Lula’s Win: A Blow to the Far Right Throughout the World

Lula’s extraordinary victory overnight in Brazil is the most important defeat for the far right we have seen anywhere in the world in recent times, and its impact will be felt worldwide.

Seeing those millions and millions of people pour onto the streets across this vast country to celebrate was enough to make you weep.

The seemingly impossible turnaround in the second round is not a simple electoral victory. It was won in the streets and on socials. Immediately after the far-right candidate, Flavio Bolsonaro, won in the first round, thousands of mainly very young people took to streets in Niteroi, across the bay from Rio de Janeiro, to demonstrate against the likelihood of a neo-fascist government in Brazil. The same thing happened in cities in the Northeast, the most impoverished region. This was repeated throughout the country in the three weeks between the rounds.

In parallel, younger members of congress from a smaller party supporting Lula’s Workers Party, completely revamped the campaign’s lacklustre social media presence. ‘Lula’s Army’, a WhatsApp channel launched by Janones of the Rede party, went from 50,000 followers to a million in two days. Now it has 10 million.

The next stage will be difficult, and possibly violent. As I write, Flavio Bolsonaro is refusing to recognise the results and calling on his supporters not to either. He’s promising a legal challenge, but last time, when his father, Jair Bolsonaro lost, they invaded the congress and presidential palace. President Trump looks ready to back him.

Even if the immediate threat recedes, Lula’s presidency will confront big far-right and traditional right majorities in both houses of congress. If he is not to capitulate completely, he will have to govern with the streets, and with his new found digital army. This in turn is likely to lead to confrontation. The far right is deeply embedded in large sections of society. And it could draw on the sympathies of at least parts of the armed forces.

What the Brazilian people have achieved can be a huge inspiration for all of us facing resurgent varieties of neo-fascism and the far right in different parts of the world. But they will also need support. We should be thinking now about how to organise that solidarity. The Scottish working class has a proud tradition in this area. ‘Nae pasaran.’

But developing our own struggles is also part of building solidarity. There is little doubt that the kids on the streets in Brazil have been encouraged by what they see in France and the Spanish state. No doubt the Serbian students who just defeated Vucic have been too. A new form of internationalism appears to be taking shape and we need to be part of that.

We live in interesting, if dangerous, times.

Iain Bruce 26th October 2026

Defend Greenland Against USA’s Plunder – Without

Illusions About the Kingdom of Denmark or the EU

Statement of the SAP Executive Committee, January 26, 2026

The Trump regime is still engaged in a fierce offensive for an imperialist American takeover of Greenland. All means have been used: political, economic and even military threats. In this situation, the Greenlandic self-government, a united *Inatsisartut*, has quite understandably chosen to seek refuge in a tactical alliance with the former colonial power (Denmark), the EU and the European NATO countries. At best, this alliance can stop Trump's plans to formally take over power in Greenland here and now. However, neither the powers that be in Denmark nor the EU are reliable champions of the Greenlandic people's right to self-determination – quite the contrary!

The massive popular support for, among other things, the demonstrations against Trump's plans for conquest has very clearly focused on the Greenlanders' right to self-determination. Hurrah for that! And even the Prime Minister has, in recent months – side by side with the leaders of the Self-Government – chosen this focus. But there is absolutely no reason to trust the Danish government and the other alliance partners or to embellish their motives.

As we described in a commentary about a year ago, Denmark's relationship with Greenland continues to be characterized and driven by imperialist interests – first and foremost, perhaps, the interest in maintaining Denmark's geopolitical significance. This is despite the limited self-government that the Greenlanders have managed to fight for.

The helpful EU partners have also occasionally revealed the EU's undoubtedly deep interest in the resources in the

Greenlandic subsoil – as well as the country's strategically important location in relation to the defence of Europe.

Stand away from the hypocrisy

For true friends of Greenlandic independence – and not least for the Greenlanders themselves – it has been challenging to listen to the entire political public in Denmark praising the Greenlanders' right to determine their own country, the rights of indigenous peoples, etc. in recent weeks. As if this were and always had been the basis for the "Kingdom", as it is so beautifully described. The hypocrisy seems glaring when this fairy tale is compared with the Danish-Greenlandic colonial history. And with the continued Danish imperialist dominance, even after the self-government arrangement.

It is also outrageous when Denmark, England, France, the Netherlands and others now stand guard over respect for "an international legal order". And claim that "we in the West" have safeguarded this since World War II. For example, a number of the same countries – not least Denmark – have been eager participants in the "coalition of the willing" which (led by the USA), without scruples under international law, violated the very territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Afghanistan – and, for many, later also Iraq!

Should the left wing – out of respect for the tactical alliance against the US – completely ignore this hypocrisy? Should we pretend that we completely share this view of the 'Kingdom' – and, for that matter, of our 'EU friends'? This is overwhelmingly what the Red-Green Alliance has chosen to do.

And that is a mistake!

Firstly, because we suddenly come across as Eurocentric hypocrites who turn a blind eye to Western (including European and Danish) colonialism and imperialism, both historically and in the present day. This will obviously and with good reason

complicate our solidarity-based, internationalist cooperation across borders. It will also strain our relationship with Greenlanders and other ethnic minorities in Denmark and Greenland, who are typically already painfully aware of this hypocrisy.

No rose-tinted view of Denmark and the EU

Secondly, to lay the groundwork for the continued struggle for the Greenlanders' real right to self-determination. A struggle that – regardless of whether Trump and the US abandon a formal takeover, and even regardless of Trump and the US altogether – will be necessary.

Unless Trump succeeds fully in his conquest and, at the same time, completely breaks the economic and military imperialist alliance across the Atlantic, the Danish government and the EU will play a decisive role in shaping the future of Greenlandic self-determination – both in terms of military armament and the exploitation of Greenland's subsoil resources.

For that reason alone, it would be reprehensible to contribute to the illusion that the Greenlanders can trust the powers that be in Denmark and the EU. For there is little doubt that the goal of these parties will be to find a solution that primarily serves their own imperialist interests in the Greenlandic subsoil and military control of the Arctic. Not the self-government of the Greenlanders, who have been very reluctant to accept both the arms race in the Arctic and environmentally hazardous mining.

No to the arms race in the Arctic

The arms race in the Arctic is a threat to both the security of the Greenlanders and world peace and must be stopped!

It may have sounded very reasonable to send some (more) Danish soldiers to “stand symbolic guard over Greenland against a US military takeover” – if the Greenlandic self-government, and even the left-wing party IA, wanted it.

They clearly did – and apparently everyone is also enthusiastic about the fact that, instead, a large contingent of European NATO troops will be coming to Greenland and the surrounding waters. The Red-Green Alliance’s enthusiasm was due to the massive “European solidarity on Greenland’s sovereignty”. This angle was also strongly emphasized by many journalists.

BUT: Officially, the large troop deployment is being presented as something completely different from protecting Greenland against the US, namely as protecting Greenland, NATO and, to a large extent, the US against Russia and China. In other words, as an attempt to demonstrate what Denmark and others have already said, namely that the Danish Realm willingly fulfils all of Trump’s dreams of insane armament – so he does not need to take over Greenland at all!

It is clear that the action serves both purposes – and that it is therefore a smart move if one wants to convince the US that a military takeover would be very difficult and costly – and that the US’s wildest dreams of arming Greenland and the Arctic will be fulfilled with joy and enthusiasm by Denmark with the support of the other European NATO countries.

However, this is where the chain breaks for a party like the Red-Green Alliance. Or rather: it should have broken.

We are staunchly opposed to the imperialist blocs arming themselves for war against each other. That is why we are also fighting for a demilitarized Arctic, for mutual disarmament – and thus against the obvious boost to the arms race that the recently launched NATO escalation around Greenland also represents.

Not a defence of either the Greenlanders or world peace

Denmark's, NATO's and the US's joint armament plans around Greenland have very little to do with defending Greenland – and absolutely nothing to do with protecting the Greenlandic population.

For example, monitoring and combating Russian submarines in the waters around Greenland, which can prevent Russian submarines from coming close to threatening the US, and the construction of a missile shield over Greenland ("Golden Dome") to protect the US from Russian missiles, are in no way "defensive defence" of the Kingdom. This armament in the Arctic will rather make Greenland and the Greenlanders a sure-fire first target in a war.

What does it mean for world peace if a "Golden Dome" actually succeeds in protecting the currently most aggressive imperialist power, the United States, from getting anything back in return if they start World War III? This increases the risk that a president like Trump, in an armed conflict with Russia/China, might take the chance and plunge the world into a nuclear war. And just last week, Trump highlighted the "Golden Dome" as a US "national security interest" that necessitates the conquest of Greenland.

Respect the Greenlanders' respect for nature

Despite economic pressure, the Greenlandic self-government has on several occasions dug its heels in when greedy companies of various nationalities have had plans for environmentally damaging extraction of raw materials from the Greenlandic subsoil. And there is little doubt that one of the more rational arguments for Trump's desire to gain overall formal

authority over Greenland is precisely to remove all obstacles – such as environmental legislation – to American companies' exploitation of Greenland's raw materials in the long term. Therefore, there is also reason to fear that part of a negotiated solution may include unpleasant concessions to wishes in this direction. Regardless of whether Trump has already discussed this with the NATO Secretary General or not… And there is reason to fear that Denmark/the EU will be more interested in getting a piece of the pie themselves than in securing the Greenlanders' veto.

In this context, it is not enough that the Greenlanders' right to decide on environmental legislation, etc. is preserved. Greenland must also be guaranteed an economy that does not force them to sell out their nature conservation efforts due to economic pressure.

Real Greenlandic self-government requires economic independence. At present, the economy is a major barrier to the Self-Government taking on new tasks. A first requirement must be that the block grant be increased – and made unconditional, so that it also goes to an independent Greenland. An obvious additional requirement is Danish "colonial era compensation" to enable the Self-Government to invest heavily in sustainable, publicly owned and controlled business development that can create a stable economic foundation for a self-financing, independent Greenland.

The fight is not over

It is clear that right now it is a matter of creating as strong a front as possible against Trump's threats, for the respect of Greenland's borders and the Greenlandic people's right to self-determination.

And, of course, it is entirely up to the Greenlanders to decide what they are ultimately willing to accept here and now in order to achieve a negotiated solution, in a situation

where they face overwhelming threats from the US – and false promises from all sides.

But that does not mean that we, including the Red-Green Alliance, should cheer for a "solution" that essentially cements imperialist interests – neither those of the US nor those of Denmark and the EU.

The Red-Green Alliance should be clear from the outset about the problems of a "successful negotiated solution", a "deal" with Trump that does not affect the sovereignty of the Realm, but entails a catastrophic Arctic arms race, increased opportunities for imperialist exploitation of Greenland's natural resources and de facto shackling of Greenland in the so-called Realm.

The struggle for real Greenlandic independence and against environmental disasters and insane armament continues – under slightly different conditions, but regardless of the outcome of the ongoing arm wrestling. It will be necessary to maintain the impressive popular support behind the Greenlanders' demands for self-determination – and for the further demands that can make self-determination a reality. Our most important task is to build popular, anti-imperialist solidarity and gather support for these demands in Denmark – and in the other imperialist countries.

- Stop USA's imperialist plunder – Defend Greenland's right to independence
- Terminate the base agreement with the USA
- Stop Denmark's – and Europe's – weapons purchases from the USA
- EU economic sanctions against the USA
- Denmark must secure Greenland's economic possibilities for independence
- Increased and unconditional continued block grant, and colonial compensation that the country can use for sustainable investments in an independent economy

- No to plunder and environmental destruction, no to imperialism via contracts
- The Greenlanders must be secured full democratic control over the country's subsoil
- No to rearmament in the Arctic
- The Greenlanders must have the right to limit/reject all military installations in their country and waters

Socialist Workers' Policy Executive Committee, January 26, 2026

Translated from "Forsvar Grønland mod USA's røvertogt – uden illusioner om Rigsfællesskabet og EU".

The SAP (Socialistisk Arbejderpolitik) is the Danish section of the Fourth International. It participates in the Red Green Alliance. It was founded in 1980 as a continuation of Revolutionære Socialisters Forbund (RSF) – Revolutionary Socialists' League

H/T Red Mole Substack

Socialist strategy and the party

[The question of how socialists should organise is a perennial one, not least due to the on-going fragmentation of the left. More recently, the threat of the far-right globally, has focussed the attention of a number of groups and individual activists on the urgent necessity of creating a popular and credible left alternative. In Scotland, where there is every likelihood of Nigel Farage's Reform party gaining a

substantial number of seats in the Holyrood elections in 2026, there is the beginning of a new discussion about how socialists might organise going forward, drawing on both the positive and negative experiences of the past. Supporters of Ecosocialist.scot are keenly involved in these discussions, drawing on the experiences of Fourth International around revolutionary regroupment and the building broad class-struggle parties internationally. As a contribution to this discussion we are reprinting this talk by socialist scholar and activist Gilbert Achcar. In it, Achcar outlines the history of socialist organisations from the time of Marx and Engels to the present day, exploring the proposition that 'the communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties' as well as analysing the experiences of the Second International and of Bolshevism. Above all, Achcar warns us against fixating on some timeless organisational model, encouraging us to recognise the centrality of democracy to our socialist project and the need to adapt organisational forms to the specific social, historical and technological circumstances that we find ourselves in. Ecosocialist.scot, 20th February 2025]

Below is the transcript of a talk titled "Marxism, socialist strategy, and the party" by Gilbert Achcar (1), which was delivered to the South African initiative, Dialogues for an Anti-capitalist Future. Here, Achcar traces conceptions of the party from Marx to the present and its implications for socialist strategy today. This transcript has been revised, edited and completed by Gilbert Achcar. The original video recording of the talk can be found here.

Thank you for inviting me to address this meeting. It's a great opportunity for me to discuss these issues with comrades from Africa, the continent where I was born and raised as a native of Senegal.

The topic defined by the organizers is quite broad: "Marxism, socialist strategy, and the party." These topics are all in

the singular, although they cover a plurality of cases and a wide variety of situations. There are many "Marxisms," as everyone knows, each brand believing it is the only real, authentic one. And there are certainly many possible socialist strategies, since strategies are normally elaborated according to each country's concrete circumstances. There can't be a global socialist strategy that would be the same everywhere and anywhere. Likewise, I would say, there is no single conception of the party that is valid for every time and country. Strategic and organizational issues must be related to local circumstances. Otherwise, you get what Leon Trotsky aptly called "bureaucratically abstract internationalism," and that always proves very sterile. Let us bear this in mind.

I will discuss a few conceptions that were developed in the course of Marxism's history since our discussion adheres to a Marxist framework. And I'll try to reach a few conclusions drawing lessons from the now long experience of Marxism.

Marx and Engels, the Communist Manifesto, and the First International

We may date the birth of Marxism as a combined theoretical and practical political orientation back to the Manifesto of the Communist Party that came out in 1848. That's a long history, which compels us to reflect upon the huge change in conditions between our present twenty-first century and the time when Marxism was born. Marx and Engels did show a lot of flexibility from the very beginning, however, starting with this founding document of Marxism as a political movement. The section on the communists' relation to the other working-class parties is well known, and quite important and interesting because it frames the kind of political thinking related to the emerging Marxist theory, which was still in its very initial phase. It is an early expression of the Marxist

perspective and, as such, it is not perfect, to be sure. But it is a very important historical document in drawing out a new global political perspective. Conceived as a political "manifesto," it is very much related to action.

In it, we read those famous lines, "In what relation do the communists stand to the proletarians as a whole? The communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties." This, of course, isn't to say that the communists do not form a party of their own, since the document's title itself is Manifesto of the Communist Party. In fact, a more accurate translation of the German original would have been: "The communists are no special party compared to the other working-class parties." ("Die Kommunisten sind keine besondere Partei gegenüber den andern Arbeiterparteien.") What is actually emphasized here is that the Communist Party is not different from the other parties of the working class. As for what is meant by "other working-class parties," this is clarified a few lines later, but the idea that the communists are not "opposed" to them is explained right after.

"They," the communists that is, "have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole." In other words, the communists do not form a peculiar sect with its own agenda. They fight for the interests of the entire proletarian class. They are an integral part of the proletariat and fight for its class interests, not for interests of their own. That's a very important issue, indeed, because we know from history that many working-class parties came to be detached, as blocks of particular interests, from the class as a whole. History is full of such instances.

So, the communists have no interest separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. No sectarian principles of their own, which would be separate from the aspirations of the class. What is distinctive then about the communists? "They are distinguished from the other working-class parties

by this only”—two points follow:

1. The internationalist perspective or the understanding that, “In the national struggles of the proletarians of different countries, [the communists] point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat.” This idea of the proletariat as a global class with interests that are independent of nationality (“von der Nationalität unabhängigen Interessen”) is a distinguishing feature of the communists in the Manifesto.

2. The pursuit of the ultimate goal of the working-class struggle, which is the transformation of society and the abolition of capitalism and class division. In the various stages of the struggle against the bourgeoisie, the communists represent this long-term perspective. They always keep in mind the ultimate goal, and never lose sight of it by getting bogged down in sectional struggles or partial demands.

These are the two distinctive features of the communists as a section of the working class, as a group or party within the working class, fighting for the interests of the whole class. This bears both practical and theoretical implications. On the practical level, the communists constitute “the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country.” They are the most resolute in political practice in that they always push the movement forward, toward further radicalization. On the theoretical level, thanks to their analytical perspective, the communists have a broad, comprehensive understanding of the various struggles. That’s at least the role they wish to play.

“The immediate aim of the communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties.” This renewed emphasis on commonality is important, the idea that we, the communists—and that’s Marx and Engels writing here—are but one of the proletarian parties, not the only proletarian party. The sectarian claim to constitute the only party of the working

class and that no other party represents the class is definitely not the conception that is upheld here.

And what is the immediate aim of the communists that is shared with the other proletarian parties? It is a good indication of what Marx and Engels meant by other proletarian parties. That aim is “the formation of the proletariat into a class, the overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, and the conquest of political power by the proletariat.” These goals define what the two authors meant by proletarian parties. And they shed light onto the initial sentence that says that “the communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties” (or a special party compared to the others). By working-class parties, Marx and Engels meant all parties that fight for these goals: the political formation of the class, the overthrow of bourgeois rule, and the conquest of political power by the proletariat.

Beyond this, what the political biography and writings of Marx and Engels clearly show is that they held no general theory of the party; they were not interested in elaborating such a general theory. I believe that it is because of the point I started with: that the party is a tool for the class struggle, for the revolutionary struggle, and this tool must be adapted to different circumstances. There can’t be a general conception of the party, valid for all times and countries. The class party is not a religious sect patterned on the same model worldwide. It is an instrument for action that must fit the concrete circumstances of each time and country.

This adaptation to actual circumstances was constantly at work in Marx’s and Engels’s political history, from their early political engagement with a group that they quickly found to be too sectarian—a group that was closer to the Blanquist perspective—to the more elaborate view that they expressed in 1850 in light of the revolutionary wave that Europe had witnessed in 1848. In a famous text focused on Germany, the Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League, the

two friends described the communists as implementing exactly the approach that they had outlined in the Communist Manifesto, striving to push forward the revolutionary process and advocating the organization of the proletariat separately from other classes.

For this purpose, they called for the formation of workers' clubs. They had in mind the precedent of the French Revolution, in which political clubs such as the Jacobins were key actors. They advocated the same for Germany in 1850, but this time as proletarian clubs (forming what we would call today a mass party) whose tactic should consist in constantly outbidding the bourgeois or petite-bourgeois democrats. The proletarian party should do so in order to push the revolutionary process forward, turning it into a continuous process: "permanent revolution" is the term they used in that famous document.

Marx and Engels afterwards spent several years without being formally involved in a political organization, until the founding of the First International in 1864. The role they saw for themselves at that time was to act directly at the international level, rather than getting involved in a national organization. The First International brought together a broad range of currents. It was anything but monolithic, including what we would today call left-wing reformists, along with anarchists and, of course, Marxists. The anarchists themselves mainly consisted of two different currents: followers of the French Proudhon and followers of the Russian Bakunin. Thus, a variety of tendencies and workers' organizations joined the First International, the official name of which was the "International Workingmen's Association" in the archaic language of the time.

The First International culminated with the Paris Commune. We have been celebrating this year the 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune, the uprising of the Parisian laboring masses, workers, and petite-bourgeoisie, that started on March 18,

1871 and ended in bloody repression after about two and a half months. This tragic outcome brought the International to an end after a sharp increase in factional infighting, as happens very often in times of setback and ebb.

The Second International, Social Democracy, Lenin and Luxemburg

The next stage was the emergence of German social democracy, which Marx and Engels followed very closely from England. One of the famous texts of Marx is the Critique of the Gotha Programme, which is a comment on the draft program of the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany before its founding convention in 1875.

Later on, after Marx's death in 1883, the Second International was founded in the year of the first centenary of the French Revolution in 1889. Engels was still active; he would die six years later. Marx and Engels, thus, contributed to very diverse types of organization during their lives. Consider the Internationals, First and Second: the Second involved mass workers' parties that were quite different from the groups involved in the First, and it comprised a narrower range of political views. Although it was quite open to discussion, the anarchists were unwelcome in its ranks. The Second International was based on mass workers' parties engaged in the whole range of class struggle forms, from trade union to electoral, struggles that had become increasingly possible to wage legally in most European countries by the end of the nineteenth century.

These workers' parties involved in mass struggle emerged against the backdrop of a critique of Blanquism, which is the idea that a small group of enlightened revolutionaries can seize power by force, by way of a coup, and reeducate the masses after seizing power. This perspective, which grew out of one of the radical currents that developed from the French

Revolution, had been strongly criticized by Marx and Engels as illusory and counterposed to their deeply democratic conception of revolutionary change.

Since the time of Marx and Engels, Marxism has gone through various avatars, as we know, but the most dominant in the twentieth century was indisputably the Russian model. More specifically, it was the variant of Marxism developed by the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Russia, a section of the Second International. After the party's split in 1912, both wings—Bolshevik and Menshevik—remained affiliated to the International, which soon went into crisis with the onset of World War I in 1914.

Russian conditions, of course, were quite exceptional compared to those of France or Germany, or most other countries where there were large sections of the International. Russia was ruled by tsarism, a very repressive state that allowed no political freedoms, except for brief periods. The Russian revolutionaries had to work underground most of the time, hiding from the political police.

It is in light of these very specific conditions that the birth of Leninism as a theory of the party must be considered. It was born at the very beginning of the past century, its first major document being Lenin's What Is To Be Done? (1902). This book offered a conception of organization and struggle that was very much the fruit of the circumstances that I described: the underground party of professional revolutionaries acting in a "conspiratorial" manner, which was the only way revolutionaries could operate under the circumstances of that time in Russia.

And yet, when we examine the evolution of Lenin's thinking on the matter, we see that after the Revolution of 1905, he modified his perspective towards a better appraisal of the potential of spontaneous radicalization of the working-class masses. Whereas he had initially insisted that the workers'

spontaneous inclination is bound to remain within the limits of a trade-unionist perspective, he realized after 1905 that the working-class masses could, at moments, be more revolutionary than any other organization—including his own!

Yet, this did not resolve the dispute that unfolded before 1905 between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks about the conception of the party: How large should the party's membership be? What conditions should there be for membership? Should all party members be fully engaged in day-to-day political activity, or should membership include dues-paying supporters, regardless of their level of active involvement? That discussion heated up in 1903. But when the party split years later, in 1912, the most serious divergence was political—the attitude toward the liberal bourgeoisie—rather than organizational. This explains the attitude of someone like Trotsky, who was very critical of the party conception expressed in What Is To Be Done?, while still being politically closer to the Bolsheviks. Hence, his conciliatory stance toward both wings after 1912, since he agreed and disagreed with each of them on different issues.

During that same period, Rosa Luxemburg was actually more critical of the German Social Democratic Party than Lenin was. Whereas Lenin regarded the party as a model and key inspiration, Rosa Luxemburg was the most prominent left-wing critic of the party's leadership. She, too, was critical of Lenin's conception of the party, because she held a fundamental belief in the revolutionary potential of the working-class masses and their ability to outflank the social-democratic party's leadership in revolutionary times.

This brief, and only partial, overview suffices to show that there existed a complex variety of conceptions of the workers' party and its role. This fact makes it all the more important to consider the different conditions of the different countries in which the holders of these views were based. The Bolshevik party turned into a big, mass party in 1917. In the course of the radicalization and the revolutionary process

that year, the party won over a big section of Russia's working class, and other components of the Russian Revolution's social base: soldiers, peasants, and others. In order to absorb the ongoing mass radicalization, the party opened its ranks widely. We see here at work the flexibility of organizational form that is necessary in order to adapt to changing circumstances.

The formula "democratic centralism," which is usually attributed to Leninism, did not actually come from Lenin. It summarizes the organizational functioning of German social democracy, indicating the combination of democracy in debate and centralism in action. It wasn't meant to prevent discussion. On the contrary, emphasis was placed on the democratic half of the expression. Even under the harsh conditions of Tsarist Russia, there was always a lot of discussion, open disputes, and creation of organizational factions within each wing of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Russia. Discussions came into the open within Russia itself when conditions changed in 1917.

It was only later—in 1921, in context of the difficult conditions resulting from the civil war—that factions were prohibited in the Communist Party (the heir to the Bolshevik wing of the Social Democratic Workers' Party), a decision which proved to be a fatal mistake. It didn't solve any problem, but was used by one faction of the party, one group within its leadership, in order to take full control of the party and get rid of any opposition. That was the beginning of the Stalinist mutation.

In 1924, Stalin redefined Leninism and enshrined it into a set of dogmas. This included a very centralistic and undemocratic conception of the party: the cult of the party and its leadership, the iron discipline, the banning of factions and, therefore, of organized discussion within the party. There, the conception of the party as the instrument of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is spelled out, a view alien

not only to Marx and Engels, but even to a book like Lenin's State and Revolution (1917), in which the party is not even mentioned in the definition of that dictatorship (this, in some way, is actually a problem, as the book should have discussed the rights and role of parties after the revolution). But the key point is that this idea—that the party embodies the dictatorship of the proletariat—also became part of what was predominantly regarded as Leninism at that time.

Gramsci, War of Position and Maneuver

In the same way that various avatars of Marxism developed, there have been various Leninisms: that of the Stalinists, which I have just described, and other Leninisms, especially among groups that call themselves Trotskyist. Some of the latter were actually quite close to the Stalinist version; on the opposite side, we find someone like Ernest Mandel, the Belgian Marxist, whose Leninism is quite close to Rosa Luxemburg's perspective.

A highly interesting reflection that developed after the Russian Revolution is that of Antonio Gramsci, the famous Italian Marxist. In considering the events that unfolded in Europe, he emphasized the difference between Russia's conditions and those of Western Europe. We get back here, again, to our starting point: the circumstances, the concrete situation of each country and region. In Western Europe, liberal democracy went along with bourgeois "hegemony." The bourgeoisie, in order to rule, did not rely on force alone, but also on the consent of a popular majority.

And that major difference must be taken into account, rather than simply copying the Russian experience. Under typical Western conditions, the workers' party must strive to build a counter hegemony, that is, to win over the support of the

majority in breaking away from bourgeois ideological domination. It must wage a war of position under liberal democratic conditions that allows the party to conquer positions within the bourgeois state itself through elections. That war of position is a prelude to a war of maneuver, a distinction borrowed from military strategy. In a war of position, an armed force entrenches itself in positions and strongholds, whereas in a war of maneuver, troops are set in motion to occupy the enemy's territory and break its armed force. Thus, under typical Western conditions, the workers' party should envisage a protracted war of position while being ready to shift to a war of maneuver, if and when this is required.

A Materialist Conception of the Party, the Internet

Let me add to all this what I would call a materialist conception of the party. For Marxists, the starting point in assessing social and political conditions is historical materialism: a given society's forms of organization tend to correspond to its technological means. This axiom can be extended to all forms of organization: they normally adapt to material conditions. That is indeed the case for the management modes of capitalist firms. The same goes for revolutionary organization: its type and form very much depend on the means it uses to produce its literature, which are in turn determined by the available technology and political freedoms. Thus, if a party mainly relies on the underground printshop, it is necessarily a conspiratorial organization that requires a high degree of centralization and secrecy. If it can print its literature openly and legally, it can be an open, democratic organization (if it is conspiratorial by choice, rather than necessity, it is usually more of a sect than a party). This brings us to the internet as a major technological revolution in communication. The belief that

this technological change should not affect the conception of the party is the unmistakable sign that the latter has become a religious-like dogmatic organization.

Nowadays, all forms of organization are very much conditioned by the existence of the internet. That is why networking has become a form of organization much more widespread than it could ever be before. Networking made possible by virtual networks, such as social media, can also facilitate the constitution of physical networks. Thanks to the internet, a much more democratic way of functioning is possible, in both information sharing and decision making. You don’t need to bring people from very long distances to meet physically every time you need to hold a democratic discussion and decide.

The potential of the internet is huge, and we are only at the beginning of its use. It feeds the strong aversion to centralism and leadership cults that exists among the new generation. I believe it is rather healthy that such defiance exists among the new generation, compared to the patterns that prevailed in the twentieth century.

Networking is very much the order of the day. It started early on with the Zapatistas who advocated this kind of organization in the 1990s. A major embodiment today is the Black Lives Matter (BLM). This movement began a few years ago, mostly as a network around an online platform and a shared set of principles. Local chapters only commit to the general principles of the movement, which has no central structure: just horizontal networking without a leading center; no hierarchy, no verticality. It is very much a product of our time that wouldn’t have been possible on such a scale before modern technology. It’s a good illustration of the materialist understanding of organization.

Networking is also at work in another recent major development, which occurred on the African continent, in Sudan. The Sudanese Revolution that started in December 2018

has witnessed the formation of Resistance Committees, which are local chapters mostly active in urban neighborhoods, each one of them involving hundreds of members, mostly young people. In every major urban zone, there are dozens of such committees, with hundreds of participants each. Tens of thousands of people are organized in that way in key urban areas. They function quite like BLM: common principles, common goals, no central leadership, intensive use of social media. They didn't take their inspiration from BLM, though. They are, rather, a product of the time, a product of the aforementioned aversion to centralized experiences of the past and their sad outcomes, combined with the new technology.

This, however, does not cancel the need for the political organization of the like-minded, of people who—like the communists of the Communist Manifesto—share specific views and want to promote them. But the qualitatively higher degree of organizational democracy allowed for by modern technology similarly applies to such parties of the like-minded.
[Marxist revolutionaries] should aim at building a working-class mass party and eventually leading it—if and when they manage to convince the majority of their views. That's also why they should join mass, working-class, anticapitalist parties when these exist, or else contribute to building them.

To wrap up, the key point I made at the beginning is that the type of organization depends on the concrete conditions of the place where it is to be built. Time and place are decisive, in addition to the technological dimension. It is very important to avoid falling into the sectarianism of self-proclaimed "vanguard parties." Vanguard is a status that must be acquired in practice, not proclaimed. To truly be a vanguard, you must be regarded as such by the masses.

Marxist revolutionaries who wish to build a vanguard party should regard themselves, as in the Communist Manifesto, as part of the broader class movement involving other organizations of different types. They should aim at building

a working-class mass party and eventually leading it—if and when they manage to convince the majority of their views. That's also why they should join mass, working-class, anti-capitalist parties where these exist, or else contribute to building them. It is not by building a self-proclaimed "vanguard party" and recruiting members to its ranks one by one that you build a mass party. It doesn't work like this. Moreover, socialism can only be democratic. It's banal to say it, but it means that you can't change society for the better without a social majority in favor of change. Otherwise, as history has shown us so tragically, you end up with the production of authoritarianism and dictatorship. And that comes with a huge price.

My final point is about the necessity of democratic vigilance against the corrosive effects of bourgeois institutions and bureaucratic tendencies. Not all countries in the world, but most of them, are countries where it is currently possible to engage in the war of position described by Gramsci, which includes a struggle within elective institutions of the bourgeois state. This is to be combined with a struggle from without, of course, through trade unions and various forms of class struggle, such as strikes, sit-ins, occupations, demonstrations, and so on.

In the course of the war of position, revolutionaries are confronted with the corrosive effects of bourgeois institutions, because elected officers can be affected by the corruptive power of capitalism. The same can be said of the corruptive power of bureaucracy, which is at play within trade unions and other working-class institutions. Revolutionaries should remain vigilant against these inevitable risks and think of new ways to prevent this corrosive effect from prevailing. That's also a key part of the lessons of history that we must keep in mind.

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*Source: **Tempest**.*

(1) Gilbert Achcar is currently Professor of Development Studies and International Relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. His most recent books are The New Cold War: The United States, Russia and China, from Kosovo to Ukraine (2023) and the collection of articles Israel's War on Gaza (2023). His next book, Gaza, A Genocide Foretold, will come out in 2025.

Hope is shipwrecked: Erdogan's regime wins again

After twenty years in power, *writes Uraz Aydin*, Recep Tayyip Erdogan won again in the second round of the presidential elections on 28 May 2023. Faced with his rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who won 47.84 per cent of the vote, Erdogan, whose bloc had also obtained a majority in parliament, was the winner with 52.16 per cent. Which means that the "Reis" should normally reign over an autocratic, fascistic and Islamist regime for another five years.

The reactionary bloc wins the majority in parliament

The bloc formed around Recep Tayyip Erdogan is probably one of the most reactionary coalitions in the country's political history. Already, since 2015, the AKP [*Erdogan's party*] had been in alliance with the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). For this election Erdogan included in his bloc the Islamist party Yeniden Refah, led by Fatih Erbakan, son of the

historic leader of political Islam in Turkey, Necmettin Erbakan.

Another more Islamist wing of the far right, the Great Union Party (BBP) also forms part of Erdogan's camp. This bloc was also joined by HÜDA-PAR, the legal party of Hezbollah in Turkey, mainly established in the Kurdish region and which in the 1990s had been used as an armed force by the Turkish Gladio against the PKK *[Kurdish Workers Party]* and had committed numerous massacres. The regime will try to use this organization to break the hegemony of the Kurdish political movement, which has maintained itself despite a level of fierce repression since 2015.

During the legislative elections of 14 May, which were held at the same time as the first round of the presidential elections, the pro-Erdogan bloc obtained, with 49.4 per cent of the votes, 323 deputies (out of 600). Although his votes were down compared to the election of 2018 when he obtained 344 deputies, Erdogan still has the majority in parliament which allows him to adopt or prevent bills. The results obtained by the AKP were also down, but the MHP, which was estimated to have fallen to 6-7 per cent, almost regained its 2018 level, reaching 10 per cent. However it should be noted that the bloc came first in almost all the cities of the earthquake zone.

A defeat for the opposition

Opposite this bloc was the Alliance of the Nation, whose main party is the Republican People's Party (CHP), a centre-left party whose origins lie in the foundation of the Republic. The other "big party" in this bloc is Meral Akşener's Good Party (IYIP), which is a far-right split, representing a more secular nationalism than the MHP, but trying to reposition itself towards the centre-right .

Also part of this alliance are two parties whose leaders were

previously leaders of the AKP, one led by Ahmet Davutoğlu, former Prime Minister, and the other by Ali Babacan, former Minister of Economy. Finally, the Saadet Partisi (SP), which comes from the historical current of Islamism from which the AKP emerged, also participates in this bloc, as well as another small right-wing party.

Politically, this opposition alliance defends a return to a parliamentary regime (abolished by Erdogan in 2017 following a referendum) and the recovery of the economy through a restored neoliberalism with certain "social" traits. With 35.4 per cent of the vote, the opposition bloc obtained 212 deputies, 23 more seats than in the previous election.

The parties of Babacan and Davutoğlu , as well as the SP, whose candidates were presented under the CHP lists, seem to have contributed 3 per cent to the results of the CHP. These right-wing parties thus obtain 40 seats, while they only brought in 22 more. The eligible places reserved for right-wing candidates in these lists had sparked debate among the rank and file of the CHP.

Nationalist turn of the opposition after the first round

During the 14 May presidential election, despite all the opposition's predictions, Erdogan won 49.5 per cent of the vote, thus beating the leader of the Alliance of the Nation by 5 points, the latter only receiving 44.8 per cent. Given the importance of the President of the Republic in the autocratic system, Kılıçdaroğlu's victory was decisive for regime change. He led a campaign that was able to embrace large sectors of the population. The fact that he is an Alevi Kurd (a minority stream of Islam seen as a heresy by traditional Sunnism) had generated debate, with many believing that he could not unify the opposition. However, the leader of the CHP led a campaign proudly claiming his adhesion to Alevism and calling for a

reconciliation of the population of Turkey in the face of the polarizing policies of Erdogan.

A third candidate, Sinan Ogan, an ultra-nationalist from the ranks of the MHP, won 5.2 per cent. He was the candidate of a small nationalist, anti-migrant and anti-Kurdish bloc, who refused to support Kilicdaroglu, in particular because the latter was also supported by the pro-Kurdish party HDP. He thus held a crucial position for the second round.

In order to be able to rally the electorate of Ogan , Kilicdaroglu, himself a candidate from a bloc made up of various centre-left, conservative, Islamist and far-right currents, thus operated a nationalist turn.

He argued that, in the context of a victory for Erdogan, 10 million new migrants would arrive in the country, that the cities would be under the control of refugees and the mafia, that young girls would no longer be able to walk around on their own, that violence against women was going to increase (because of the refugees) and that finally Erdogan was going to make concessions in the face of “terrorism” (therefore of the Kurdish movement). He was thus trying to ride the (massive, among Turks and Kurds) anti-migrant wave by declaring that he was going to send them all back to their own country, but also to reverse Erdogan’s main argument during his campaign, that the opposition supposedly supported the “terrorism” of the PKK.

Indeed, the fact that the HDP (pro-Kurdish left) supported Kilicdaroglu, himself Kurd and Alevi, and that it promised to release Selahattin Demirtaş (former HDP leader, imprisoned for seven years) had been Erdogan’s main angle of attack against the opposition. After having maintained a more democratic discourse before the first round, Kılıcdaroglu ended up criticizing Erdogan himself for having conducted negotiations with the Kurdish movement (in 2009-2014).

Eventually Ogan preferred to express his support for Erdogan, but the most prominent party in the bloc for which Ogan had been a candidate, the Victory Party, whose main political stance was anti-migrant nationalism, declared its support for Kilicdaroglu. On this, the latter signed a protocol with this party, where the anti-migrant position was reaffirmed but which also promised (within the framework of the laws) the continuation of the appointments of administrators in place of HDP mayors in the Kurdish region, who were accused of having links with the PKK (about fifty municipalities are concerned by this). While in the initial programme of the opposition it was a question of new elections for the town halls concerned… Although the HDP protested this decision, it continued to call to vote for Kilicdaroglu, but the percentage of participation in Kurdistan, which was already below Turkey's average in the first round, fell further in the second round. Despite everything, the opposition candidate emerged a winner in all the towns of the Kurdish region.

HDP, TIP and the "Work and Freedom" Alliance

Another opposition alliance was the one called "Work and Freedom," made up of the HDP (Democratic People's Party, left-wing party from the Kurdish movement), the TIP (Workers' Party of Turkey, in which our comrades of the Fourth International are active) as well as four other formations of the radical left. For the presidential elections this coalition supported Kılıçdaroğlu. For the presidential elections the HDP participated in the elections under the name of its "replacement party", against the probability that it would be banned, the Green-Left Party (YSP).

The TIP did not present itself in the cities where the HDP had a large majority (Turkish Kurdistan) and in some where it risked losing deputies to the HDP and the CHP; it submitted

slates in 52 out of 81 cities. The fact that the TIP wanted to run within the alliance but with independent slates in some cities is a question that has generated a lot of debate. For the HDP, the TIP should have included its candidates in the lists of the YSP; its opinion was that having two competing lists within the same alliance would divide the votes and lose potential elected representatives.

The TIP had another proposal. The party had been observing an influx of members for several months. It had quadrupled its membership since mid-January, going from 10,000 to 40,000 members in four months, in particular because of its mobilization in solidarity with the city of Hatay (Antioch), seriously affected by the earthquake. This participation, but above all the sympathy that was expressed towards the party and its elected representatives, who for five years had led a very combative policy, came from political and social sectors that were largely different from those who had previously voted for the HDP. An important part came from the left of the CHP, but also from an electorate which previously voted for the right but which (especially through the elected representatives of the TIP) discovered a combative left, which does not mince its words vis-a-vis the ruling circles and gives a prominent place to workers' rights. It was clear that the TIP could not channel all of these votes to the HDP-YSP lists. So its proposal was that the alliance candidates present themselves in certain cities under the TIP lists (even if it meant putting HDP candidates at the top of the list) and thus having a plurality of candidacy tactics according to the demographic, ethnic and social specificities of the localities. This would have increased the results of the alliance at the national level, but also the number of elected representatives. In the end, the two parties failed to agree on this tactic, mismanaged the controversy (which had negative repercussions on the networks) and the TIP ended up presenting itself with its own lists in fifty cities. Among the TIP lists there were also candidates from two Trotskyist currents, the

Workers' Democracy Party (IDP) and the International Workers' Solidarity Association (UID-DER).

The HDP-YSP obtained 8.8 per cent in the legislative elections, 3 per cent less than in the previous ones. It is still too early to make substantial analyses, but it seems that support for Kılıçdaroğlu for the presidential elections was understood as support for the CHP (in the legislative elections) and therefore votes went to this party. On the other hand, the 10 per cent barrier (to enter parliament) was an important source of motivation to vote for this party and allow its representation in parliament (and reduce that of the opposing bloc). The fact that this barrier is currently 7 per cent (a threshold that the HDP should easily exceed, according to estimates) must also have weighed, and part of the left-wing electorate who had previously voted for the HDP returned to vote for the CHP and partly for the TIP. Finally, we know that especially within the Kurdish people, certain more conservative and nationalist sectors are opposed to alliances with the Turkish far left; this must also have had an effect on the results.

The results of the YSP, which are considered a failure by the party, have triggered debates and in particular severe criticism from Selahattin Demirtaş, whose relationship with the leadership had been strained for several years. Having played an important role during the campaign from his cell (through the daily visits of his lawyers and his Twitter account directed from outside according to his instructions), Demirtaş has declared his retirement from "active politics". The HDP is thus embarking on a process of internal debates which will culminate in its next congress.

In this nightmarish panorama a meagre (but significant) consolation is the result that the TIP obtained. For the first time since 1965, a socialist party defending the cause of the working class has managed to enter parliament with its own votes (and not by being elected under the list of another

party). The TIP obtained 1.7 per cent with a million votes, only presenting itself in two-thirds of the territory, therefore probably above 2 per cent in total. It thus gained four deputies, three of whom were already in the previous parliament. The fourth, Can Atalay, who was elected as deputy for Hatay, is a renowned lawyer involved in all the struggles of the country and who has at present been in detention for a year and has been sentenced to 18 years in prison for having been one of the main spokespersons for the Gezi revolt in 2013. Can's case is being appealed; legally he should be able to be freed to take his place in parliament, but the regime refuses for the moment to release him.

Rebuilding class consciousness

If the conditions for carrying out the campaigns were completely unequal (control of the media by Erdogan, etc.) and many cases of fraud were observed, we must recognize that the regime triumphed despite everything. Neither the economic crisis nor the earthquakes of February, and even less the attacks on democracy have led the conservative and popular electorate to break with the regime. On the contrary, the discontent of the working classes was expressed within the reactionary bloc, but towards currents even more radical than the AKP.

The results of these elections show once again that to defeat the Erdogan regime the defence of democratic and secular values is not enough. If Erdogan's camp brings together different social classes, so does the opposing bloc. Once again we see that the right wing of the opposition, far from being a solution, further strengthens the regime and the dominant bourgeois, nationalist and Islamist ideology. It is necessary to build another polarization, in order to break the reactionary hegemony, but also that of the opposition bloc. A polarization that would allow the dissociation between the interests of the working class, the oppressed and those of the

bosses, whether secular or Islamist. The fight against authoritarianism must be invested with a social, class content. And this goes through the reconstruction of the "subjective factor", of class consciousness, of the capacity for self-organization of the exploited, of women against patriarchal domination, of the unification of local and migrant workers, Turkish, Kurdish, Syrians and Afghans. This is the main challenge facing the radical left, from the HDP to the TIP and other currents of the revolutionary left. Certainly the situation is not easy. We recognize our defeat, but we refuse to bend and give up the fight. Being aware of the fact that freedom and equality will only be the work of the workers themselves, as we like to repeat here, we pour ourselves a tea and get back to work…

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Uraz Aydin is the editor of Yeniyol, the review of the Turkish section of the Fourth International, and one of many academics dismissed for having signed a petition in favour of peace with the Kurdish people, in the context of the state of emergency decreed after the attempted coup in 2016.

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