealth, according to a recent business report, denied 33% of claims in 2023, the most in the industry.

UnitedHealthcare is part of UnitedHealth Group, America's largest insurance company and the fourth-largest corporation of any type in America as ranked by revenue in the Fortune 500 list. UnitedHealthcare has approximately 400,000 employees and had 52.7 million medical insurance members at the end of 2023. The company expects to have \$455 billion in revenues in 2025 and had \$22.3 billion in profits last year, up from \$13 billion in 2019. The COVID pandemic led to greater profits because fewer people went to the hospital for doctor visits and treatments, so companies didn't have to pay claims. UnitedHealth Group and other insurers routinely increase profits by delaying or denying claims payments for treatment. Thompson, who was under investigation for

insider trading, was slated to become president of the corporation when he was murdered.

The killing of Thompson has turned

his assassin into an admired Robin Hood figure. "Anyone who helps to identify the shooter is an enemy of the people," said a post on X with more

than 110,000 likes and nearly 9,200 retweets," according to The Washington Post. But we don't need a Robin Hood, we need a movement for democratic socialism.

A fraud too far in Mozambique

9 December 2024, by **Paul Martial**

Fraud and corruption

Frelimo is no stranger to electoral fraud, which has enabled it to retain power since the country gained independence in 1975. But today this is no longer acceptable, and the protest is massive for two main reasons. The level of fraud is unprecedented. Many observers have reported ballot box stuffing and inconsistencies in the figures, resulting in voter totals of over 100%. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) refused to endorse Chapo's victory. Such is the embarrassment that the Constitutional Court has still not given its verdict. The second reason is that the people want real change. With Frelimo in power, corruption to the tune of nearly two billion dollars has been a real drag on the country's economic growth. By the authorities' own admission, two-thirds of the population live below the poverty line. The policy of discrimination against certain communities has encouraged the emergence of a jihadist guerrilla movement in the Cabo Delgado region, bringing to a halt the huge gas production project in which TotalEnergies is involved.

A climate of repression

Venâncio Mondlane declared himself the winner of the elections and called on the population to fight against 'electoral banditry'. Demonstrations were widespread and took place in almost every province of the country. The authorities responded with a terrible crackdown. The police fired live ammunition at the demonstrators. Human rights organisations estimate that 70 people lost their lives. Many people were arrested. The police took advantage of Frelimo's social surveillance to arrest and execute the leaders of the demonstrations in the neighbourhoods. Venâncio Mondlane's lawyer and a close associate were killed in the street. Mondlane, who had fled to South Africa, claimed to be the victim of an assassination attempt. He is now living in hiding. The people's fighting spirit is not strong enough to sweep away the regime, but it is strong enough to prevent the normalisation of political life.

A lack of alternative

This precarious balance has prompted all the parties to join forces in a broad opposition front to demand the truth

from the ballot box, at Mondlane's initiative. This is not his first battle against electoral fraud. In 2023, he fought against the inversion of results to his detriment when he was a candidate for mayor of Maputo. At the time, Mondlane represented Renamo, the main opposition party. When Renamo refused him the nomination for the 2024 presidential elections, he turned to Podemos, a small party made up mainly of former Frelimo members, whose two candidates were unable to stand. So it was a case of a candidate looking for a party and a party looking for a candidate.

Mondlane's arm wrestling with the Frelimo dictatorship should not obscure the fact that he warmly congratulated Donald Trump on his election, and this was no mere diplomatic manoeuvre to turn Washington into an ally. This former evangelical pastor has expressed his admiration for Bolsonaro and, during his visit to Portugal, met with the far-right Chega party.

This makes it all the more necessary to mobilise independently from an opposition that does not really represent an alternative.

28 November 2024

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

“We won’t solve the problem of violence against women simply by changing the laws”

8 December 2024, by Maria

What has been the impact of the law on “comprehensive protection measures against domestic violence” passed in 2004?

The law was a fundamental step in recognising the existence of structural violence that women suffer as women, as a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men. Male violence is expressed in many areas, although its application has been reduced to cases where the violence is perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner. This limitation was criticised by the feminist movement and, almost 20 years later, the need for a law to combat sexual violence has become clear, giving reason to this criticism. The impact could perhaps have been greater if, from the outset, a comprehensive response to the violence suffered by women in all spheres had been provided, and not just focused on the private sphere of conjugal or couple relationships.

As a comprehensive law, it recognises that the approach and responses to this violence must be multidisciplinary and includes measures in many areas: prevention, education, media and advertising, support for victims, etc. However, it focuses more on the criminal dimension, as the law itself states: “the criminal response that all manifestations of violence regulated by law must receive will be tackled resolutely”.

In the area of advertising, it can be seen that the law has not been applied in a “resolute” manner. Over the past 20 years, we have seen numerous campaigns by the women’s movement denouncing, for example, the pink and blue toy catalogues every Christmas, but few if any measures, or even fines, have been applied against the companies responsible to ensure that

this does not happen again. In terms of education, much greater progress could have been made, and in a much stronger way, but this has not been the case. With the rise of the far right and its presence in the institutions, the few advances that have been made in the field of education have been called into question, with initiatives such as the “parental pin” proposed by the far right party VOX a few years ago (providing for parental authorisation for children’s participation in activities related to issues of gender violence, among others).

Applying the penal code as the main measure is the failure of violence prevention, it’s the last response of the state, it shouldn’t be the first or the main one. The idea is that if we continue to generate “healthy children of patriarchy”, we cannot think that by severely applying the punishment they deserve for the violence they perpetrate, the problem will be solved. It’s not because we increase penalties that violence will decrease, there’s enough evidence to support that. It is by focusing on structural and symbolic violence, rather than trying to determine the sanctions to be applied in the case of direct violence, that we will succeed in reducing violence and building societies free from oppression.

Repressive measures have succeeded in changing common sense with regard to the recognition of violence that used to be legal, such as punishing your wife with a slap if she doesn’t make dinner, or hitting her for cheating on you, because these actions now carry a criminal penalty. “You can no longer act as you did before”. They have also made it possible to avoid reducing violence to its physical form, and it is now hard to find anyone who doesn’t know that

violence can also be and is verbal and psychological, and that it generates after-effects in the same way as physical violence.

But the application of a well-oiled repressive machinery, without other accompanying responses, has also had perverse effects, such as the climate of victimisation in which men now live. In today’s imagination, there is the idea that a woman has the power to ruin a man’s life simply by lodging a complaint, whereas her protection before the courts and this power are not so automatic. The insistence on false complaints (everyone claims to know of cases where women have used the law to take revenge), the fact that men claim to be criminalised and the continual “Not all men” show how far we have failed to reverse the narrative that violence is an individual problem and not a social one.

For many, this change in common sense has been experienced as something imposed, rather than as a logical step forward in rights and social justice.

Has the number of feminicides been significantly reduced?

According to data from the National Statistics Institute (www.ine.es) on the number of women murdered by their partner or ex-partner between 1999 and 2023, there has been no significant reduction in feminicide. In 1999, there were 54 feminicides and last year 58. The years with the lowest number of victims (49) were 2016, 2017, 2021 and 2022, and the year with the highest number (76) was 2008.

While it is true that in the last decade the number of feminicides has fallen compared to the previous decade, not reaching 60 victims, whereas in the previous decade it was more common

to exceed this number, I believe that we are still a long way from being able to say that this reduction is significant. Nevertheless, the trend is towards a reduction.

In France, we are debating the introduction of the notion of consent in the legal definition of rape. A bit like the “Sólo sí es sí” [Only a yes is a yes] law of 25 August 2022 does? What did it allow?

I really think it's too early to know what the law has achieved, in addition to the latest reform that the PSOE has incorporated, from what I understand, it gives rise to a legislative framework very similar to the one we had in reality. The media noise generated around this issue has not exactly been positive, and it will have many undesirable effects (for example, the announcement of the release of rapists by reducing the penalties of the law has reinforced punitive populism), and the “Errejon case”, which occurred only a few weeks ago, puts the finishing touches to the issue in a negative way.

The “Soló si es sí” campaign is in response to criticism from a feminist movement that has highlighted a highly sexist and patriarchal judicial system. One of the movement's main demands was to eliminate the distinction between abuse and aggression, to broaden the concept of sexual aggression, emphasising our sexual freedom to decide on the relationships we have, the practices we indulge in, the limits we set ourselves, to be a subject and not just an object of desire and pleasure.

But this law was not conceived by feminist groups as a whole, and it is a mistake that its development was limited to a dialogue between institutional feminism and an obsolete and patriarchal judiciary, without the autonomous feminist and civil movement being able to play a specific role. Thus, while the law echoes the demands of the movement, it also incorporates its punitive tendency, focusing on judicialisation and giving a particular voice to the most abolitionist approaches. Abolitionism, criminalisation and judicialisation tend to go hand in hand; indeed, in its

original formulation, it included issues such as penalising landlords for renting properties used for prostitution, reflecting the abolitionist and criminalising attitude towards sex workers. Also absent from the debate was a commitment to a new formulation of feminist justice.

It is a law designed “against sexual assault”, not a law “for sexual freedoms”, despite its name, but it is nevertheless a major step forward: it emphasises the rights of victims, rather than focusing on perpetrators, and does not require a criminal complaint to be made in order to access remedies, which is what happened in the law on gender-based violence. Focusing on this rather than on whether or not violence is perpetrated is a step forward, even if it generates debate about consent and what has been called the shift from a “culture of violence” to a “culture of consent”.

Does putting the clear and manifest expression of affirmative consent put the victims at the centre?

The transition from a demonstration of violence to a demonstration of consent is not necessarily simpler or more liberating for the victim; we still need to change the ideas that justify aggression and exonerate aggressors from all responsibility. How do we deal with the fact that many women are sexually assaulted in the context of family and friends? Dismantling what we call the ‘rape culture’ remains a task to be accomplished. Consent as such is a problematic and ambiguous concept: what behaviours and practices are recognised as manifestations of consent, what are they, and according to what cultural codes should we understand non-verbal consent? The logic of affirmative demonstration implies an understanding that all sexual intercourse is potentially a sexual assault from which we must protect ourselves. It implies a vision of sexuality full of fears and dangers, in which women are potential victims and not subjects with the right to enjoy their bodies and their sexuality. All this while the debate revolves around punishment and involves regulating and criminalising.

Assuming that without consent, “without yes, there is sexual assault” places many sexual relationships governed by other logics in potentially punishable areas.

The commitment to a culture of consent makes it desirable to regulate and standardise the sexual process, which affects the very process of development, discovery, experimentation and the ability to set one's own limits. I'm not against consent, but I am against punitive regulation of consent. Unilateral consent on the part of women makes us reluctant subjects. We take it for granted that we are the ones who must consent, that we are not attracted to sex, that we do not desire, that we do not touch, that we do not take pleasure? It's the idea that “they always want it”, or that we don't like it. It's more a question of wanting to have sex or not, than of consenting. That's why I think it's better to talk about sexual freedom rather than consent.

Beyond the legal aspects, how is society progressing in terms of gender violence?

After a few years in the heat of strike action, when it seemed that feminism was hegemonic and that progress had been made, we are now witnessing with horror the macho counter-reaction. It seems that the gap between the sexes is obvious and that men have been left behind. In the words of bell hooks, “there has never been a collective and determined demand for boys and men to join the feminist movement to liberate themselves from patriarchy”, and I think this is one of the tasks ahead of us.

We have come a long way and we know that legislative changes are important, even if they have their limits. We won't solve the problem of violence simply by changing the laws. We need real and profound changes in social structures. If male violence, as we know, is structural, until we break down patriarchy and live in non-patriarchal societies, the direct violence we suffer will not stop.

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

Putin's new weapon

7 December 2024, by Catherine Samary

The United States had been informed 30 minutes before the launch of this missile, which had no nuclear warhead but was capable of carrying one. It did little damage, hitting a former Dnipro factory. For Putin, it was a multi-faceted theatrical operation aimed at a variety of audiences: to frighten Ukraine and the public opinion of the countries that support it, by taking the nuclear rhetoric of his threats to the West a notch higher, by amending a decree to state that any aid given to Ukraine would signal the country concerned as a 'co-belligerent' and liable to nuclear retaliation.

At the same time, Putin wanted to reassure the Russian people about the country's defence capabilities. The Russian leader welcomed the success of a 'test' - enabling the production of other missiles of this type to be launched. Except that, according to experts, it would cost 100 to 200 times more than the missiles fired at Ukraine every day (and massively intercepted). What's more, Ukraine has already had to deal with Russian hypersonic missiles that Putin had previously described as invincible. This was the case in May 2023, when Kiev used an American Patriot anti-missile system to destroy a Kh-47M2 Kinjal missile (launched at Ukraine from a Russian MiG-31) which, according to Putin, as he repeated for his 'Oreshnik', could not be intercepted.

The difficulties of the Putin regime

But above all, Putin accompanied his presentation of Operation Oreshnik

with a significant measure for his soldiers: the cancellation of their debts - in addition to several budgetary measures already taken to find volunteers - and to help their families when they die at the front, which is the rule.

At the beginning of November, according to US security services, Russia had trained North Korean soldiers who could go to the front. This would mark both a turning point in the war and an admission. Until now, there has been no recourse to foreign troops to fight alongside Kiev or Moscow - but such recourse would underline the difficulty of recruiting soldiers - which is also true in Ukraine, but in a different context. Putin has turned his attention to the poorest people in the farthest reaches of the Russian Federation and has offered wages well above those offered by industry, creating labour shortages there too. The Russian war economy is firing on all cylinders and paying out wages - but it's not enough to 'live on' or produce what the population needs. And inflation is likely to exacerbate tensions.

Overall, the 'military operation' launched by Putin in February 2022 was supposed to bring about the fall of the Zelensky government and the submission of Ukraine to the 'Russian world' in a matter of days. For almost three years now, Ukrainians have been resisting (to the surprise of Biden and other NATO forces), demanding the means to repel the invader.

Ukraine is fighting in self-defence

In anticipation of negotiations that would be catalysed by Trump after his inauguration, both parties are seeking to consolidate their positions. According to the US press, President Biden has authorised Kiev, under his supervision, to carry out attacks on Russian territory using missiles with a range of 300 km capable of reaching the Kursk region, where North Korean forces are believed to be stationed. The aim would be to dissuade the North Korean forces from intervening and targeting the military sites from which the repeated attacks on Ukraine's infrastructure and population have been launched for months - resulting in thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of injuries.

This war has transformed the Russian regime in a fascist direction - killing its opponents, imprisoning them or forcing them into exile. It has also deepened 'anti-Russian' hatred even in the Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine. This has not stopped the blindness of some of the world's leftists, whose only possible imperial enemy was NATO - and who, for some, see Putin as a progressive alternative to the West.

The Trump era opens up great uncertainties. Our role is to help the popular resistance in Ukraine - armed and unarmed, and independent of the rulers - and the Russian opponents of war by building internationalist alternatives.

28 November 2024

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

After President Yoon's failed self-coup

6 December 2024, by **Youngsu Won**

What happened?

At 10.29pm on December 3, Yoon declared he was imposing martial law, formed a military command and sent armed special force troops to occupy parliament and arrest key politicians.

But the coup attempt failed.

As parliamentary officials and opposition party staff fought back against the coup-plotting soldiers inside parliament, activists and trade unionists gathered outside.

By 1.02am on December 4, 190 MPs — including the entire opposition and some government MPs — managed to convene an emergency plenary session and unanimously vote to repeal martial law.

A few hours later, Yoon accepted defeat and said he would respect parliament's decision. But the question of whether Yoon should resign or be impeached remains unresolved.

Still a mystery

Why did Yoon attempt a self-coup? The president said his intention was to remove a "cancer", namely supposedly pro-North Korean anti-government forces. But this is a farcical excuse.

What we know is that most of the key military and civilian figures involved in the coup attempt were Yoon's colleagues in high school. Moreover, the number of soldiers involved was very small, less than 280.

The poorly written martial law decree revealed how little thought out the conspirators' plan was.

Yoon's secretaries and ministers quickly resigned, as did his defense minister who, having participated in the coup plot, tried to claim

responsibility for defeating it.

We also know that Yoon and his wife, Kim Keon-hee, have previously exhibited bizarre behaviour. In many ways, their marriage resembles a black comedy and gossip TV series.

For most of her life, Kim has been a surreal figure, having been involved in several financial scams, many orchestrated by her mother, herself a large-scale behind the scenes scammer.

Perhaps responsibility for the coup plot lies completely with the couple. The reality is that few Koreans understand either of them.

What is more, Yoon is a very poor communicator. In early November, the president delivered a speech to the nation in which he was supposed to apologise for his wife's involvement in several scandals. His speech was so vague that nobody understood what he was apologising for.

It will take more time to figure out the real motives behind the coup. No doubt more information will come out during the trial and punishment of the coup plotters.

Division within the ruling party

With the president seemingly refusing to step down, opposition parties are seeking to impeach him.

Back in 2018, South Koreans forced parliament to impeach then-president Park Geun-hye after 134 days of consecutive candlelight protests that together mobilised more than 15 million people. Park belonged to a predecessor party that later helped form Yoon's People Power Party (PPP) in 2020.

The ruling right-wing PPP faces a

deep crisis. It suffered a huge defeat in the April general elections, which left it a minority bloc in parliament.

Despite Yoon hand-picking his close friend Han Dong-hoon to lead the party, the PPP is today divided between Yoon and Han supporters.

Yoon's coup attempt took party leaders by shock, leading Han and 18 other government MPs to join with the opposition in repealing martial law.

At first, it also appeared they would support impeachment. But after much debate, Han's faction failed to persuade Yoon's backers to support impeaching the president.

While there was no way the pro-Yoon faction could justify the coup, impeachment was a step too far. Many felt impeaching a second president would spell political death for the party.

The ruling party's decision placed the opposition Democratic Party in a delicate situation as they required the votes of at least some government MPs to obtain the two-thirds majority required for impeachment.

But with public opinion turning on the failed coup leader, the PPP may soon pay a very heavy political price for its continuing support of Yoon.

A December 4 survey of 504 respondents found 73.6% supported impeachment, with only 24% opposed.

Asked whether Yoon had committed the crime of treason by declaring martial law, 68.5% answered yes; only 24.9% said no.

The real battle is in the streets

Given impeachment seems to be blocked, it is now up to the people to

step in where politicians failed.

Given the self-coup ended quite swiftly, popular mobilisation against it was fairly limited. Protests were held inside and outside parliament, as well as in Gwanghwamun Square, a symbolic protest site during the 2018 candlelight protests.

A huge protest to demand Yoon's resignation is planned for Seoul this weekend.

The PPP will no doubt become a target of people's ire should it choose to continue supporting Yoon. The ruling right-wing conservatives face an existential choice of discarding Yoon or going down in flames with him as a political force.

Whatever his intention, Yoon failed to recognise the deep-seated nature of people's decades-long popular resistance to military and civilian

dictatorships. South Koreans refuse to accept the sight of tanks and troops occupying the heart of Seoul.

Yoon's failed coup has shown that South Korea still has some way to go to achieve genuine democracy — and that obtaining this will require further democratic revolutions.

December 5

[Links](#)

Call for donations for ESSF's Asia 2025 Solidarity Fund - Joining forces

5 December 2024, by **Adam Novak, Pierre Rousset**

We are launching our annual appeal to fund our permanent Asia Solidarity Fund for the year 2025. We are in the midst of a deadly spiral of worsening crises - from the international 'reactionary acceleration' symbolised by the election of Donald Trump to global warming spiralling out of control. Maintaining solidarity, in all its forms, is a matter of the utmost urgency. Our association is committed to ensuring the continuity of this solidarity, including financial one, with the movements whose work we support in four Asian countries, for the help they provide to populations deeply affected by disasters of human or natural origin.

In September, our solidarity fund was almost exhausted. We launched an appeal so we could seal the gap up to the end of the year, and it was done. More generally, ***we were able, in 2024, to provide our partner organizations with financial support comparable to that of previous years.*** . All this was not a foregone conclusion. We would like already to express our sincere thanks to all those who made this possible.

However, it will not be possible to draw up a financial balance sheet for 2024 until the beginning of next year, to include, among other items, the

results of our present appeal for the 2025 solidarity fund.

As a reminder :

- All the donations we receive are passed on to our partners. The ESSF team itself covers the costs of maintaining the website and distributing the Newsletters. No one is paid for this militant activity in any form whatsoever.

- All donations count, large or small. Don't give up on making a donation because it's 'too far out of line' with what's needed. In addition to the financial contribution, which is never negligible when they multiply, they constitute a gesture of political solidarity which the movements we support are sensitive to. If you can make a large donation, please feel free as well!

- We help the movements we support to continue their work with vulnerable populations. It is up to them to judge the priorities on the ground, with the aim of rebuilding (after the trauma of a disaster) and strengthening the self-organisation capacities of the grassroots sectors in which they operate.

- South Asia and South-East Asia are among the regions of the world where

the effects of the climate crisis are most violent, with alternating droughts and torrential rain. In some areas, rising temperatures combined with high levels of humidity are having a major impact on health and living conditions. Rising sea levels are impacting the entire coastline and estuaries. Climate chaos also tends to exacerbate periodic peaks in atmospheric pollution.

The 'polycrisis' is striking everywhere, in the North, South, West and East, while the established powers (political and economic) are increasingly reducing the resources without which no public policy to protect people is conceivable. In the face of adversity, we can only stand together by strengthening our local and international solidarity: by fighting together and supporting each other. This support, however reciprocal, implies a financial commitment on our part. That is the reason for this appeal.

We are still unable to re-establish operational links in Burma. Our four current partners are

- **In the Philippines, the MiHANDs coalition.** Based in Mindanao, in the south of the archipelago, it can also intervene in neighbouring islands. It

organises a network of around fifty associations that pool their specific skills together to respond to crisis situations and strengthen the sustainable self-organisation capacities of grassroots communities. It is particularly active in the region where Christian and Muslim populations live side by side, as do the indigenous Lumad peoples.



*Extraction PDF **Solidarity with our comrade Jawad Mustaqbal***

The year 2024 confirmed the trend towards an increase in the number and strength of typhoons hitting the archipelago. In addition, the situation of minority populations in the Moro administrative region of Mindanao continues to deteriorate in the absence of any formal transcription of the recognition of their rights (which exist at the national level). The MiHANDs network is particularly active on this issue.



*Extraction PDF **Against Half-Solidarity and False Pacifism***

• **In Indonesia, the 'Free Women' movement.** As well as taking part in collective initiatives on various issues and working closely with trade unions, this association, based in the industrial areas of Jakarta and Sukabumi (West Java), works with women workers in the clothing sector to defend their social and reproductive rights (which are not respected by employers), and against gender-based violence in the domestic sphere and in the workplace. It runs educational campaigns, conferences, helps with self-organisation, supports women's demonstrations, etc.



*Extraction PDF **In Jenin, Israel is unveiling the next phase of apartheid***

In 2024, the repression of civil society increased. Numerous mobilisations took place, for the rights of wage earners, women, LGBT+ people, ethnic minorities, etc.

• **In Bangladesh, the twin peasant associations BKF (men) and BKS (women).** They are mainly based in the south-west of the country. The majority of their members are farmers who occupy public land (large sandbanks that appear in estuaries), cultivate it and demand legal recognition of their usage rights. BKF-BKS members have to face violence from the henchmen of landowners. In the event of a humanitarian disaster, these associations can provide aid elsewhere. In association with a trade union and an indigenous peoples' organisation, they take part in unitary activities, particularly in Dhaka, where their national headquarters are located, on a wide range of issues.



*Extraction PDF **Let's federate to "storm the heavens"!***

Demonstration in defence of landless peasants, 5 May 2024

In 2024, despite severe repression, the dictatorial regime of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was overthrown by a vast student and popular mobilisation - a great victory. Unfortunately, the new interim Prime Minister, Muhammad Yunus, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics, is a fervent defender of the neoliberal order.

Climate disasters have followed one another, with rising sea levels, increasing salinisation of estuaries and rivers, and flooding. Millions of people are sinking into extreme poverty.



*Extraction PDF **"Prigozhin's March": What Was It All About?***



*Extraction PDF **Strikes and solidarity - hot autumn in Britain ?***

Distribution of aid by the BKF-BKS

• **In Pakistan, the Labour Education Foundation (LEF) and the Crofter Foundation (CF).** The CF's priority is to defend the interests of peasant farmers. It works closely with the LEF, which helps workers in the formal and informal sectors to organise, train and demand their social, economic and political rights, with a view to radically transforming power relations. Based in Lahore, it operates throughout Pakistan. Part of the aid we provide goes to the Himalayan territories under Pakistani administration (Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir).



*Extraction PDF **"The Act of Killing"***

Women farmers for the right to food sovereignty.

In 2024, the February elections expressed a rejection of the military order, but the army nonetheless retains a wide margin of manoeuvre. Between IMF dictates, extreme heat, floods, social insecurity and toxic pollution peaks, all exacerbated by the climate crisis, survival conditions in a growing number of regions are becoming hazardous.

In recent years, the populations of this part of the world have suffered successive traumatic shocks. With each shock, the living conditions of

the working classes are structurally weakened, and their dependence on the established powers is aggravated. The effects of one shock are far from over when another occurs.

The role played by our partners is all the more important in helping grassroots communities to cope, but they have to intervene in situations that are increasingly deteriorating and often dangerous.

We would like to thank in advance all those who will be able to help us enter 2025 in good financial conditions, while knowing that the rising cost of living is weighing on each and every one of us.

Pierre Rousset and Adam Novak
ESSF, 20 November 2024

To send donations via ESSF

Donations can be given by cheques (in euros only, payable in France), direct bank transfers to our account or via Helloasso and PayPal. All payment options are listed on the home page of our website.

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2, rue Richard-Lenoir
93100 Montreuil
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10 boulevard Chanzy
93100 Montreuil
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International bank account details :

IBAN : FR85 3000 2005 2500 0044 5757 C12

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What is happening in Syria?

4 December 2024, by Gilbert Achcar

As is well known, the origin of the group goes back to Jabhat al-Nusra, which was founded in 2012 as a branch of Al-Qaeda in Syria, then announced its defection from the organization under the name Jabhat Fath al-Sham in 2016, before absorbing other groups and becoming Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham the following year. The HTS invasion of Aleppo in recent days was carried out at the expense of the Syrian regime's army, backed by Iranian and Russian forces. As for the Turkish role, it was again one of complicity, but in the opposite direction this time, as HTS has become dependent on Turkey, which is its only outlet.

Let us take a closer look at this mayhem, starting with the Turkish

role. At the beginning of the popular uprising in Syria in 2011, Ankara aspired to impose its tutelage over the Syrian opposition and through it over the country in the event of its victory. It then soon cooperated with some Arab Gulf states in supporting armed groups raising Islamic banners, when the situation got militarized and transformed from a popular uprising against a sectarian, despotic family rule into a clash between two reactionary camps, exploited by a third camp formed by the Kurdish movement. These developments paved the way for the Syrian territories to become subjected to four occupations, in addition to the Zionist occupation of the Golan Heights that began in 1967: Iranian occupation (accompanied by regional forces affiliated with Tehran,

most notably Lebanon's Hezbollah) and Russian occupation backing the Assad regime; Turkish occupation in two areas on Syria's northern border; and US deployment in the northeast, in support for the Kurdish forces confronting ISIS or its remnants.

So, what happened in recent days? The first thing to stand out was the rapidity with which the Assad regime forces collapsed in the face of the attack, recalling the collapse of the Iraqi regular forces in the face of ISIS when it crossed the border from Syria in the summer of 2014. The reason for these two collapses lies mainly in the sectarian factor, their common feature being that the Alawite majority in the Syrian forces and the Shiite majority in the Iraqi forces had no incentive to

risk their lives defending the Sunni majority areas under their control targeted by the attack. Add to this the resentment created by the existing regime's failure to create incentivizing living conditions, especially in Syria, which has been undergoing an economic collapse and a major increase in poverty for several years. Last Saturday, the Financial Times quoted an Alawite saying: "We are prepared to protect our villages and towns, but I don't know that Alawites will fight for Aleppo city ... The regime has stopped giving us reasons to keep supporting it."

What is clear is that HTS, along with other factions under Turkish tutelage, have decided to seize the opportunity created by the weakening of Iranian support for the Assad regime that resulted from the great losses suffered by the Lebanese Hezbollah, Iran's main armed wing in Syria, due to Israel's onslaught on Lebanon. This weakening, combined with the weakening of Russian support due to the involvement of the Russian armed forces in the invasion of Ukraine, created an exceptional opportunity that HTS did seize. It is also clear that Turkey blessed this attack. Since 2015, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's shift towards playing on the Turkish nationalist chord, along with his alliance with the Turkish nationalist far right, meant that his primary concern has become the fight against the Kurdish movement. In 2016, Ankara stabbed the Syrian opposition forces in the back by allowing the Syrian regime to retake Aleppo with

Iranian and Russian support, in exchange for Russia allowing it to launch Operation Euphrates Shield and seize the Jarabulus area and its surroundings, north of the Aleppo Governorate, from the Kurdish forces that were dominant there.

This time too, Ankara took advantage of the attack by HTS on Aleppo to unleash its Syrian suppletive forces against the Kurdish forces. Erdogan had previously tried to reconcile with Bashar al-Assad, offering him support in extending his regime's control over the vast area where the Kurdish movement is dominant in the northeast. However, the latter's insistence that Turkey hand over to him the areas it controls on the northern border thwarted the effort. Erdogan then turned against the Assads again and gave his green light to HTS's attack, angering the backers of the Syrian regime. The "difference of viewpoints" that Iran's foreign minister alluded to during his visit to Ankara after the start of the attack, consists in the fact that Tehran sees the greater threat in HTS, while Ankara sees it in the Kurdish forces. Despite a common hostility towards the Kurdish movement, Tehran, Moscow and Damascus had concluded a long-term truce with it, waiting for the circumstances to change to allow them to resume the offensive for the control of the whole Syrian territory, while Ankara's relationship with that movement has remained extremely hostile, in contrast with its cooperation with HTS which controls the Idlib region.

As for Israel and the United States, they are cautiously monitoring what is happening on the ground, as the two parties - the Assad regime and HTS - are almost equally bad in their eyes (despite the UAE's efforts to whitewash the regime and Ankara's efforts to whitewash HTS). The Zionist state's main concern is to prevent Iran from seizing the opportunity of this new battle to strengthen its military presence on Syrian territory and find new ways to supply Hezbollah with weapons through it.

Finally, by stirring up sectarian animosities, these developments are pushing away the only hopeful perspective that arose in recent years in Syria, constituted by the massive popular protests against the deterioration of living conditions that have been taking place in the country since 2020. These protests began in the Suwayda region (inhabited by a Druze majority) in the territories controlled by the regime, and quickly turned into demanding Bashar al-Assad's departure and the fall of the regime, thus reviving the spirit of the popular, democratic, non-sectarian uprising that Syria witnessed amid the Arab Spring, thirteen years ago. Let us hope that the unity of the people's interests in livelihood and emancipation will, in a not-too-distant future, lead to the renewal of the original Syrian revolution and allow the country to be reunited on the democratic basis that the pioneers of the 2011 uprising dreamed of.

[Gilbert Achcar's blog](#)

Trump Confrontation with Mexico over Tariffs, Migration, and Drugs

3 December 2024, by **Dan La Botz**

So, president-elect Trump and Mexican president Claudia Sheinbaum had a conversation on November 27, a chat that Trump recalled with delight, writing on his Truth Social media site, "Just had a wonderful conversation

with the new President of Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo. She has agreed to stop Migration through Mexico, and into the United States, effectively closing our Southern Border. We also talked about what can

be done to stop the massive drug inflow into the United States, and also, U.S. consumption of these drugs. It was a very productive conversation!"

That was not how she remembered it.

Sheinbaum responded on X, formerly Twitter, "I explained to him the comprehensive strategy that Mexico has followed to address the migration phenomenon, respecting human rights. Thanks to this, migrants and caravans are assisted before they reach the border. We reiterate that Mexico's position is not to close borders."

Sheinbaum also issued a statement saying, "Among Mexico's main exporters to the United States are General Motors, Stellantis, and Ford Motor Company, which arrived in Mexico 80 years ago. Why impose a tariff that would jeopardize them? Such a measure would be unacceptable and would lead to inflation and job losses in both the United States and Mexico." She said that Mexico could impose a tariff on the United States.

Some believe that the agricultural, construction, hotel, and manufacturing industries that engage in international commerce and rely on undocumented immigrant labor will pressure Trump to stop both the

tariffs and such mass deportation. For now, he says he's going ahead with both.

Trump promises that on day one he'll also begin the mass deportation of 11 million undocumented immigrants, many of whom are long-term residents with ten years or more in the country, with jobs and children who, born in America are U.S. citizens. Trump says he will declare a national emergency and mobilize the army to carry out the deportation at whatever financial cost. Asked if he will divide families, Thomas Homan, who will be Trump's "border Czar," says families don't have to be divided—parents can take their American children with them when they go.

Republican governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, notorious for sending more than 10,200 migrants at a cost of \$148 million to states governed by Democrats, has offered president-elect Trump 1,402 acres (567 hectares) for a concentration camp for migrants detained for deportation. Border Czar Homan says other migrants will be

arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Ice) officers or county sheriffs and held in local jails before being flown home.

Tens of thousands of immigrants are gathering their documents, meeting with lawyers, some are marrying U.S. citizens, and immigrant rights groups are being overwhelmed by people seeking advice. Immigrant rights organizations and labor unions are making plans to defend their members. Sanctuary states and cities like California that refuse to cooperate with ICE, are planning to resist Trump and to defend their residents.

Most of the undocumented immigrants are Latinos and most of them Mexican, so Sheinbaum, herself an authoritarian president who has increased the role of the military and shut down government human rights watchdog groups, will be faced with an inundation of her compatriots being returned home, and we can expect abuses on both side of the border. Our work is cut out for us.

1 December 2024

Education: Final Declaration of the III World Congress against Neoliberalism in Education

2 December 2024, by Collective

For four days we discussed the importance of racial, gender and class issues for the construction of an emancipatory education, in the construction of which the unions of education workers and the organised student movement play a central role. We have discussed and denounced the risks of accelerated digitalisation of school and university systems that is not accompanied by social equity and increased public funding for education. We argued with conviction that hybrid education without state funding for internet connection and provision of connection equipment for education workers and students is a new model of educational

privatisation. We have also analysed the risks involved in the attempt to turn artificial intelligence into a regime of human truth, as well as the problems caused by the dehumanisation of distance education through exclusively virtual and standardised learning formats.

The analysis of the impact of conservative projects in education has been one of the main concerns of this world congress, especially when their paradigms seek to impose themselves on school systems and universities. The defence of secularism, freedom of ideas, comprehensive sexual education, the right to decide freely

about our bodies, the recognition of sexual, ethnic and black diversity, is seriously threatened by neo-conservatism in education. The only way to avert this danger is with more democracy and critical thinking in education. This is what we have understood and ratified.

This poses new and renewed challenges for the trade union, trade union and student education movement. The class perspective is powerful to the extent that it deepens participatory democracy, social control and rotation of positions, principles that we inherited from the Paris Commune.

We have much to learn from the social movements of the 21st century, especially feminism and environmentalism, which have found the keys to mobilise and contest hegemony. That is why we dare to dream of a world day of mobilisations for the right to education, a utopia for which we are working and committed. We are initiating a global dialogue so that 8 October 2025 will be the beginning of convergences that will bring together energies, consciences and ideas to mobilise all over the world for a public education at the service of the people and not of capital.

We have listened to our brothers and sisters from different territories of the world, who have shown us how neoliberalism assumes thousands of masks to try to impose commodification, privatisation and neoliberal evaluative culture.

It has become clear to us that in all places the construction of anti-neoliberal resistance has been effective to the extent that we have managed to create broad social fronts of support that converge in mobilisation. In this direction, will,

knowledge and critical consciousness combine to move forward.

There is no trade union and student movement outside the pedagogical movement and the dispute of ideas. These are intertwined dynamics that are part of another way of conceiving education, learning, the vindication of knowledge and the knowledge that contributes to social justice. That is why we are committed to accompany, promote and strengthen the pedagogical movement within our unions and trade unions, so that from their reflections and ideas it will be possible to build consistent and radical alternative proposals.

We will create our own training, editorial and communication system, based on the experience of Other Voices in Education and those that each union has developed over time. Research, Education, Communication and Organisation (INVEDECOR), working together, as a paradigm for the work we will do in this field. In 2025 we will launch our editorial, training and communication initiative to complement the work we do in the territories.

Our story of confluence has just begun. We have decided to meet again in 2026, at the Fourth World Congress against Neoliberalism in Education, at a venue to be announced in April 2025. In the meantime, we will advance in the realization of International Conferences of Classist and Autonomous Trade Unionism together with the Pedagogical and Student Movement to be held in April 2025 in Mexico, another one in October of the same year in a virtual way and a third one, of a face-to-face character, in Quito, Ecuador. We will also promote the International Trade Union School and the Pedagogical Congress of Popular Education in the first half of 2026. With joy and redoubled commitment we proclaim that we will continue to meet on all roads, to join and weave anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist resistances, which will allow us to continue advancing in an education for the people, with freedom, social justice, solidarity and love for life.

18 November 2024

*Translated by **International Viewpoint**.*

A meeting for left perspectives in Greece

1 December 2024, by **Andreas Sartzekis**

While the congress of Nea Aristera, a group formed on the initiative of former cadres around Syriza, is calling for a Popular Front, accepting Tsipras' disastrous policies in power, it is on the radical and revolutionary left that forces want to put an end to the self-proclamation of the revolutionary party and are working towards a unitary framework, in the light of other experiences. To this end, five groups invited our comrade Olivier Besancenot from France's Nouveau parti anticapitaliste (NPA) to Athens on 8 November to lead a meeting on the question of the New Popular Front, which is being discussed a bit here. These organisations included

DEA, Anametrissi (where comrades from the Fourth International Programmatic Tendency, one of the two groups in the Greek FI section, are active) and Metavassi (a group from NAR, the main organisation of the revolutionary left).

A successful meeting

Olivier began by stressing the seriousness of the world situation, with the bourgeoisie choosing to allow governments of the extreme right to be formed, with all the threats of war that are piling up in the context of

inter-imperialist competition, and of course a general extension of repression against mobilisations and the left. He showed how the Nouveau front populaire (NFP) in France is above all the fruit of an exceptional mobilisation that gives hope in the mass movement's capacity for resistance. And this mobilisation is at the same time the fruit of previous mass movements, for example against retirement at 64, and of the unitary pressure that played an important role for the trade union front last year. But the current situation is that of an abandonment of the NFP in favour of a partisan withdrawal into the electoral framework of the institutions, and in

the face of this, the NPA wishes to keep local NFP committees alive.

Various questions from the floor followed, showing an interest that went beyond the five organisations. Generally speaking, everyone seemed very happy with a meeting that ended with an internationalist call to struggle. The event was a great success, with 350 to 400 people in attendance. Everyone left with the energy to face the many deadlines ahead, and with the idea that we must work to create a united and revolutionary front.

Social anger is rising!

There have been major mobilisations

in recent days: against the repression of teaching trade unionists, the government wanted to ban a teachers' strike, but ended up with a public service strike! Of course, things are moving in the universities, in the face of plans to cut a third of the public university's departments. But also among secondary school pupils, against the lack of teachers and the merging of classes. The 2,500 seasonal fire-fighters are mobilising to ensure that their contracts are not reduced to the summer months, given the catastrophic situation of fires and fire prevention. The inhabitants of islands such as Ikaria and Samothrace are rejecting the imposition of hundreds of wind turbines en masse. All against a backdrop of repression that is becoming Orwellian against fire-fighters, or as in Piraeus, where schoolchildren have been summoned

by the police on suspicion of wanting to 'occupy their school'! One result of the atmosphere may be promising: PAME, the very sectarian trade union branch of the KKE (Greek Communist Party), has invited radical unions such as the delivery workers' union to a conference.

Not forgetting, of course, the annual mobilisation on 17 November to commemorate the massacre at the Polytechnic University by the colonels' junta, a high point on the social and therefore political agenda will be the general strike called for 20 November, at a time when 2.5 million taxpayers are living below the poverty line.

17 November 2024

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