Scottish Parliament elections: a balance between continuity and change

The independence-supporting Scottish National Party (SNP) [**3**] became the largest party for the fifth consecutive time since the Parliament was re-established in 1999, though it fell short of a majority. The SNP have been the largest party for 19 years and now move into their third decade of continuous leadership of the Scottish government – a remarkable outcome given the volatility of UK politics.

Despite the SNP falling back a little, the Parliament now has the largest majority supporting independence in the devolution era. This is despite the process of devolution and the electoral system being deliberately intended by the once-dominant British Labour Party to prevent independence.

While the right wing anti-immigrant party Reform UK has emerged as a significant force in Scotland for the first time, their gains in seats were entirely at the expense of the discredited rightward-moving Conservative & Unionist party [**4**], with the combined Reform UK and Conservative seat numbers being less than those held by the Conservatives alone in the last Parliament. Reform failed to win a constituency seat and had to rely on the regional list "top up" seats in the "two votes" electoral system.

The election was a disaster for the Labour Party [**5**] which had high hopes two years ago of emerging as the largest party, but they lost seats and fell to their lowest representation in the devolution era.

The big gainers were the left-wing Scottish Green Party [**6**], who nearly doubled their seats despite being ignominiously bundled out of a joint governmental agreement with the SNP in

the last parliament. The Scottish Greens won two constituency seats from the SNP for the first time in the largest cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh and won representation from all regions of Scotland. The small centre-right anti-independence Liberal Democrat party also grew but is still the smallest party in the parliament.

The SNP will continue to take the role of First Minister and nominate Government ministers as a minority, negotiating with other parties to get their legislation through. One policy of the newly re-elected government will be to demand another independence referendum from the UK Parliament at Westminster. This is very unlikely to be granted by the Starmer UK government majority, leading to a continuing "democratic deficit". However the SNP will be strongly encouraged by the victory of Plaid Cymru [**7**] in Cymru/Wales to take control of government there and role of First Minister. The SNP are also working with Sinn Fein in the north of Ireland, once taboo due to Sinn Fein's past and unionist sentiment in Scotland, but now becoming normal.

All three First Ministers and leading parties in the devolved legislatures of the UK state now support the break up and creation of separate states. The "Celtic Alliance" of the three First Ministers and parties, as it is increasingly called, will put significant pressure on the unionist forces in England. [**8**]

Similarities and differentiation across Britain

The separate elections took place across Britain on 7 May have provoked a crisis in the UK government of Prime Minister Keir Starmer that could see him ousted from power after only 22 months within days rather than weeks.

It is important to understand that although synchronous, the elections were to different bodies in different parts of the state in England, Scotland and Cymru/Wales, and even under

totally different electoral systems and electorates. Unlike the Westminster Parliament, both Scotland and Cymru/Wales use systems for their national-devolved legislatures that are more proportional and give votes to 16/17 year olds. The electorate in Scotland includes all nationalities, the only part of the UK state where all immigrants are enfranchised.

But the common features across the UK state were a massive collapse in votes for the Labour Party compared to the UK general election in 2024, a continuing rise in support for the right wing Reform party of Nigel Farage, emerging from the Brexit Party, and a rising challenge to the Labour Party by parties setting out policies to the left of Labour or posing a radical challenge to the UK state union.

However these challenges to Labour were differentiated across different parts of the UK state – in England from the Green Party of England & Wales (GPEW) winning 5 councils and hundreds of councillors, in Scotland from the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the left wing Scottish Green Party (SGP) in Parliament, and, most dramatically, in Cymru/Wales from the left social democratic/nationalist Plaid Cymru that replaced a century of Labour domination and their 27 year uninterrupted leadership in the devolved legislature, Senedd Cymru.

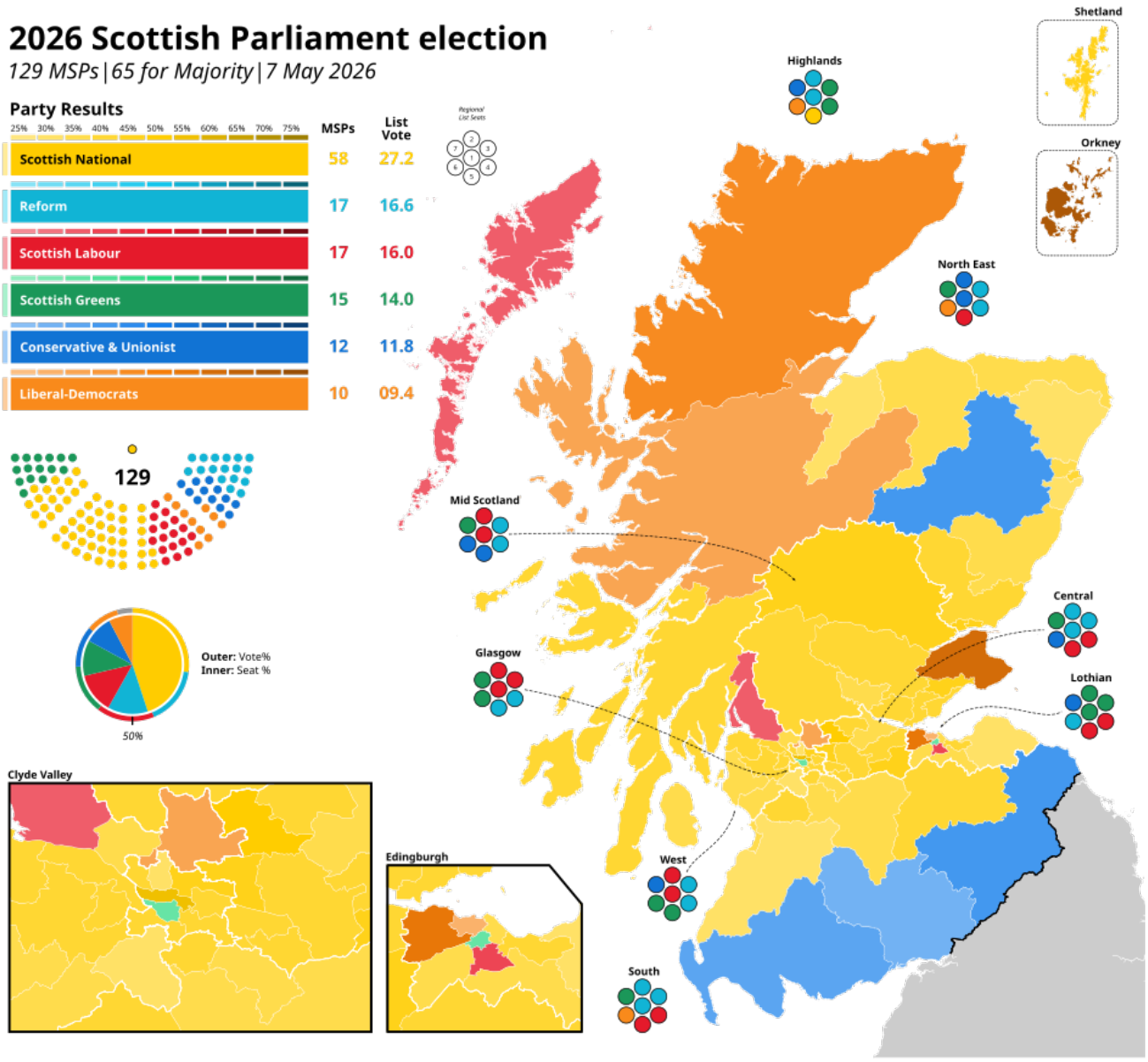
There were no elections in the part of the north of Ireland occupied by the UK state, where Sinn Fein, the former political wing of the IRA, have emerged as the largest party in elections in recent year, reinforcing the fractures within the UK state on national lines. Elections will however take place for the Northern Ireland Assembly and local councils there under a more proportional system (Single Transferable Vote – STV) in May 2027 and for all the local councils in Scotland and Cymru/Wales, as well as for some councils in England. Scotland also uses the STV election system for council elections, while Cymru/Wales and England still use the less representative ’first past the post’ system for local

councils.

A further fracturing and crisis of the political system into multi-party, multi-national politics in the 2027 elections and the multiple by-elections anticipated is likely to put pressure on the UK government, whoever is at the helm by then.

The results

Scottish Parliament Election results in seats (previous results in brackets from 2021)
Party Seats Vote Share Constituency / List (figures in brackets 2021 election)
SNP 58 seats (64), 38% (47%) / 27% (40%)
Labour 17 seats (22), 19% (22%) / 16% (18%)
Reform UK 17 seats (-), 16% (-) / 17% (-)
Scottish Greens 15 seats (8), 2% (1%) / 14% (8%)
Conservative 12 seats (31), 12% (22%) /12% (24%)
Liberal Democrat 10 seats (4), 11% (7%) / 9% (5%)



Unlike the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament is elected under an Additional Member System that resembles that used in Germany, where voters have two votes: one for a traditional 'first past the post' constituency candidate and one for a party list top-up regional election that brings a stronger element of proportionality than the winner-takes-all Westminster system.

The SNP won the lion's share of the constituencies taking 57 out of 73 seats, largely due to a significantly divided opposition. The SNP constituency vote however declined by 9.5% percentage points to 38.2% from the last election in 2021. Due to its domination of the constituencies, in the regional party list elections the SNP only took 1 list seat, with many SNP

voters switching to other parties, particularly the Scottish Greens. But the net effect was to give the SNP a clear large lead over other parties, but short of a majority. The SNP have led a minority government on 3 of the last 4 occasions since 2007, only winning a narrow and supposedly impossible majority in a somewhat ’freak’ election result in 2011 that has yet to be replicated.

While Reform UK took 17 list seats and entered the parliament for the first time as joint largest party, this was entirely at the expense of the collapsing Tory vote. The Tories were originally a more liberal party in the Scottish Parliament, even supporting SNP budgets and advocating increased spending commitments while presenting a pro-LGBTQI image, but the process of Brexit transformed the situation and the Tories in Scotland followed their party at Westminster in moving rapidly rightwards and embracing anti-immigrant sentiment. However the Tories lost much support to the more media-savvy, more right wing populism of Nigel Farage’s Reform UK, particularly given the relentless promotion of Farage and scare-mongering against immigrants in the London-based media that Scottish unionism looks to.

The entry of the 17 members of Reform UK of a populist far right anti-migrant party into the national parliament will have a significant effect on Scottish politics. Reform UK have promoted far-right street protests against asylum seekers. Reform UK are opposed to efforts to stop climate change through development of sustainable energy. They will aim to move politics to the right. Yet, most Scots realise migration is needed to tackle an aging population and populate jobs in the economy and public services. North Sea oil and gas is nearly exhausted and due to its large land mass, Scotland is well placed to expand wind, wave and hydro sources of cleaner energy. The SNP have declared they will attempt to isolate Reform UK MSPs. Overall the combined right wing anti-immigrant parties have less seats than the previous parliament and there

is a big 10 percentage points difference in electoral performance of Reform UK in Scotland than England.

The Scottish Greens were criticised from their left for standing in only six constituencies and concentrating on the list vote. The Scottish Greens are a decentralised party however, and decisions about where to stand were made in local branches. Against all the odds, the Scottish Greens took two constituencies/direct mandates, defeating two SNP ministers, and topped the list poll in five constituency areas in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Across the Glasgow region as a whole the Greens exceeded 20%, beating Labour and coming a narrow second to the SNP in what was previously regarded as Labour heartland (Labour ran Glasgow council for over 40 years from the 1970s and won all 7 Westminster seats in 2024).

The left of the left

Outside of the Greens, Labour and SNP, the left challenge completely floundered. The Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) contested the list vote in all eight regions in its own name for the first time since 2011, but its vote was minuscule (only 0.37%). The SSP was a significant force in the early days of the parliament, winning 6 seats in 2003 election and over 10% in Glasgow region. The SSP included most of the left groups to the left of Labour/SNP, but split badly over the leadership of its maverick biggest personality Tommy Sheridan, and has diminished to a small group of highly committed activists with a lost direction. Sheridan tried to reinvent his career by standing for a motley cobbled-together ’independence’ coalition arising from the ruins of the former Alba Party formed by former SNP leader Alex Salmond. Alba had turned to transphobia and the right, and has since collapsed. The Sheridan coalition also won less than 1% of the vote wherever it stood, as did the few candidacies by the George Galloway’s Workers Party and the remnants of the Militant Tendency/CWI and the Communist Party.

Despite an enthusiastic response and big conferences, the new party launched by former Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana has totally collapsed in Scotland and did not stand or support any candidates. Named ’Your Party Scotland’, the 300 strong conference in Dundee in February decided to form a separate but linked Scottish Party, to support Scottish independence and to contest the elections. A sizeable contingent including three councillors from the Scottish Green Party in Glasgow had joined Your Party Scotland, alongside a wide range of other left wingers who reflected the consensus by the vast majority of the radical left to support independence. But these moves to a new Scottish party were blocked by the England based clique around Corbyn supporters, despite claims to respect ’autonomy of nations’. This finally collapsed in April when it became clear candidates would not be permitted to stand and that a unitary party with the Scottish members constituting a ’branch office’, reflecting UK Labour practice, was inevitable. All the leading members of Your Party Scotland resigned, declaring it a failure, and are now engaged in a process around developing a new initiative.

The challenge ahead

In many respects the election campaign was dull. Despite their claims of being progressive, the SNP promised an element of continuity with little in the way of new thinking around tired and struggling public services. Their one radical policy – price controls over basic goods – was treated as undeliverable by the media. UK Labour threw massive spending on advertising, focussed on a presidential style campaign for their leader, Anas Sarwar, much of it funded by commercial interests and Labour supporters in England. Yet Labour failed due to the massive disillusionment among those who had voted Labour in 2024 to rid the UK government of the 14 year reign of Tories. While independence is a major cleavage in Scottish population, it’s mainly the Tories who raise it , unsuccessfully for them, as an electoral issue. Similarly with Brexit. The climate and

ecological crisis was not a major feature – the main issue was the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the failure of the UK government to tackle it.

The general feeling of voters was summed up in the old Scots language word “scunnered”, meaning discontented and bored. Turnout was down ten points on the previous election to 53% – it had previously been higher than UK Westminster elections, though the electorate for Scottish Parliament elections is significantly larger due to the more inclusive electorate. The Greens tried to develop alternatives, for example by promoting an immediate policy of free bus fares to tackle both climate and poverty and having previously championed (and won) free bus travel for those under 22. But both the SNP and Greens present cautious social democratic incrementalism rather than radical change. It is Reform who are presented as the disruptors and their support mainly comes from a minority of disillusioned working class former Tory and Labour voters looking for scapegoats in the crisis.

Despite winning its largest ever Scottish Parliament majority, the movement for independence remains stalled. The Westminster UK parliament veto over a second independence referendum, established by the UK Supreme Court in 2023, remains in place. The focus on the day-to-day cost of living pressures makes it unlikely a successful mass movement for rupture will re-emerge in the short term, though the constitutional divide remains a significant cleavage, demonstrations regularly occur and polls put support for independence at 50-55%, rising to 60% if Reform UK came to power at the next Westminster election. The broader coalition against the union state is given a boost by the victory of Plaid Cymru and the liaison with Sinn Fein, though all three parties adopt constitutional gradualism and compromise with capital, relying on changing generations rather than mass mobilisation and rupture.

The SNP did put forward a radical policy in their manifesto – price controls over basic goods by the end of the year in the

face of rapidly rising inflation due to war and trade. The Scottish Greens may pressure the SNP to make that policy more meaningful for a working class bearing the brunt of an economic crisis. The trade unions, increasingly disentangled from their Labour Party heritage, may support mobilisations and increase defensive actions including strikes. However, the powers of the Scottish Parliament to impose widespread price controls may be limited by the UK government using a post-Brexit Tory law over the UK internal market and their powers over fuel pricing and taxes. A confrontation over the right of the Scottish Parliament to take such measures is possible.

Whatever happens in the crisis of Labour at Westminster and the threat of a Reform victory in the UK government, there are some positives in Scotland in building a fightback.

Mike Picken, 14 May 2026

[1] Graphic: Par Talleyrand6 – File:2026 Scottish Parliament Election Map.svg, CC BY 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=191646626

[2] The Scottish Parliament covers a population of over 5 million and has very significant legal and constitutional role and a large annual budget of around £60 billion sterling and including some taxation measure, control over many public services like health, education, transport, aspects of social security benefits, local government, police, courts and prisons.

Importantly the UK government retains control over oil and gas industries in the North Sea and the energy infrastructure, though the Scottish government are able to use devolved planning powers to oppose fracking and the construction of new nuclear power stations, and to promote renewable options particularly wind farms. The Scottish government has deviated significantly from some UK state policies, for example

abolishing university tuition fee and health prescription charges, adopting more progressive income tax measures, not breaking hospitals and schools into semi-independent “trusts”, and expanding social security benefits targeted at the poorest.

[3] The Scottish National Party, normally abbreviated to SNP, was formed in the 1930s combining a conservative layer with radical middle class support for Scottish identity. In the late 1960s and early 1970s it emerged as a significant electoral force and declared it was in the “mainstream of European social democracy” though without the formal links to the trade union bureaucracy enjoyed by Labour and most social democratic parties. It first became the largest party in the Scottish Parliament in 2007 and in 2011 won a “freak” majority of seats that resulted in the independence referendum of 2014. While losing the referendum, the SNP emerged as the strongest electoral force with a mass membership five times that of Labour, but it fell back in the UK general election of 2024 and was widely presumed to being on its way to being replaced by Labour as largest party.

[4] The Conservative party in Scotland organises under the formal title of “Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party” but is also widely known as “Tory” or “the Tories”. It was originally a separate party but merged with the Conservatives in England & Wales in the 1960s. The “Unionist” label in its title originally referred to opposition to Home Rule in Ireland and many of the party’s supporters had strong links with the unionist/loyalist block in the north of Ireland, including the sectarian protestant-supremacist Orange Order dedicated to preserving Protestantism within the UK state. The party has not won an election in Scotland since 1955, but became the second party in the Scottish Parliament in 2016. In recent years it has collapsed and many of its activists and voters have defected to the newly established and more rightwing Reform UK of Nigel Farage. However, both parties

support Brexit, the UK leaving the EU, which is very unpopular in Scotland where support for EU membership runs at over 75%.

[5] The Scottish Labour Party was established by Keir Hardie in the 1880s, predating the Britain-wide Labour Party and supported “Home Rule” within the UK state – most domestic policies being controlled by national parliaments with only defence and foreign policy being coordinated at UK level. However it has now become a fully fledged unionist party and its opposition to independence and alignment with Tories in a “Better Together” campaign in 2014, led to a mass exodus of voters and members to the SNP. Its central strategy to head off independence moves from the UK state in the 1990s was to create significant “devolution” though keeping many powers at the level of the UK state. While it has some elements of a notional “autonomy” within the British Labour Party, under its current leadership of Anas Sarwar it had aligned itself with the leadership of Keir Starmer in London winning 37 out of 57 Westminster seats in the UK general election in 2024 mostly from the SNP. Following its electoral collapse in 2026 and plummeting support for Starmer across the UK, there are some marginal voices calling for it to become an independent party.

[6] The Scottish Green Party [SGP] was formed in 1990 and is entirely independent from the Green Party of England & Wales/Plaid Werydd and the Irish Green Party which operate elsewhere in the UK state. It sits on the left of Green Parties internationally and long supported Scottish independence. It has formally adopted “ecosocialism” as its ideology and increasingly uses that term to describe its politics. It is opposed to membership of the NATO alliance but supports Scottish membership of the EU when it becomes independent. It has supported the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign in Scotland and endorses Ukraine’s right to defend itself against Russia’s aggression rejecting pacifist pressures. It is strongly anti-monarchy. It entered into a governmental agreement with the SNP in the Scottish Parliament in 2022,

taking two ministerial roles in the government, but its support for trans rights and opposition to an abandonment of climate targets by the SNP generated tension between the SNP and SGP and it was unceremoniously bundled out of the government by the SNP. For many Green activists the SGP was too uncritical of the SNP, and a new leadership was elected in 2025 that takes a slightly more critical tone. Other parties argue the SGP is just a satellite of the SNP. The SGP broke off relations with the Green Party in England over disputes about trans rights and recognition of devolution, but following the election of Zack Polanski as leader in England and his advocacy of Scottish and Cymru/Wales independence, there has been a convergence and closer working.

[7] Plaid Cymru "Party of Wales" was established in the 1920s and was heavily involved in the revival of Cymraeg/Welsh Language in the 1960s, though remained only a minor or fringe party confined to Cymraeg speaking areas until recently. It has long had informal relations with SNP though it does also define itself as a party of "decentralised socialism'" rather than nationalism per se.

[8] This Alliance includes the North of Ireland in which no elections were held this year. Stormont, the devolved Assembly, will be re-elected next year.

Corbyn's New Party Risks Labour's Fatal Mistake – Why "Your Party" Needs

Independent Wings, Not Branch Offices

Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana's newly announced "Your Party" is already raising concerns among Scottish left activists who warn the venture could collapse before it starts if it continues ignoring the national question. The harsh reality? Scotland's left has watched this movie before – and it always ends in failure.

Bella Caledonia sums it up: "Limited consideration of Scotland has taken place in this attempt to get a left of Labour electoral challenge up and running," observes Democratic Left Scotland, while Richie Venton of the Scottish Socialist Party warns that "any new party that seeks to operate in Scotland must respect the right of the Scottish people to self-determination and must not be a mere branch office of a London-centric project.

This isn't just Scottish sensitivity – it's strategic necessity. The historical record is unforgiving: centralized left parties that ignore national questions don't just fail in Scotland, they fragment entirely. Spain's catastrophic left retreat in the 1990s offers a perfect case study of what happens when socialists dismiss plurinational realities.

The Spanish Warning: How Centralism Destroyed the Left

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) once dominated the left. The left magazine Viento Sur describes its failures. By the 1990s, it had become a "neoliberal force with progressive trappings," transforming into what critics called a "party-cartel" that monopolized politics through state financing while abandoning its working-class identity. But PSOE's fatal error wasn't just embracing neoliberalism – it was promoting a divisive "theory of two national communities" that alienated

Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia.

In the Basque Country, PSOE manufactured a false division between communities, casting Basques as "bourgeois and racist" nationalists opposed to "working-class, socialist, and universalist" speakers of Castilian Spanish. This strategy poisoned dialogue and drove communities apart. This wasn't just bad politics – it was organizational suicide.

Izquierda Unida (IU), formed as a left alternative to PSOE, repeated the same mistakes. Despite its anti-capitalist rhetoric, IU struggled with a chronic inability to accept the plurinational reality of the Spanish state. Strong centralist currents within IU viewed national demands as "sectarian" or "right-wing," fatally undermining the party's ability to build genuine grassroots support in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia.

The results were devastating. In Galicia, the rise of the Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG) captured the "vote of discontent" while IU's components struggled to reach even 3% of the vote. The lesson couldn't be clearer: Spain's alternative left faces a binary choice: **either** genuinely champion the distinct national identities and self-determination rights of its regions, **or** accept political marginalization and eventual collapse.

Scotland's Clear Message: Autonomy Works, Branch Offices Don't

Scottish left parties have learned this lesson the hard way. The most successful examples – the Scottish Socialist Party and Scottish Greens – operate as genuinely independent entities, not subordinate branches of UK-wide organizations.

The Scottish Greens emerged in 1990 when the former UK Green Party deliberately separated into two independent parties. Today, they're completely separate and unique with their own leaders, membership, and policies. Their strong support for Scottish independence isn't incidental – it's integral to

their identity and success.

Similarly, the Scottish Socialist Party formed in 1998 from the Scottish Socialist Alliance, explicitly as a distinct Scottish entity. The SSP unequivocally supports independence, framing it through "internationalist rather than nationalist concerns" and advocating for a "Scottish socialist republic."

Contrast this with parties that maintained centralized structures. The Respect Party, "established in London" with no distinct Scottish presence, made virtually no impact north of the border and even lost supporters in England who opposed its organising north of the border. The pattern is clear: Scottish voters reject "branch office" politics.

Ross Greer, the Scottish Green MSP, put it bluntly: "The idea of a new London-based party trying to establish a 'branch office' in Scotland without a clear understanding of our distinct political context is deeply concerning."

Why "Your Party" Risks Disaster

Troubling early indicators suggest "Your Party" risks repeating these historical errors. Scottish commentators describe the initial launch as "badly bungled and incoherent," with conflicting reports about organizational structure and minimal Scottish input.

Helena from 'No Justice' captures the frustration: Rolling out "Jeremy Corbyn as a 'left-leader' and harking back (uncritically) to how wonderful he was" isn't "serious politics." The party risks being dismissed as nostalgic English leftism that ignores Scottish political realities.

Most critically, "Your Party" has yet to clarify its position on Scottish self-determination—a silence that Scottish activists are already interpreting as indifference.. This isn't a minor oversight – it's a deal-breaker for many. As Ross Greer notes, "Scotland needs a strong, independent voice

on the left, not another Westminster-controlled outfit."

The electoral arithmetic is brutal. Connor Beaton warns that attempting to contest Holyrood elections without broad engagement could "end up like RISE in 2016, winning a derisory share of the vote which then contributes to the whole project's collapse."

The Platform for Socialism and Independence

The good news is that Scottish socialists are already organizing to prevent this disaster. The recently launched Platform for Socialism and Independence brings together Aberdeen Marxist Caucus, the Republican Socialist Platform, Scottish Socialist Youth, and Socialists for Independence. It represents exactly the kind of proactive intervention needed. Rather than waiting for "Your Party" to impose a structure from London, these groups are engaging strategically while maintaining core principles around independence and Scottish autonomy.

The Path Forward: Embrace Plurinationalism

Jamie Driscoll, involved in "Your Party's" formation, seems to understand the stakes, emphasizing "significant autonomy in the nations and regions" and rejecting a "top-down London-run party." But good intentions aren't enough – organizational structure matters.

Based on successful precedents, "Your Party" needs to:

- **Unequivocally support Scottish self-determination**– not as a tactical position, but as a foundational principle. The Spanish experience shows that half-measures create "artificial barriers of incommunication."
- **Foster genuine autonomy**– Scottish and Welsh wings must have their own leadership, decision-making structures, and tailored political programmes. The Scottish Greens' model of formal separation or the SSP's autonomous

development offer proven templates.

- **Build grassroots power first**– Instead of immediate Holyrood campaigns, focus on local organizing and council elections in 2027. This allows time to develop genuine Scottish leadership and avoid the "excessive politicismo" that doomed Spain's IU.
- **Engage existing Scottish movements**– Work with independence campaigns, climate justice groups, Palestine solidarity, and other progressive forces rather than competing with them.

Learning from Failure in the Spanish State

The Spanish left's 1990s retreat wasn't inevitable – it resulted from strategic choices that prioritized institutional power over grassroots organizing and centralized control over plurinational democracy. These same pressures exist today.

"Your Party" can succeed, but only if it learns from these failures. The choice is stark: embrace genuine autonomy for Scotland and Wales, or watch another promising left initiative fragment on the rocks of unresolved national questions.

The Scottish left has been clear about what it needs. The question is whether Corbyn and Sultana are listening – or whether they're destined to repeat the mistakes that have buried left parties across Europe.

As Richie Venton warns: "We've seen countless attempts to build left-wing unity in Scotland only to see them fail because of a lack of understanding of the Scottish political landscape and the need for a genuinely independent Scottish socialist movement."

This is "Your Party's" moment of truth. The early warning signs are flashing red, but the fatal mistakes haven't been locked in yet. Corbyn and Sultana can still demonstrate they understand what every successful Scottish left party has learned: revolutionary democracy means unequivocally

supporting self-determination. The choice is stark—act now to embrace genuine Scottish autonomy, or watch another promising left initiative fragment on familiar rocks.

Reposted from Red Mole Substack

What do you know about us? by ‘Somebody’s Sister’

A note: If you feel like this article is addressing you, then it is. It’s not my problem if you don’t like seeing yourself in the mirror. To those who do know us and stand with us, I send comradely regards.

It’s a question I find myself asking often enough, but it’s been rattling around in my brain with especially violent force in the days since that accursed Supreme Court decision:

What do you know about us?

I ask you sincerely. What do you actually know of or about trans people, trans communities, trans culture? I don’t ask this facetiously. I really want to know- Do you actually, genuinely, know any of us?

And I don’t mean passing acquaintances in your work, neighbourhood, political organisation, etc., nor do I mean the *idea* of trans people you have from some Twitter posts or newspaper articles.

Do you have any trans friends? Trans relatives? Do you talk with them and listen to them? And I don’t mean talking *at* them or pretending to listen. Do you know how we speak, how we joke, how we love, how we grieve? Do you know about our far-

reaching networks of friends and polycules, of our dumb in-jokes, our vernaculars, our tastes in fashion, our traditions of knowledge-sharing and mutual aid, our often-shrouded history of defiant existence and struggle?

Our history and community brims with wonderful writers, musicians, comedians, game developers, scientists, filmmakers, artisans, actors, programmers, activists, artists- Do you even know a single one of their names?

When the Supreme Court judgement went out, did you speak with any of us and hear our sorrow and disappointment, our fear for the future?

I ask because the news doesn't show this. At best, they have on a couple people from a charity or the Green Party, if you're lucky an actual trans person, to offer a quick snippet or quote, and then it's back to the gender-criticals, the ideologues and the cynical politicians. We are mostly just discussed, never truly spoken with.

And it shows! The discourse about us is conducted in terms of grotesque stereotypes and ridiculous "what-if" situations. I've seen the idea of us that gender-critical slopheads in Twitter threads and newspaper columns hold to, an absurd caricature that would be hilarious if it wasn't influencing policy and assisting the rise of the far right. The trans people that exist in their heads are creepy, slovenly, asocial and predatory- essentially, inhuman creatures beyond empathy. And yet, it's these imaginary, stereotypical trans people, imaginary trans women specifically, that all the "legitimate concerns" are premised on.

Legitimate concerns. Let's linger on that term for a moment. I can think about some other "legitimate concerns":

The "legitimate concerns" of parents about homosexuals "influencing" their children.

The “legitimate concerns” of Israeli settlers about the “dangers” posed by dispossessed Palestinians.

The “legitimate concerns” of racists all over Europe about Syrian, Afghan, Eritrean, Sudanese, Kurdish and other refugees constituting a force of “fighting-age men” ready to undermine their host country.

And do you remember Emmett Till?

The road to his brutal murder, and the lynching of countless others, was paved with the “legitimate concerns” of white people about “threatening”, “lustful” black people, “concerns” that were just the outward justifications for stereotypes, bigotry, and hatred.

It’s all stereotypes, it’s all horseshit! It’s always horseshit! And you know it. We have seen it all before, past and present, as one group of bigots fearmongers about another marginalised group, and it’s no different with trans people. You might hide behind your “legitimate concerns”, but the truth is that you have more in common with the lynch mob and the settler on the West Bank than any real fighter for human justice.

The trans community as it genuinely exists does not deserve to be demonised like this, just as the concrete, genuine human beings underneath abstractions and umbrella terms like “refugee” or “homosexual” do not deserve to be the victims of prejudice as they try to live decent, dignified lives. Neither me nor the man from Syria should have to answer for *your* ignorance. We just want to live our lives without someone else’s boot on our necks.

Lets face it, whatever legal finery and rhetorical flourishes this offensive against trans people is being draped in, it stems at its core from simple, brutish feelings of disgust. Our enemies are disgusted by us. Or, to put it another way, they pretend that their disgust for us can be hidden by some

concocted political or moral ideal. Women with penises give them the ick, and it really does just boil down to that. Never mind that many of us want rid of our dicks at the earliest convenience, and many of us already have vaginas.

Not that genitals are necessarily the ultimate definers of my or any trans woman's womanhood, by the way. Are your genitals the be-all-and-end-all of your womanhood? Or does some man think so? Excuse me- Hasn't the feminist movement been fighting for centuries to destroy a patriarchal tyranny upheld by biological essentialism? And anyhow: *My* genitals are only of significance to me and my partners- The rest of you can fuck off and stop being so bloody nosey!

And yet *we* have to face the consequences for everyone else's creepy obsession with our genitals- And the transphobes call *us* perverts? The nerve!

On the subject of patriarchal domination, let me take this opportunity to point out my own speck of blood on the banner. I've been assaulted by a man on public transport, and I've been sexually assaulted by a man on the street. Do I have to certify my suffering, my oppression by the patriarchy to you, to gain some kind of solidarity and sisterhood?

Let's stop bullshitting. If a man wants to rape a woman, he doesn't go to the ridiculous contrivance of transitioning to be a woman first- What kind of cartoony secret-disguise nonsense do you think rapists operate by? A rapist breaks whatever boundaries he wants- If he wants to force his way into a women's toilet and sexually assault women, he'll try it. If you bothered to know any of us, you'd know that trans women are victims of this too. We are also assaulted, raped and murdered by men, whether in public or in private. The patriarchy aims to control, exploit and mutilate *all* women, cis or trans.

And yet, you consider me and my trans siblings the threat to

women’s safety, the obstacle to feminist gains? Fuck off and get a grip. Have a good think and realise who your real enemy is. Trust me, he wants me dead too.

The answer to rape culture and patriarchy is not the toilet gestapo. The answer is a united feminist movement that protects and uplifts all targets of the patriarchy, no matter whether they are cis or trans. Feminist comrades in Mexico, Argentina and Brazil understand this far better than us, and it’s no surprise that their feminist movements are bold, powerful and truly inclusive, while ours here is tiny, weak and demoralised.

I’m tired and hurt, and the quiet burning rage I feel at the collapse I’m seeing around me is so palpable, and has made my hands shake with such fury, that it has been hard to set my thoughts out in greater detail or length. I am going to end here for now, but first:

I must say specifically, to all the useful idiots, fairweather friends, grifters, cynics, opportunists and cowards of the left who skipped out on trans liberation, ignored our struggle, or bought into the culture war offensive against us: I despise you, and if you even bother to read and digest the thoughts of a single trans person about the destruction you’ve assisted by ignorant omission or conscious activity, then I hope you feel sick to your gut with shame for the rest of your life. I hope the guilt chases you forever. You are serving as the “left” wing of a movement for segregation and social murder and I will never consider you a comrade of mine. Ever.

I don’t care how you feel about what I’ve just said. I care about the trans people who will be harassed, beaten, sexually assaulted and killed in public places, who will face discrimination in workplaces, who will feel like they need to go back into the closet to live. Many trans people, despairing of everything, will take their lives in the years to come, and we both know this- don’t you dare be a shitebag and deny it.

It is a deeply horrible thing to acknowledge that there are sisters of mine, dear cherished friends, who may not live to see all of this bullshit repealed and sorted. We trans people will do our best to help each other get through this and avoid as much of that as possible. It's going to be a long and painful road, but we will endure it, just as we always do, no matter the circumstances. Do not forget- Once, many decades ago, using bonfires, camps and mass graves, Hitler's men tried to wipe us from the face of the Earth.

And yet, they failed. Trans people will never disappear.

But will the bulk of the left be much help to us in defeating this next round of repression and social murder? After witnessing the way the last few years have played out, I can only laugh at that notion. And the laughter is hollow and bitter.

You have failed not just trans people, but all of us. And when the far right goes after abortion or gay rights next, I honestly doubt you'll understand the connection between all of these assaults on civil rights, and the role the anti-trans offensive has played in galvanising them all.

After all, what the fuck do you know about us?

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No Going Back! Stand Up For Trans Rights



Class War on Workers – Revisiting The Great Miners' Strike 1984-85

40 years on from the most decisive class confrontation in Britain since the Second World War, Duncan Chapel finds much to like in a new retelling of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike.

For those like me who didn't yet read Richie Venton's new book, Class War on Workers – The Great Miners' Strike 1984-85 & Its Aftermath, two recent podcasts with him commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Miners' Strike offer a valuable and accessible path into his insights. Listen to them here and here

I listened, and here are a few thoughts I had along the way.

The welcome to one podcast rightly says, "This is our history. I mean, it's 40 years ago. It's recent history. And anybody

younger than me and Marlene, there are some of you around. We know you might find this really interesting as well". Richie Venton comments on the "broader context of the miners strike, and also lessons we can learn in the present day about it". He is aptly described as having "decades of dedicated experience" as a trade unionist and socialist, widely respected for "building support for workers and communities and struggle".

Venton highlights the fundamental nature of the dispute, stating it "was far more than a strike. It was premeditated class war aginst the workers. It unleashed the biggest confrontation between classes since the 1926 general strike". He outlines how the Tories, having been defeated by the miners in 1972 and 1974, "plotted revenge against the miners", referencing the "1977 infamous Ridley plan" which aimed to "smash the miners amongst others". The podcasts vividly recount the "biggest police operation ever mounted in peacetime UK" and how "freedom of movement was abandoned. Police stopped 164,000 presumably pickets moving around the country". The use of police as "armies of occupation in the villages" is also mentioned.

Venton stresses that despite the immense pressure, "we were so close, and sometimes people don't know how close we are. In October 1984…the Financial Times clearly worried about coal stocks and the supply and demand conundrum as the miners were so close to victory". He argues that victory was within reach "if only the leaders of the labour and trade union movement had lifted their finger to help us". He is rightly critical of the role of the right-wing trade union and Labour leadership, stating their role was to "join the ranks of the millionaire press and complain about picket line violence and the lack of a bar", and that "Norman Willis…and Neil Kinnock…were acting like referees calling for fair play when we were literally getting kicked in the hobs with our hands tied behind our back". Kinnock's condemnation of violence "on all sides, was a tragic response from a useless Labour leader".

Venton in the podcasts focuses on the betrayal of national union leaders. The strike occurred during a period when early neoliberal regimes, like Thatcher's in the UK, were targeting democratic rights, with trade union rights being a primary focus. Before the strike, there was a substantial increase and coordination of shop stewards, both within and across different workplaces. However, the strike also coincided with a historic low in the number of working days lost to strikes and a decline in trade union membership, reflecting the impact of Thatcher's first term.

The Tories' aimed to weaken the strength and coordination of grassroots labour organisation, and the historic defeat of the miners' strike had profound and lasting consequences. In particular, the defeat of the miners' strike contributed to a weakening of shop stewards' organisation.

While Venton's comments in the podcasts primarily focus on the domestic aspects and the solidarity received, the international political context of the strike mattered too. Venton mentions the "£60 million…collected for the miners from the wider working class, nationally and internationally", a "phenomenal indication of the support that they gained". The international solidarity mattered. For example, women's delegations toured Ireland, supporting women involved in the miners' dispute and seeking support for British workers.

It is challenging to encompass every facet of such a complex and far-reaching dispute. While Venton powerfully portrays the transformative impact on women in the pit villages who organised soup kitchens and their own picket lines, becoming eloquent speakers for the struggle, a more exhaustive account might explore the specific formations and national coordination of groups like Women Against Pit Closures. Similarly, while the book undoubtedly captures the spirit of solidarity that transcended traditional boundaries, the specific roles and networks of other support groups, such as Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, warrant further

exploration.

Despite these necessary limitations of a slim volume, Richie Venton's "Class War on Workers" is a powerful contribution to British socialist history. It provides a crucial understanding of the fundamental forces at play during the Miners' Strike and its lasting consequences. By grasping the lessons within these pages – the nature of state power, the necessity of working-class solidarity, and the dangers of right-wing opportunism – today's socialists will be better equipped to "fight climate change without sacrificing workings on the altar of green capitalism" and to build the "socialist future" that Venton argues is eminently achievable. This book is not just a history lesson; it is a call to action, urging us to learn from the past to build a stronger socialist movement for the future.

Class War on Workers – The Great Miners' Strike 1984-85 & Its Aftermath is published by the Scottish Socialist Party and is available to buy here.

Building Internationalism from Below in a Multi-Polar World – afternoon school 27 April 2024 Glasgow

A day conference organised by the Republican Socialist Platform on 2pm-5pm , Saturday 27th April 2024, Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP

Building Internationalism from Below in a Multi-Polar World.

Book here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/building-internationalism-from-below-in-a-multipolar-world-tickets-858894254837

Please note this event was rescheduled from 23 March due to speaker illness

Hear from Prof Gilbert Achcar, author of 'The New Cold War', and speakers from the Palestinian, Kurdish and Ukrainian solidarity movements.

The **Republican Socialist Platform** invites friends to discuss 'Building Internationalism from Below in a Multipolar World' in Glasgow on **Saturday 27th April 2024, 2pm-5pm**.

Our main speaker is **Professor Gilbert Achcar**, professor of development studies and international relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

His many books, published in a total of 15 languages, include:

- *The Clash of Barbarisms: The Making of the New World Disorder* (2002, 2006);
- *Perilous Power: The Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy*, co-authored with Noam Chomsky (2007, 2008);
- *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (2010);
- *Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism* (2013);
- *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising* (2013); and
- *Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising* (2016).

Most recently, Professor Achcar is the author of *The New Cold War: The US, Russia and China – From Kosovo to Ukraine*, which was published in 2023.

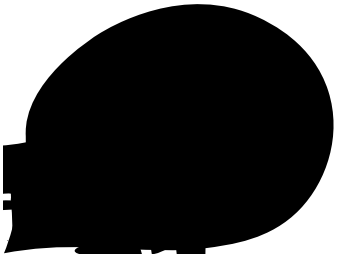
On the day, we will also be joined by speakers from the Palestinian, Kurdish and Ukrainian solidarity movements to provide an update on the current state of these struggles and what we can do to support them.

This event is free to attend, but we welcome donations to help us cover the costs of arranging speakers and the venue.

This public event will be governed by the RSP's comradely conduct and care policy.

To join the Republican Socialist Platform,
visit: https://join.republicansocialists.scot/

Heckle is an 0nline Scottish publication overseen by a seven-person editorial board elected by members of the Republican Socialist Platform.



Kurdistan: Scottish activist interviewed on Turkey's local elections

From a polling station in the Şirnak mountains – an interview with Hazel, an election observer from Scotland for the 31 March local elections in Turkey.

Sarah Glynn talks to one of two Scottish women who came to observe the elections at the invitation of the DEM Party *[Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party – see note 1]*. Hazel describes the militarisation of the region and the psychological pressure on voters. She witnessed the mass voting by soldiers brought in from outside the region, and saw the anger and worry in Şirnak (Şirnex) after their election was stolen by imported votes. And she emphasises the power of Kurdish resistance.

Hazel was observing the election at the invitation of the DEM Party, and was sent to village polling stations in the Şirnak (Şirnex) mountains. She describes a heavily militarised region, and militarised police and armoured vehicles outside the polling stations. Despite having become accustomed to the constant military presence, voters described feelings of intimidation and psychological pressure on account of the people outside the polling stations, who included families of AKP members.

Hazel saw a military helicopter that they were informed had brought soldiers to vote, and witnessed a long line of soldiers in civilian dress waiting to cast their ballots. But the observers were restricted in where they could go, and in inspecting voter lists.

She contrasted the victory celebrations in Diyarbakir (Amed) with the anger and worry in Şirnak – at the stolen election due to the votes of thousands of soldiers brought from outside, and at the prospect of the coming years of AKP control. And she described the immediate post-election repression and arrests in Şirnak.

Hazel attended protest statements in Amed, following the government's refusal to recognise the elected mayor of Van, and observed the importance of the presence of the Saturday Mothers.

She finished by trying to convey the sense of powerful resistance that she could feel in the Kurdish region and that she was reluctant to leave behind.

Below is the full transcript of the interview:

Şırnak mountians

Dembaş. This is Sarah Glynn for Media News

, and I'm talking today with Hazel, who is one of two women who came from Scotla

nd to observe the elections at the invitation of the DEM Party, and is just now in

the airport on her way back to the UK.

So, Hazel, obviously a lot has happened since the actual election itself, but you were there to observe the election, so I think we should start with that. And I wondered, for the benefit of people who've not been to a Turkish election, if you could just describe – well, describe where you went, where you were – but also what the polling station is like, who's allowed in, what sort of privacy you get for voting, what sort of security there is to protect the ballots themselves, and whether there's pressure on the voters from people outside.

Yeah, so I've also been to the general election last year, which was a little bit different to this year's municipal elections, and I think it's also a little bit regional. So, all over Kurdistan region, also Turkey, it's generally in schools that people go to vote, and there are certain laws pertaining to the schools. So, for example, police shouldn't have weapons with them if they're actually inside the polling booth, like the room that people are voting in. And last year,

there was a proper booth inside the polling stations that did afford people a bit more privacy, but I didn't personally see that at this one, but we were in quite a remote village in Şîrnak province, and it was called Beytüşşebap in Turkish, or Ilkê in Kurdish. And yeah, there wasn't actually really any privacy, to be honest, in the rooms, but people will make their vote, and there's a sort of desk that people from each party – so DEM Party, AK Party, CHP – they all also sit in the room as well, and they're kind of responsible for overseeing the process. So, there's a bit of a collective management of the day, and there's quite a lot of people from each political party there as well, and also outside the schools, and I'm sure we'll get into this more later. It does depend on the region, so what we saw in Ilkê or Beytüşşebap is, there's the Jandarma outside the schools, which is like militarised police, and there's also plainclothes police, and also uniformed, but there's the militarised and armored vehicles outside.

So, did you get a sense that there was pressure on voters?

So, this is what we asked people, actually, who were there, and they did tell us that they did feel quite a bit of pressure, and I think that also, one thing to keep in mind is that, actually, there's a normalisation of the militarisation of the region, because there's checkpoints, there's military checkpoints when you move inside or outside of the cities in Kurdistan region. You can see the Jandarma (Gendarmerie), or the military – there's military bases all over the place, inside cities, etc. So, I think that there is a desensitisation, actually, as well; but of course, it does also create the psychological pressure, and for example, there was big families from the AK Party outside in the school grounds that we saw ourselves, and it was like an extended family. And people were also telling us this is also a type of psychological pressure, and they also felt intimidated. And it was also reported that – not where we were, but at another

location – that some of the police did have weapons with them inside the schools, as well.

And anyway, they're allowed weapons just outside the schools.

Yes, they're allowed weapons outside of the schools, including the military vehicles themselves, which were literally parked right outside the gates, literally right opposite the entrance to the schools, multiple ones, actually. And also, one thing that we saw too is a military helicopter actually landing directly next to the school, which we were told was bringing soldiers in from Şirnak, like central, the actual city. And then, you know, we were in quite a remote area up the mountains, and we went to the first school, and then we went to two others, and then we were told, oh, go back to the first school, because now a lot of soldiers have just come. And you know, in the region, it's occupied militarily, so there are soldiers around, but people know who are the local soldiers. You know, there's not thousands and thousands of soldiers in each place, usually. And when we went back to the first school, there was this long line of soldiers in plain clothes who were waiting to vote, and it was a very, very tense atmosphere, and we basically were quite abruptly asked to leave.

They wouldn't actually let us be present inside the polling station on that occasion. And yeah, we saw the helicopter, because it wasn't there when we first arrived, and then when we went to the schools, and then it had arrived, and then it left when we were there.

And were people able to see the voters' lists there? Were all these soldiers' names on the voters' lists?

So, one of our friends who was with us – one of our colleagues who was with us, who was also doing the observations, she has a press card, she's a journalist, she was allowed to look, but we were not allowed, and we were barred from looking at the

lists. But there is many, many areas that people have had more access to the lists, and Şirnak is one of them, Şirnak Central, that has shown hundreds and hundreds of male names who – and no women at some addresses at all – but just hundreds and hundreds of male names, which aren't normal military bases. And what we were told is that this is basically soldiers coming from outside, who have been sent here by the state, and they are using other people's addresses to be able – because you know it's municipal, so you have to have like a specific local registered address to be able to vote in that district. And yeah, there's been like a lot of this military people coming and voting.

Over 6,000 in Şirnak, I think.

I know at the general election there was a lot of concern about guarding the ballot boxes, and then there were also problems about changes made when the votes were transferred onto the final system. Were either of those issues this time around, or not?

Yeah, so this was definitely a thing last time. There was really clear evidence, for example, of votes getting transferred from DEM Party to MHP last time – well it was Yeşil Sol (Green Left) Party last year, but to MHP – and then they even ended up being transferred back in the appeals process at points, but I haven't heard of that myself this time. But also, it's one of those things that, you know, I think it's really hard sometimes to catch the ways that manipulation happens. And there's been really widespread observation amongst the independent observers about this practice with the soldiers, and this is something that – it's in specific areas, it doesn't happen in every single area, obviously – but it's, yeah, it's very difficult to appeal this process. And it didn't really seem like the ballot box issue was something that was really focused on this year, but they were already aware of the extra people signing up in the municipalities this time, so that has been the main focus this

year.

I heard calls for guarding the ballot boxes, but I didn't hear of any actual concerns, I think.

I haven't heard of any myself.

And what immediately afterwards, as the results started coming in – I mean, before things started happening in Van – what was the general view of the elections from the DEM Party, because I think you were with people in the party after the elections as well.

Yeah, so I mean, I was in two different places – in Şirnak at first, and then I went back to Amed. And it was really different in both places, because, you know, in Şirnak, people were really hurting, because AK Party, for the central area, was elected again. And people were pretty furious, and also worried. People are really worried about their future, and they're very angry, because they feel it's a very, very undemocratic process. And straight afterwards, on the same day as the elections, there was an attack on the party office by the police, and they arrested at least a dozen people, I think two dozen people – so two of the responsibles in DEM Party, and then also quite a few youth as well. And when we were leaving the next day, we heard that the DEM Party members had been released, but a lot of the local young people were still being detained. And this is just like a kind of – I think that that's very symbolic, actually, because straight away, there's repression. And I mean – you just mentioned Van already, but even when there is a secure vote for the DEM Party, it doesn't mean that repression doesn't come. But when people don't have control of their own municipality, and that really affects, you know, funding, that affects education, that affects all of these different things. It affects also, you know, state propaganda. It affects state control, it affects state access to the border – for example, going south and east, and Şirnak is a really strategic location for the state's war policies.

All of these things are affected in people's everyday lives. And somebody – not a DEM Party member, but just like a local person – was saying to me – he was saying, I'm really worried about my child's future. She's only three years old, but again, and again, and again, this keeps happening. I don't know what I can do. And then for DEM Party, people were really exhausted, but they were just busy the entire time. They were saying, we're going to appeal this, we're not going to stand for this, you know, they have cheated the system. And there was this feeling of loss.

But there wasn't much, I've seen in Western media. There's been a lot of dialogue around – oh, CHP, they've done so well; oh, this is such a win for democracy, because AKP have done really badly in this election. But people don't talk about the Kurdistan region, and don't see that AK Party can't even – they can't even keep hold of their own seats in the West. But still, they try and coup them, basically, from the Kurdish regions, for their war policies, and for political reasons.

But when I went back to Amed – so I didn't see it myself, because we're in Şirnak, but I did see a lot of videos that showed there was a big celebration. People were really happy, but there was this focus on the other regions, it wasn't cut off. I think the first day, people were dancing in the streets, big, big celebrations, but by the time we got back, people were just really focused on Şirnak, and then also the other regions where AKP had sent soldiers, or just where they'd also just done well, you know. And then, also what happened in Van after. So, yesterday, all day, there was just announcements, protests. The people in DEM Party were incredibly busy, I have to say, from morning until evening, just full-on organising: visiting the family of the martyr, the shaheed [the DEM Party election official who was killed in a polling station dispute]; organising announcements, where police also repressed people, and two people were arrested from that – nothing like what we've seen in the further east

regions, where people have been really being attacked viciously by the police, and, you know, there's a bigger answer, I think, there – but still, people were then focused on that…

It's not clear what's going to happen now. I was asking people. I was saying, do you think that… will come again, is this going to be the policy of the state this time, because it happened so much last municipal election. And people's answer was just, we just don't know. We just don't know what's going to happen. It's just very unclear.

Which is frightening in itself, of course, the not knowing. So, I don't know when you had to leave that area. Were you able to see any of the protests about what was happening in Van?

In Amed. Yeah.

Reactions to the removal of the mayor, of the elected mayor in Van – were you able to see any of the reactions to that?

Yeah, in Amed, I went to a couple of the announcements and protests, and the thing is, like, even just an announcement, which is what it actually was – or announcement is maybe not quite the right translation, but a kind of, like a statement against what happened – like, even these things, when they're made publicly, are very, very, criminalised by the police. So, maybe in Western Europe you could make a statement saying, oh, the state did this, and it wasn't good, blah, blah. But, in Bakur [North Kurdistan/southeast Turkey] you're surrounded by armed police, armoured vehicles. Lots of people already have criminal cases or have spent a significant time in prison, and these are the kind of things that can certainly get people arrested again and sent to prison. So, there's quite high stakes, even with just standing up and denouncing …

And there was one protest outside one of the legal centres, and that was made by DEM Party members, and two of the MPs, so

one person was Abbas Şahin, and then also Pınar as well. They're both MPs in Amed region. And then also, directly after that, there was another announcement in a park in Amed, and that was by the Democracy Platform, which is particularly, like a labour platform.

And there were people from other parties or from…


Vigil for forced disappearances

Yeah, I mean, in general, the people who attended, it wasn't only DEM Party members who were there. It's just people in the community, basically, people who agree with the fact that what happened in Van was extremely undemocratic and unfair, and it didn't reflect the will of the people. And the second event, I'm not sure, I would need to find out exactly which groups it was present, actually, and yeah, but there was, like, a kind of mix of people from, like, various groups, and also non-affiliated people as well. Not everyone was specifically a member of a specific organisation who was present. There was, oh, and the Saturday Mothers as well, the mothers of the martyrs, and also of the missing

people who had disappeared in the 90s. So, when everyone was going to this court in the first announcement, the first denunciation, some people tried to enter. And they weren't allowed, of course, they weren't allowed to go in, but there was this big crowd of people, maybe a couple hundred people, and the mothers who, you know, they were walking as a group, and they have the white veils on their head, they're very, very distinctive. And they're really, really, really strong embodiments of the principles of the struggle there, and what people sacrificed, and what people continue to do as well, despite such a deep and painful struggle. They tried to get in, and when they first came, everyone started clapping and applauding, and people were chanting. It was really, really beautiful to see how people reacted to their presence as part of that struggle, and part of the wider statement.

And they were also at the second denunciation as well, which was in the park. They didn't speak at it, but there was – yeah, like I said, it was kind of a mix of people present, and – just one second, I'm just gonna check something… I had a thing where I wrote down the chants that people were making, but I'm just struggling to find it…

You were looking for the chants that were said at these demonstrations, so do give us some examples.

Yeah, so, well, one chant that people were chanting is, long live the resistance of Van, so, "Biji Berxwedana Wanê", and also, "Resistance is Life", and also, "Kurdistan will become a grave for fascism", and, yeah, I thought it was just a very – like, every time somebody would make a speech, the young people in the crowd would start leading the chants. Yeah, that was all.

So, is there anything else you want to add before I let you go and catch your plane?

It's really hard to – I thought there is something that I want to add, but it's really hard to put into words. And I feel really, like I really wish that I wasn't leaving now, because the different layers of society that say, and one of the other chants, the translation in English is, "we will win by resisting". I think that that is just such a present spirit and energy, and that is something that is really beautiful and inspiring; and yeah, I'm sure that people really will resist. And if it really is the case that the mayor has, again, been

reappointed, I think that that really just shows like that chant, that we will win by resisting, is completely true. And whatever happens now, because I think that the democratic process is completely – it's not respected in Kurdistan region especially. And I think that we need to stop invisiblising the politics there, when we talk about Turkey as a whole, and the democratic process in Turkey as a whole, and, you know, not see CHP as this kind of – oh great, everything's answered now, blah, blah, blah. I think that, yeah, the struggle is really alive, and we also need to find ways to support it, that's all.

Thank you, and bring that spirit of struggle back to Scotland with you. Thanks very much.

Thank you for having me.

Sarah Glynn is an activist from Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan who writes for Medya News.

For a full report of the local election results and the successful resistance movement to the annulment and subsequent reinstatement of the successful DEM candidate in the municipality of Van, see Sarah Glynn's article 'Resistance Works!' https://medyanews.net/resistance-works-a-weekly-news-review/

Interview originally published by Medya News: https://medyanews.net/from-a-polling-station-in-the-sirnak-mountains-an-interview-with-hazel-an-election-observer-from-scotland/

Note by Ecosocialist.scot: [1] ***DEM Party – Peoples' Equality***

and Democracy Party *is a pro-Kurdish political party in the Turkish state. It is the legal successor of the Green Left Party (Yesil Sol) and with the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) handing over its work to this party in 2023, it has become the latest iteration of Kurdish interests in Turkey. It won 10 provinces and 2.6 million votes (5.7%), the fourth highest vote in the elections of 31 March.*

Photo: DEM Party Election Rally, Medya News

Rising Clyde Episode 18: Scotland's Circular Economy Bill

The latest issue of Rising Clyde, the Scottish climate justice show hosted by Iain Bruce is now available on YouTube thanks to Independence Live.

The Show looks at the Circular Economy Bill now under discussion in the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood. Iain talks to the Scottish Government's Circular Economy Minister, Lorna Slater, MSP for the Scottish Green Party, as well as Kim Pratt of Friends of the Earth Scotland (FOES) and Franciele Sobierai of Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC).

Rising Clyde Show – the Scottish climate justice show.

Rising Clyde examines the key issues and the big challenges facing the struggle for climate justice in Scotland. After the surprisingly big and hugely diverse protests in Glasgow during COP26, how can the breadth of that movement be held together, how can we build on its energy?



- After the suspension of Cambo, can the movement stop any more new oil or gas projects in the North Sea?
- How can we wind down the whole oil and gas industry in Scotland in this decade, while ensuring no layoffs and decent new jobs for all those affected?
- Was the Scotwind auction a major step on the transition to renewable energy, or a sell-off of the family silver?
- How can an independent Scotland tolerate one of the most unequal and damaging systems of land ownership on the planet

For half an hour on the first Monday of each month, we'll be talking to activists and experts about these and many other issues that will shape this country's future.

The host of Rising Clyde, **Iain Bruce**, is a journalist, film maker and writer living in Glasgow. Iain has worked for many years in Latin America. He has worked at the BBC and Al Jazeera, and was head of news at teleSUR. He has written books about radical politics in Brazil and Venezuela. During COP26, he was the producer and co-presenter of Inside Outside, a

daily video briefing for the COP26 Coalition.

Playlist…. To see previous episodes, start the video below, then click on the top right icon.

https://youtu.be/0qK7olrAtvk?list=PLxc3IWpJ3vJZLQg9hFjnGWvvfSHdIrnxG

Main picture: Friends of the Earth Scotland/Government-wide Programme for a Circular Economy, Netherlands, 2016

Better Buses for Strathclyde People's Rally, Friday 15 March 9am, Glasgow

Better Buses for Strathclyde are holding a People's Rally to campaign for publicly controlled and publicly owned bus services across Strathclyde Region and demanding the public body, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, begin the process of using new powers under Scotland's Transport Act 2019.

Join them outside SPT headquarters

Friday 15 March 2024, 9am

SPT Offices, 131 St Vincent Street,

Glasgow, G2 5JF

Facebook event: Better Buses for Strathclyde People's Rally

We need a really strong turn out. It's the people of Strathclyde vs. the private bus company bosses in the fight to take back our buses!

BETTER BUSES FOR STRATHCLYDE RESOURCES

- Better Buses for Strathclyde Campaign Leaflet
- Campaign Briefing for SPT Board Members
- Campaign Timeline

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A Fine Step Forward: The Scottish Socialist Youth's First Conference

Jennifer Debs reports for Heckle.scot on the first conference of Scottish Socialist Youth.

The morning of Sunday 28th January saw a number of us gathered in Glasgow's Civic House, thankful to have the walls of the old printworks between us and the dreadful weather. Members, for the most part, of the Scottish Socialist Youth (SSY), we were there for the organisation's 2024 national conference –

the first such that the SSY has ever had.

As the SSY is a fairly new organisation, I will give a sketch of the group's development before discussing the conference. Born in 2021 of the familiar process by which the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) disappoints, frustrates, exhausts and then emits eager young members, the SSY stems from a disaffected student branch of the SSP which decided to go it alone. Stirling University was ground-zero, and it still remains the SSY's main centre, boasting the majority of members.

In the last year however, the SSY has been striking out in new directions and expanding, with the greatest success in Glasgow so far. There are growing links with comrades in Dundee and Edinburgh, and working groups in Falkirk, Fife and East Lothian, which look promising for the year ahead.

This growth is a result of the SSY's campaigning work in the course of 2023, on issues like drug deaths, public transport, republicanism, Palestine solidarity and Scottish independence. This has brought the SSY beyond Stirling more and more, and has been winning it supporters and new members from across Scotland. I am one of them, and I am not alone in being attracted to the SSY by the fact that it is an autonomous youth organisation with a broad variety of ideas and perspectives, not beholden to any political party or sect, nor to the leaden decree of some wizened leading comrade who has been in control for roughly thirty years. What a fresh breeze in comparison to the usual sort of lefty youth wing!

This increasing national scope is what spurred the conference in January. The key theme of the day's political content was that of campaigning beyond parliamentary activity. We are soon headed for a general election of course, but with the outlook so grim and the left being as puny and irrelevant as it is, the prospects for a meaningful intervention are pretty much nil. So, it's crucial that a group like the SSY directs its

limited resources in directions that will actually make a difference, and which will help to cohere a stronger and more vibrant socialist movement at a national level.

In that spirit, there were contributions by guest speakers from Living Rent, This is Rigged, and Palestine Action, who each in their own way elabourated on the role of youth in organisational activity and direct action, whether in challenging the encroaching creep of bureaucracy that plagues every union, in building community solidarity amid climate chaos and austerity, or in breaking up the war-machines of imperialism.



To see these groups brought together on a single platform was an encouraging sight, and it is hoped that the SSY will not only continue to connect militants from such varied ends of the movement, but also that it will lend an active and useful hand to their struggles. Tenants' unionism, environmentalism, anti-imperialism, and more – the SSY must aim to be the kind of socialist group that can integrate these perspectives and organisational "spheres" and give a unified expression to all of them.

But this cannot be done in a dogmatic or opportunistic way, by entryism and ultimatums, by take-overs and smash-and-grab recruitment tactics. Instead, the SSY needs to be honest and helpful in its relations with other campaigns, rendering

concrete, disinterested assistance to them, and, by being a genuine friend to the cause, demonstrating the utility of our socialist analysis, politics and practice. This will do a great deal more good than turning up with newspapers, wagging an all-knowing Marxist finger, and wishing other campaigns could just see that capitalism is the main problem already, simply because we say so.

This puts me in mind of the role that a good socialist group *should*, and indeed must, play as a co-ordinating centre for all the struggles, democratic and economic, domestic and global, in which the working class has an interest. A place where the working class in all its variety of identity can find a political home, because the group stands tall as an authentic tribune of the people, capable of championing everything from the fight for increased wages to the civil rights of transgender people.

There is an old conception that the memory of the working class is its party – that is to say, that a revolutionary organisation can serve as the "historical memory" of the proletariat, a living store-house of lessons and knowledge taken from the experience of the class struggle in its widest sense, and therefore a guide that can prepare and organise the working class for future battles. The task of becoming a group like this is one that confronts every socialist organisation, whether it is conscious of it or not, whether it calls itself vanguardist or anarchist, whether it tries and fails or just reneges on the responsibility immediately.

To build a truly revolutionary organisation, to achieve and maintain principled unity, to carry forward and generalise all the struggles of the people – all of this is certainly a very difficult task, and there is absolutely no guarantee the SSY will succeed where most have failed. But we're still new and fresh, and up for trying. At the very least, by bringing together different social movements to discuss and share ideas as it did at the conference, the SSY is off to a good start.

As to the democratic content of the conference, this consisted in votes on a battery of motions for SSY policy, and in the presentation of candidates for the national committee elections. The motions spanned a variety of causes, including policy on the de-commercialisation of housing, advocating for rural and island areas of Scotland, universalist urban planning, diversity and inclusion within the SSY, and the preservation of small music venues. These motions give a good view into the diverse interests that animate the SSY's membership, and it is exciting to see that there is a sense within the organisation that it has a lot of potential to tackle many different social issues.

Unfortunately, one area where the conference could be criticised is around the national committee elections. Of all the positions, only the national chairperson was contested, the rest just seeing an incumbent up for re-election. This is never an ideal situation to be in, but for the moment it is also an understandable one, given the SSY is only really beginning to grow and establish new branches. However, for the good of the democratic health of the organisation, it is very important that the SSY encourages more members to stand for positions in the future. From what I have seen so far, I am hopeful that this will be done.

All these matters finished and the conference concluded, we repaired to the pub for the obligatory post-event pints, and there's not much that you need to know about that. In any case, I drank a toast to the SSY, and so should you!

Look out for us in 2024!

Photos courtesy of the Scottish Socialist Youth.

Ukrainians Haven't Been Forgotten

Connor Beaton writes for Heckle.scot, publication of the Republican Socialist Platform, on the recent day school in February 2024 organised by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland.



A landmark seminar organised by the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland (USCS) began on Saturday *[3rd February 2024]* before last with the uplifting news that public service union UNISON's Scottish council had just voted unanimously to affiliate to the relatively young organisation. With the war featuring less and less prominently in the media, this was welcomed as an encouraging signal that Scottish trade unionists have not forgotten about their Ukrainian counterparts as the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine looms.

Taking place under the title 'Ukraine's fight is our fight', the four-hour-long event in Edinburgh's Augustine United Church – which was live-streamed in its entirety – boasted an impressive range of speakers, many of whom were Ukrainian socialists, trade unionists and environmentalists. This made the event a refreshing departure from many other left-wing forums in Scotland and the rest of these islands in which the

war has tended to be discussed with very little, if any, input from or reference to the views of Ukrainians.

USCS was established in the immediate aftermath of the all-out invasion in February 2022, initially as an outgrowth of the longer-running London-based Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (USC) but increasingly functioning as an independent organisation in its own right.

It rejects the argument advanced by some sections of the left, particularly those in and around the Stop the War Campaign, that the war in Ukraine should be understood principally as a conflict between Russia and NATO in which socialists should be neutral; instead, taking its cue from left-wing Ukrainians, it recognises that Ukraine is fighting a defensive war against Russian imperialism in which it deserves support from those who uphold the right of nations to self-determination.

This event, by far the most substantial and successful event organised by USCS in its short existence, served two purposes: firstly, to aid socialists in Scotland in better understanding the current situation in Ukraine and the impact of the war on Ukrainian workers, the economy and the environment; and secondly, to focus minds on how we can organise the most effective and practical solidarity from Scotland to Ukraine.

Pictured: Dr Taras Fedirko speaking at the USCS seminar in Edinburgh.



Radical perspectives

The day suitably began with a harrowing report from Olesia Briazgunova, international secretary of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KPVU), who joined the event remotely from Kyiv. She set out a now-familiar description of the dual role of Ukrainian trade unions in supporting their members on the frontlines while also defending their interests against employers and the state, all against the backdrop of martial law which has made strikes and union rallies illegal. The KPVU has called on western governments to continue to provide economic, humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine (not an uncontroversial demand in trade unions here), to impose stronger sanctions on Russia and to use frozen Russian assets towards a "just reconstruction".

Solidarity greetings were subsequently heard from Labour MSP Katy Clark, SNP MP Tommy Sheppard, Green MSP Ross Greer and PCS assistant general secretary John Moloney – a reflection of the broad nature of USCS, whose members consciously decided not to have a narrow focus on the trade union movement but to instead build support for Ukraine across Scotland's trade unions, political parties and social movements.

An exceptionally good, if sobering, presentation was given by Dr Taras Fedirko, a political and economic anthropologist at the University of Glasgow. He explained in clear terms the extent to which the Ukrainian economy is now overwhelmingly dependent on western aid. Ukraine's defence spending alone was greater in 2022 than the entire state budget in 2021; the country's annual tax revenue just about covers military salaries.

Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF), alarmed by this unsustainable reliance on other countries, has encouraged the previously libertarian Zelenskyy government to pursue progressive taxation (an irony observed by LSE's Luke Cooper

in a recent article which Fedirko mentioned and endorsed).

Fedirko's presentation left an impression of two distinct paths open to Ukraine: one in which the massive labour shortages created by the war, combined with the expansion of the state and a turn towards progressive taxation, provides enough leverage to organised labour to push for a social-democratic reconstruction; or one in which Ukraine becomes an "Eastern European Israel" with a powerful military-industrial complex orienting the entire economy and society around confrontation with Russia. With well-paid British consultants among western experts deployed to Ukraine to shape economic strategy, there is an acute danger of the British and European left leaving the question of Ukraine's economic future uncontested and allowing the right to exclusively shape it.



Pictured: Iryna Zamuruieva speaking at the USCS seminar in Edinburgh.

Environmental crisis

A similarly thorough presentation by Iryna Zamururieva, an ecological activist based in Edinburgh, highlighted the scale of the environmental damage caused by the war, much of which will have a cross-generational impact. For example, up to 40% of Ukrainian land is now mined.

While the full extent of the damage can understandably not be

determined until areas which are either occupied or the site of active conflict become safe for researchers to access, it has already been established that hundreds of species of animals and plants are at risk of extinction (alarming not least because biodiversity is recognised as a bulwark against climate change) while fresh water, already in short supply in Ukraine as a result of climate change, has been widely contaminated by destructive actions such as the flooding of coal mines.

The destruction of the Kakhovka dam last June, leading to devastating flooding in the Kherson region, is perhaps the best known environmental disaster arising from the war in Ukraine. Zamuruieva pointed out, however, that the construction of the dam in the 1950s was also an environmental disaster, motivated in large part by the need for fresh water in Crimea during the deportation of the Tatars – a Russian colonial crime. She also highlighted other environmental disasters; in one case which received remarkably little publicity, more than four million chickens died at Europe's largest poultry farm after the occupation made it impossible to feed them.

With fossil fuels playing a significant role both in driving and funding the war, the Scottish climate movement forms a critical part of global anti-imperialist struggle, Zamuruieva put across. She encouraged USCS supporters to attend Climate Camp Scotland this summer, as well as to pressure the Scottish Parliament to take more action; opportunities include Labour MSP Monica Lennon's proposed bill on ecocide, and the Scottish Government's ongoing consultation on a national adaptation plan that also encompasses international action.

A more technical presentation on Ukraine's major environmental challenges was separately given by Ecoaction, a Ukrainian NGO which is to receive a £400 donation from USCS – the group's first international donation.

A divided left

Very little of the day was dedicated to discussing the way in which the war has divided the left internationally, but where these came to the fore most clearly was in a session on self-determination led by Irish writer Conor Kostick, who has previously written and delivered talks about Ukraine and the politics of James Connolly.

Though at times veering too close to a speculative exercise along the lines of 'what would Connolly say if he were here today?', Kostick correctly pointed out that Connolly was prepared to accept arms from a rival imperialist power, i.e. the German Empire, in order to wage a struggle for national liberation against the British Empire. Condemning Ukrainians for soliciting and accepting arms from NATO countries may be a legitimate political position, he said, but those advocating for it can't claim they've derived their analysis from Connolly.

Neither can they claim to stand in the tradition of Lenin, added Mike Picken of Ecosocialist.scot, highlighting the Bolshevik revolutionary's writing on self-determination and in particular his opposition to annexations ("because annexation violates the self-determination of nations, or, in other words, is a form of national oppression"). This did not appear to convince Graham Campbell, now an SNP councillor, who said he had been a Leninist for almost all of his life but had since come to believe that the Soviet project was imperialist from the very beginning, owing to its suppression of Ukrainian self-determination and the subsequent Holodomor.

Leslie Cunningham, national organiser for Scotland in rs21, put across their position that Ukraine has a right to obtain weapons from whoever is willing to supply them, but also that the UK should not provide them. Everyone in the room, including the rs21 comrades, seemed to accept this was a bit

of a fudge.

Most socialist opponents of western arms supplies to Ukraine rely on the specious argument that these supplies are prolonging the war, and that ending these supplies would quickly result in peace. USCS's persuasive counter-argument, which could have been more clearly articulated from the platform on the day, is that it is up to Ukrainians to decide the extent to which they resist the Russian invasion and occupation, and when to pursue peace and on what terms. This argument was recently and very coherently made by Colin Turbett in the *Scottish Left Review*.

Allan Armstrong, a member of the Republican Socialist Platform who has incidentally written extensively about Connolly and his politics, said a withdrawal of western support for Ukraine would inevitably lead to something resembling the Munich Agreement. Ukrainian independence is vastly preferable to the alternative seen in Donetsk, Luhansk or Chechnya, he said – fascism of a far more aggressive kind than is seen in the core of Russia.



Pictured: Ukrainian students and refugees carry a flag through Dundee city centre to mark the first anniversary of the

Russian invasion in February 2023.

Building the movement

The biggest takeaway from this event is that USCS is capable of organising discussions of a remarkably high calibre, a great achievement particularly in the context of wider post-pandemic organisational challenges being faced by virtually all of the left in Scotland. There was a welcome sense of comfort with USCS's political breadth and good-natured debate flowed easily from this. It was great that printed materials from Ukrainian writers, including English editions of the Ukrainian left journal *Commons/Spilne*, were on offer.

The second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, landing on Saturday 24th February, will overlap with Palestine solidarity demonstrations in towns and cities across Scotland. There is a valuable opportunity here to connect the Ukrainian and Palestinian peoples' struggles through a self-determination framework, which USCS is uniquely positioned to do. USCS has already rightly supported Palestine solidarity demonstrations in Scotland and distributed copies of the Ukrainian letter of solidarity with Palestinian people. Efforts to place Ukrainian and Palestinian solidarity in competition with each other should be fiercely resisted. Demonstrations organised by Ukrainian communities in Scotland should be given whole-hearted support.

Looking further ahead, the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and various trade union conferences will provide more opportunities for USCS to win affiliations from trade unions, which – while representing only one aspect of its work – will boost its capacity to organise political and practical support for Ukrainians.

There is a positive sense of momentum building in USCS. It is virtually alone on the Scottish left in answering the call for internationalist solidarity with Ukraine. Its success or

failure will reverberate for a long time to come.

CONTRIBUTOR
Connor Beaton is a republican socialist based in Dundee, where he works as a journalist. He was one of tens of thousands of young people drawn into politics by the 2014 independence referendum campaign. He is now the secretary of the Republican Socialist Platform and a local organiser for the Radical Independence Campaign.

Republished from: *https://heckle.scot/2024/02/ukrainians-havent-been-forgotten/*

Main photo: USCS activists supporting Ukrainians in Glasgow's George Square on the 2nd anniversary of the Russian invasion 24 Feb 2024 (Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot)

Other photos: Connor Beaton for Heckle.scot

Scottish Kurds protest against Erdoğan invitation

Kurds in Scotland and their supporters have protested at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh against any invitation to Turkish state President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to visit Scotland, reports Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot.

The apparent invitation arose after Scottish First Minister, and leader of the governing Scottish National Party (SNP), Humza Yousaf met briefly with the Turkish state President while they were both in Dubai in December 2023 for the COP28 summit. Kurds are angry that Erdoğan is using the Gaza crisis to launch military attacks on Kurdish populations inside both the Syrian and Iraqi state and continue his persecution and

murderous policies towards the 10 million Kurds inside the Turkish state. In the Kurdish-led liberated region of Rojava in neighbouring Syria, Erdoğan has committed exactly the same sort of brutal bombing and attacks on civilian infrastructure that he accuses Israel of in Gaza.



Damage caused by Turkish air attacks on civilian electricity infrastructure in Suwaydiyah North & East Syria. Photo: Rojava Information Center

So when news that Yousaf had invited Erdoğan to Scotland came out in the media in January 2024, Kurdish and solidarity organisations such as Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan, alongside trade unionists Mike Arnott of the Scottish TUC and Stephen Smellie of UNISON Scotland, moved swiftly to condemn the invitation by issuing a public letter of protest. The Kurdish community in Scotland organised a demonstration at the Scottish Parliament on 25 January to demand the SNP refuse to invite Erdoğan and instead condemn his regime's murderous policy against the Kurds. The protestor's views were recorded by progressive media outlet The Skotia on Instagram (video below) and the open letter of protest received wide media coverage.

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Media for a better Scotland. (@theskotia)

Prominent Glasgow SNP councillor Roza Salih, herself a refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan, had previously drawn attention to the matter in a post in December on Twitter/X in December, covered by The National daily newspaper:

> *“Humza being friendly and laughing with Erdogan is an offence to the Kurdish people”*

> *Roza Salih, Scotland's first refugee councillor, has criticised Humza Yousaf for shaking hands with the Turkish president https://t.co/XHu2iH28P0*
>
> *— The National (@ScotNational) December 2, 2023*

International Movement demands release of Öcalan on 25th Anniversary of his incarceration

Meanwhile the Kurdish movement internationally is organising a global mobilisation to demand the release of Kurdish political leader, **Abdullah Öcalan**, with demonstrations across Europe up to the **25th Anniversary** of his unjust imprisonment and solitary confinement by the Turkish state. An Internationalist Long March is poised to spotlight this anniversary, beginning in Basel-Switzerland on 10 February, and will include key events such as a conference in Strasbourg on 15 February and a pan-European demonstration in Cologne and Düsseldorf, Germany, on 17 February. SNP Westminster Member of Parliament, Tommy Sheppard, recently met with Öcalan's lawyers at the Council of Europe meeting and has written to UK government foreign secretary to call on him to take up Öcalan's incarceration by the Turkish government and demand his release (text below).



Text of Open Letter by Kurdish

solidarity organisations and individuals on the invitation of Turkish president Erdoğan to Scotland

STATEMENT:
We, the undersigned, condemn the invitation that the First Minister of Scotland, Humza Yousaf, has made to Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Turkish state's record on human rights abuses is well documented, both internally and externally. Women, ethnic minorities and migrants bear the brunt of its oppressive policies. In particular, the Turkish state continues a policy against the Kurdish people that seeks to suppress basic human rights and political autonomy through military force, legal repression, and assimilationist policies.

Erdogan's party destroys civilian infrastructure beyond Turkey's own borders for political leverage and to disempower an already economically disadvantaged population in Syria and Iraq. Yousaf's response to journalists was dismissive when challenged on this. We condemn the cooperation between Erdogan and any segment of the British state. The First Minister's response to press questioning whether the invitation was "a good idea considering his treatment of the Kurds" was that "as a NATO ally", it was a legitimate invitation "if he was visiting the UK". This is hypocritical: The SNP positions itself as distinct from Westminster and with a more discerning eye towards human rights abuses and regional autonomy.

While Erdogan has been vocally supportive of Palestinians, 40% of oil imports to Israel come via Turkey, and the two governments have a long term and high value arms industry relationship that has been ongoing throughout the periods of

intensification in Israeli attacks over the last decade. Erdogan does to the Kurds everything that he accuses Netanyahu of doing to the Palestinian people. Both Israel and Turkey have been crafting a Middle East where business and trade with western countries are more valuable than justice or freedom. The power to define terrorism and the legitimate use of violence are now highly developed tools to repress even the most basic self-determination of peoples.

From January 13th – 16th 2024, Turkish military forces carried out 224 ground and air strikes in north-eastern Syria, targeting agricultural and energy infrastructure such as oil fields. In nine locations, electric power stations were struck, which led to power outages and water supply issues that are currently affecting millions of people. This type of attack is a frequent but under reported reality and Erdogan is exploiting this moment when the world media is rightfully watching Gaza. The targeting of vital infrastructure is itself a war crime and these attacks are also an unprovoked act of aggression.

BAE Systems, Thales, Leonardo and other weapons manufacturing companies that have factories in Scotland supply both Israel and Turkey. In 2019, white phosphorous – banned for use as an incendiary chemical weapon – was reported to have been used by the Turkish military in north-eastern Syria. An investigation at the time showed 70 British export licenses for phosphorous.

Domestically in Turkey, the political repression of the left-wing parliamentary party HDP has led to more than five thousand of its members being arrested, the stripping of MPs' parliamentary immunity and their imprisonment, and widespread implementation of the "trustee" system by Erdogan's party that forcibly removed all elected HDP mayors from office and replaced them with government-appointed officials. This has disproportionately affected the Kurdish people in Turkey, where attempts at democratic expression are crushed, and more

than eight thousand Kurdish political prisoners are languishing in Turkish prisons. Kurdish language musicians, teachers and campaigners are often met with criminalisation – the Kurdish language is unrecognised by the Turkish parliament despite being the second most spoken language in the country, and language rights are linked to terrorism as a method of delegitimisation.

The UK government and the European Union countries have shrewdly wedded themselves to facilitating Erdogan's AKP government in exchange for the policing of Europe's land and sea borders and its imprisonment of displaced peoples subject to these "push-backs".

As residents of Scotland and members of human rights organisations, we request that the First Minister and the SNP condemn Erdogan and the AK Party for their actions. The targeting of civilian infrastructure and use of chemical weapons are war crimes, regardless of whether the state that does so is a NATO member.

We request Mr Yousaf's support in condemning these attacks on north-east Syria. We also ask him to assess the human rights abuses that the Kurdish peoples are subject to within the state borders of Turkey and that he supports the struggle for the freedom of political prisoners in Turkey.

We are in a moment that requires brave leadership on myriad human rights abuses, the repression of the self-determination of peoples and the destruction of the earth, happening across the globe. We implore the First Minister and Scottish government, particularly in this moment, to resist shallow alliances that fail to look at the geo-political situation holistically. The moment demands an uncompromising acknowledgement of the colonial legacies of the current genocidal treatment of the Palestinian and Kurdish peoples.

We ask Mr Yousaf to meet with the Kurdish communities in

Scotland and campaigners to discuss this issue. We believe that Scotland can do better and we would like to talk about how.

LIST OF SIGNATURES

Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan
Kurdish Community Scotland
Zagros Community Scotland
Women's Rights Delegation from Scotland to North and East Syria, May 2023
International Human Rights Delegation on political prisoners in Turkey, December 2023
Edinburgh University Justice for Palestine Society
Mike Arnott, President of Scottish Trades Union Congress
Stephen Smellie, Depute Convenor UNISON Scotland
International Solidarity Movement (ISM) – Scotland

Text of Letter from SNP Westminster MP Tommy Sheppard to UK government foreign secretary David Cameron



The Rt Hon Lord David Cameron
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London

SW1A 2AH
26th January 2024

Dear David

I am writing on behalf of several constituents to ask you to make representations to the Turkish Government in the case of Abdullah Ocalan.

You will know that Ocalan is regarded by millions of Kurds throughout the world as their leader and he is key to achieving a permanent and peaceful solution which respects the rights of the Kurds in Turkey and neighbouring countries.

He has been held in solitary confinement on the island prison of Imrali for almost 25 years. This is contrary to several judgements of European Court of Human Rights which have found the manner of his detention to be in violation of the statues to prohibit torture.

As a UK member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I met with Mr Ocalan's lawyers earlier this week. They tell me that he has been denied any communication with the outside world and any visits from his legal team for almost three years now.

This case does great damage to Turkey's reputation and is an egregious breach of international human rights law. It is also a running sore and an insult to the many thousands of Kurdish people who have made this country their home.

I would ask you to take up this case with the Turkish authorities, demanding that Mr Ocalan be allowed access to his lawyers, that his isolation end, and that after a quarter of a century in solitary confinement, his case is reviewed, and plans made to end his incarceration.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Tommy Sheppard
Member of Parliament for Edinburgh East

Gaza: Support the New Hetherington Occupation at Glasgow University

Students have occupied a building at Glasgow University to demand divestment from arms industries in the light of Israel's genocidal war in Gaza. Jennifer Debs reports for ***Heckle*** *– online journal of the Republican Socialist Platform.*

Almost thirteen years have passed since Glasgow University's Hetherington House was last alive with student protest, but as of Monday 22nd January, that long dry spell has come to an end.

Once again, the windows of the building are brightened by flags and protest signs, and once more the halls are filled with political chatter and radical demands. Nearby, university security guards hover uneasily, keeping an eye on the front door and everyone that comes and goes. Looking at the scene, you might think it was 2011 again.

But this is a new generation of student activists, even if the causes they fight for, like that of Gaza, were also upheld by a previous generation. The new occupiers are part of the Glasgow Against Arms and Fossil Fuels (GAAF) group, and they have taken over Hetherington House with the demand that the University of Glasgow divests from its investments in the arms industry.



Credit: @gaafmovement on Instagram

Inflamed by the brutal invasion of Gaza, the latest chapter in Israel's campaign of genocide against the Palestinian people, GAAF are taking action to pressure university management into taking a decision that would have a concrete impact on the funding of murder in the Middle East. GAAF argue that the university has blood on its hands, and that it profits by the shedding of that blood – something that must be stopped as soon as possible.

The occupation is aiming to put specific pressure on the university's finance committee, ahead of its next meeting in February, to make a decision in favour of divestment. GAAF has reason to believe its goal is feasible, given that Glasgow University previously made commitments to divest from fossil fuels in 2014 after a successful campaign by student activists.

Of course, any commitment the university makes will be one that it must be held to, and that will doubtless be a part of GAAF's work should they win the current struggle. The university cannot be allowed to kick this issue into the long grass, not when so much is at stake in Palestine, Yemen, and

other sites of imperialist slaughter in the world today.



Credit: GAAF

For now, the occupation is focused on its first goal of winning a commitment to divestment, and on keeping itself running. Yesterday, Wednesday 24th January, a solidarity demonstration of students and supporters rallied outside Hetherington House before marching to the main building of the university. There were speeches about the goals of the campaign and the necessity of arms divestment, and the crowd made plenty of noise to let the university management know they aren’t going anywhere.

This is only the beginning. GAAF intend to keep the occupation going until they win their goal, and they naturally need as much support as possible. With this action, these brave students are striking a blow at the imperialist war machine, and lending a hand to the people of Palestine in their hour of need. Every socialist in Scotland should support this

occupation.



Credit: GAAF

If you live nearby, go along to 11 University Gardens, have a chat with the students guarding the door, bring them some snacks and fruit, and let them know they are not alone. Occupations always need food and supplies, so find out what they need, and help them get it if you have some cash to spare. If GAAF call a demonstration, get along and show your support. The university and the broader public must know that these occupiers are backed up by a great well of support from the working class.

If you live elsewhere, why not think of organising a solidarity action through your trade union branch, your student union, your tenants' union, or your group of friends? And if the university management attempt to punish the occupiers with disciplinary action like suspension or expulsion, then we as a movement must help GAAF resist and

overturn any such decisions. Any victimisation of the occupiers must be confronted with a firm response: nobody left behind!

When the original Hetherington occupation took on university management all those years ago, they had a network of student groups and anti-austerity collectives at their side, supporting them and taking action in Glasgow and further afield. If the new Free Hetherington is to survive – and not just survive, claim a victory too – then it cannot be a single event. It must be answered in all the rich variety of action and expression the student and workers' movement is capable of.

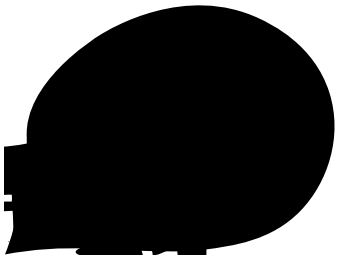
There are many more institutions that fund genocide in Palestine, and this cannot be allowed to continue. But take heart – today we are seeing a new era of student militancy, and hopefully there will be many more occupations to come, not just in Glasgow, but also Dundee, Paisley, Stirling, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The arms economy needs a good beating. Let the second Free Hetherington be a kick in the teeth, but not the last!

All together – defend and extend the Free Hetherington!

Books not bombs!
No profit from blood!

You can keep informed about GAAF and the occupation on their Instagram page. The occupation is located at 11 University Gardens, Glasgow G12 8QH.

Originally published on **Heckle**: https://heckle.scot/2024/01/support-the-new-hetherington-occupation/



To join the Republican Socialist Platform,
visit: https://join.republicansocialists.scot/

Ukraine’s Fight is Our Fight – Seminar in Edinburgh Saturday 3rd February 1pm-5pm

https://bit.ly/USCScot24

UKRAINE'S FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT

Perspectives from social movement and trade union activists

Edinburgh's Augustine United Church, Saturday 3rd February 2024, 1pm-5pm.

Free seminar with guest speakers including:

- Tommy Sheppard MP & Katy Clark MSP
- Chris Ford of Ukraine Solidarity Campaign
- Dr Taras Fedirko on the Ukrainian economy
- Iryna Zamuraieva on the environmental crisis
- Irish historian Conor Kostick on self-determination



More info & registration: bit.ly/USCScot24

Organised by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland

Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland sponsors include: Tommy Sheppard MP, Ross Greer MP. Affiliations include Edinburgh TUC, Dumfries and Galloway TUC, N Lanarkshire Unison.

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https://twitter.com/USCScotland