DISUNITED KINGDOM – the elections on 6 May

by Terry Conway 31 May 2021

On 6 May 2021 there were elections of some sort everywhere in England, in Scotland and in Wales. The picture in England was one in which Johnson's Tories using a model of right-populist Keynesianism and appeals to English nationalism and anti-migrant racism, have done well and Starmer's Labour had disastrous results. The Green Party of England and Wales also improved their showing – gaining 80 extra seats in local government.

There were parts of England where Labour did better – notably in Greater Manchester where Mayor Andy Burnham had showed rather more spine in challenging the Tories than Labour leader Keir Starmer, but also in parts of the south east. Indeed, Labour did relatively well at the level of Mayors – winning 11 out of the 13 contests – including Sadiq Khan's seat in London, but this is nothing like enough to compensate for the loss of a bye-election in Hartlepool and dire results at local council level.

But it is the extraordinary differences between Scotland, Wales and England that are the key story of this election and that the left in England ignores at its peril.

Pro-independence majority at Holyrood

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP (Scottish National Party) are right to point out that it is a huge victory to be returned as the largest party after 14 years in office, to be forming the fourth government in succession This is particularly the case if you realise that the particular

form of proportional representation voting in use for Holyrood elections was precisely introduced to prevent any party getting an absolute majority. They would have needed 65 seats to take an absolute majority and came one short with 64 – but that is one more than in 2016.

They did so with a much higher turnout than anywhere else in Britain, 64 per cent overall with some constituencies topping 70 per cent and queues reported in some places. One polling station was unable to close until 11.30pm because of the numbers already queuing before the 10pm deadline.

Another first for Scotland was that for the first time there – or anywhere else in Britain – all foreign nationals and anyone serving a prison sentence of less than 12 months to vote. [1] And 16-17 year olds – allowed to vote in Wales for the first time at this election – have been allowed to vote in Scottish elections since 2015. England looks increasingly isolated with its limited franchise.

Despite the split in the independence electoral camp as a result of the founding of Alba by former first Minister Alec Salmond, and the fact that the Unionist media used this as an opportunity to lay into both Nicola Sturgeon personally and her party, the SNP vote has held up and it remains the main electoral expression of the independence movement.

While Salmond attempted to present Alba as to the left of the SNP, even on the question of independence; they do not have the key to unlock the standoff between Westminster and Holyrood. Only a mass movement on the schemes (housing estates) and the streets which dwarfs what the Radical Independence campaign impressively managed in the second referendum, based on a radical vision of what an independent Scotland would stand for, could force Johnson to change his mind.

This needs to be combined with a major growth in support in

England and Wales for the democratic right of the Scottish people to decide. Salmond and Alba are no more likely to build such a pluralist movement than Sturgeon and the SNP. In the meantime, Alba has a reactionary stance on social issues with prominent members playing a role in an anti trans backlash and trivialising misogyny in terms of Salmond's behaviour.

The Scottish Greens, who stood in more constituencies than previously and saw their share of the vote rise, have also elected eight MSPs, an improvement on their previous best showing in 2003 where they elected 7. Indeed, they could easily have elected 10 MSPs – coming only a few hundred votes short of doing so.

Support for independence was clearer in their manifesto than before and with COP26 coming to Glasgow in November the environment has been climbing the Scottish political agenda. So it was not surprising that that section of the pro-independence electorate who did not buy the rather hollow appeal to give both their votes to the SNP were more likely to back the Greens. [2] Their strong showing should be welcomed and it is to be expected they will exact a radical price from the SNP – particularly, but not necessarily exclusively on environmental questions.

The Scottish Greens are an interesting formation – with political positions similar to or to the left of the GPEW (Green Party of England and Wales) – but with no real branch structure or existence outside elections. Patrick Harvie has been the party's dominant figure for a long time – becoming an MSP in 2003 and taking over from Robin Harper in 2008 as co-convenor (the post became co-leader in 2019). Though he has nominally shared the leadership during these years the fact that 5 women have shared that role with him means that his profile has been much greater. Whether a bigger parliamentary group, including previous co-convenor and socialist Maggie Chapman, who was also active in the Radical Independence Campaign, remains to be seen.

While there is not the scope in this piece to deal with the radical left in Scotland in detail, its certainly worth noting that this was the first Holyrood elections were there were no pro-independence candidates to the left of the Greens. The Scottish Socialist Party decided not to stand any candidates – and indeed looking at their website, they hardly acknowledge an election was taking place. Sheridan's Solidarity has effectively disappeared.

The current that played a major role in the Radical Independence Campaign during the previous referendum campaign, the International Socialist group Scotland, formally dissolved in 2015 with its members going into other projects such as Rise and Conter. Unfortunately some of them were also heavily involved in attempts to undemocratically wind up RIC precisely at the point when the left needed to really focus on what urgent tasks would be posed for it following the inevitable fact of a new electoral mandate for a new referendum. [3] After all it was precisely in the last referendum campaign that the failure of the SNP to put forward a radical vision for Scotland became apparent to the greatest numbers. The Republican Socialist Platform has made some important steps forward in this regard but cannot hope to entirely fill the gap

Unionist discipline

There was disciplined tactical voting in the Unionist camp. In seat after seat significant numbers of voters backed whichever Unionist party was seen as the strongest challenger to the SNP, whether that be Tory, Labour or Lib Dem, though this was less true of Labour voters. While this did not take seats from the governing party, it did prevent the SNP taking a number of key target seats – Dumbarton was held by Labour as was Edinburgh Southern while the Tories held Eastwood.

In Dumbarton, the seat with the smallest majority in the country, Labour's Jackie Baillie saw an increase of 6.1 per

cent in her votes with the Tory vote falling by 6.3 per cent and the Lib Dems by 1.6. In Edinburgh Southern Labour's vote increased 10.4 per cent, the Tory vote fell 14.5 per cent and the SNP vote rose only 4.4 per cent. In Eastwood the Tory vote went up by 6.2 per cent to hold the seat while the SNP challenging increased only by 5.6, while Labour's vote plummeted by 14.8 in a seat where they had no hope of even being second. It is probably worth marking the fact that a higher proportion of Tory supporters switched to Labour where this was tactically advisable – the strength of their unionism was hugely apparent.

The new leader of Scottish Labour, Anas Sarwar, presided over a 1.6 fall in his party's vote, the worst since devolution, but claims it is on 'a journey back'. Tell that to the whole of the Glasgow Kelvin Executive committee who resigned their positions after candidate Hollie Cameron was removed for disagreeing with the leadership over the right to a referendum. [4] The support even for the right to a referendum has always been weak in Scottish Labour, which has a long tradition of tribalism and of dismissing the SNP as Tartan Tories – somewhat ironically when the majority of their leadership is happy to block with the Conservative and Unionist Party to try to defeat a push for independence.

While promises of further devolution may have purchase in Wales and in the English cities, it is unclear that they would fly in Scotland. Sarwar is much closer to Starmer than to Drakeford and has inherited a Scottish Labour Party which has lost a huge proportion of its working-class base in particular to the SNP. No road back without some very sharp turns – turns which Sarwar is certainly not contemplating.

The Welsh dragon roars

Welsh Labour's Mark Drakeford will be very pleased with the surprisingly good results in the Sennedd elections where Labour took 30 seats, Tories 16, Plaid 13 and Lib Dems 1.

Making a comparison with the previous national elections in Wales is complex because then UKIP took 7 seats and this time they (nor the new formation Abolish the Welsh Assembly with similar reactionary roots) had any significant impact. This, together with the two tier electoral system means that calculating swings is a nightmare.

Labour's showing was much better than opinion polls predicted early on. Drakeford has definitely benefited from managing the pandemic relatively well – he has not made nearly as many U-turns as Johnson, though that does not explain the shift during the campaign. [5] Labour will work with other parties on a case by case basis; the widely predicted Labour-Plaid coalition is not a runner. And while the Tories in Wales are much less pleased than those in England, they should not be completely written off.

The big political story in Wales however is increasing support for independence . [6] Before 2018, the proportion of Welsh voters in favour of independence ranged between 10% and 20%. However, this figure has increased in recent years. Recent polling indicates that between one quarter and one third of Welsh voters who express a view say they would vote Yes in a Welsh independence referendum. Yes Cymru has grown significantly – and those numbers are probably much higher amongst younger people.

But unlike in Scotland, where for the mass of people the SNP is clearly the electoral voice of the independence movement, the same is not true in the same way for Plaid in Wales. While the differences are indisputable the reasons need more exploration.

There are certainly different takes. This piece "This was a bad election for Plaid Cymru – but they seem to be winning without winning elections" seems a profoundly complacent piece after such a lacklustre campaign by Plaid, whereas this [Voice Wales article which suggests former Plaid leader Leanne Wood,

who lost her seat in the Rhonda, might have been a victim of current leader Adam Price failure to champion independence enough in a lacklustre campaign. [7]

Plaid's website remarkably has no reaction to the results – only a statement at the eve of poll as to why people should vote for Plaid. I can only find Price's comment on his own individual election result – but clearly they will not be happy not only at the loss of Leanne Wood's seat but with their national showing. [8]

Indeed independence was the issue that everyone other than the far right were trying to downplay despite its increasing popularity. The Welsh Labour manifesto has nothing to say about it but Drakeford made a speech to Welsh Labour's spring conference in late February in which he said: "Now, for all that to be achieved we need a more powerful devolution settlement. One in which we secure both home rule for Wales but in a successful United Kingdom. Internationalist, not nationalist. Outward facing, not inward looking." [9]

The fact that since the election Mick Antoniw has been appointed to a new post of Minster for the Constitution shows that this was not just a stance to undermine Plaid at the election but a longer term route that Welsh Labour under Drakeford is committed to going down. Antoniw was one of the those involved in the publication of an extensive report on Radical Federalism published this January – so in appointing him Drakeford is certainly given some weight to his views. [10]

While sections of the Welsh Labour bureaucracy can be as tribalist as is the case for the overwhelming majority of Scottish Labour, there is also more support – and more organised support for independence inside Welsh Labour than there ever was in their sister party in Scotland. Labour for an independent Wales is a visible and serious organisation which makes this key statement: Labour for an Independent

Wales sees independence as a tool with which to organise a socialist state, on an equal footing with every other state around the world – an ambition that is unattainable in the United Kingdom as it is.

It is not clear how these views around home rule and independence are reflected within the Labour left in Wales. Welsh Labour Grassroots, the sister organisation of Momentum in Wales, these days has a very out of date website and no list of its current office holders, but it was good to see prominent Welsh Labour Grassroots member s making a public tribute to Leanne Wood. This sentiment was also expressed widely by supporters of Labour for an Independent Wales recognising that she was probably the most left wing members of the Sennedd

All of this means that for socialists in England the question of deepening our understanding of the national questions in both Scotland and Wales, and in particular fighting for labour movement support for the right to self determination, needs to be pushed much higher up our political agenda.

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Popular Uprising in Colombia – Ecosocialist Movement Statement

The popular uprising is bringing down the neoliberal and militarist regime

STATEMENT BY THE MOVIMIENTO ECOSOCIALISTA DE COLOMBIA

"*Neoliberalism does not die without killing, but the more it kills, the more it dies. What is happening in Colombia is not a Colombian problem, it is our problem, that of the democrats of the world,*" Boaventura Dos Santos.

The 28 April 2021 marked a new stage in the history of mobilization and the exercise of social protest in Colombia. The national strike called by the trade union federations ended up becoming a great popular uprising. On that same day, the capital cities saw mobilizations of workers, those in the informal sector, students, neighbourhood organizations, women, and indigenous and Afro communities; a diverse and plural social expression of a desperate people cornered by the implementation of decades of neoliberal policies, and which was left to its own devices during the pandemic. This popular uprising has a line of continuity with the urban mobilizations of 21 November 2019, but this time intermediate cities and rural areas joined in. **There were street protests in 600 municipalities and the number of protesters reached approximately five million people.**

This massive protest has already achieved results. The withdrawal of the tax reform, the departure of finance minister Alberto Carrasquilla and his economic team, the resignation of Chancellor Claudia Blum, the paralysis of health, pension and employment reforms in Congress which form part of the Duque government's "Paquetazo", demanded by the risk rating agencies and the IMF.

These results have been obtained despite the unprecedented police and military deployment in the country authorized by

the government of Iván Duque against social mobilization. The 50 murdered, 400 disappeared, the hundreds injured and dozens of sexually abused women, leading in the case of 17-year-old Alisson Meléndez, raped in an Immediate Response Unit-URI- in Popayán, to her tragic decision to commit suicide, have been the consequence of a civil war approach to citizen protest taken by ESMAD, the police, army and armed civilians. In Cali, the repression included the use of assault weapons, grenades and gas against the protesters and surrounding neighbourhoods or residential units, and even machine-gunning from military helicopters, as occurred in Siloé.

On the outskirts of Buga, on the Pan-American Highway, airborne military units were also used, and nearby neighbourhoods were surrounded by ESMAD and attacked with gas and explosive weapons. In Popayán, the militaristic response to the uprising of popular indignation caused by police abuses has already cost one student dead, missing and injured. Something similar has happened in Yumbo. These military "theatres of operations" were authorized personally and directly by President Iván Duque, the general commander of the Armed Forces Eduardo Zapateiro, the general director of the police Jorge Luis Vargas to which we must add the responsibility by omission of the local mayors who handed over control of the "public order" of the cities without so much as a discussion. All of them are responsible for genocide and terrorism against the peoples and must be tried as such before the International Criminal Court and the international organizations created for this purpose.

This militaristic barbarism confirms that we are witnessing the collapse of the so-called "Rule of Law" and confirms that there is an abysmal separation between the institutions of a precarious representative democracy and the social demands of the majority of Colombians.

The systematic and programmed application of state terrorism also shows the crisis of peripheral capitalism in the country

linked to the worst economic crisis in the history of capitalism and aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic. We have reached the dead end of a state and elites incapable of meeting the most basic needs of the population, now, and in the medium and long term.

The social outbreak went beyond the classic forms of popular mobilization, making possible expressions of solidarity as with the presence of the indigenous "Minga" in Cali and blockades and self-defence (barricades) in the cities as key points of a genuine national strike.

Those who led the blockades, the so-called "front line" are young people marginalized by neoliberalism, lacking health, education and work who came to protest out of outrage, united in hopelessness. They do not believe in conventional institutions, nor in political parties, whether from the left or the right.

They are organized "from below" in slow coordination processes based on the demands of the street resistance; they reject personal leadership, proclaim "horizontality" in decision-making, and have gained great social legitimacy in the neighbourhoods where they operate and facilitate popular assemblies. These urban blockades, according to public statements by the Archbishop of Cali, Darío Monsalve, "constitute almost the only way that strike activists have to make themselves heard …" and also arose in response to the armed forces besieging of the cities.

The fact that the days of protest days began more than two weeks ago and that the blockades have been presented by the government, businessmen and local merchants as being responsible for the shortage of basic necessities and fuel, despite the enabling of "humanitarian corridors" by the protesters, has opened discussion on whether to maintain them. In this regard, we consider that any decision should be preceded by guarantees of no prosecutions or criminalization

for all those leading the blockades, supervised by human rights organizations and, as far as possible, international agreement and with explicit commitments from the national government. and local leaders on their demands. What has been happening in Cali after the failure of the negotiations attempted with the mayor's office is contrary to what we need to find solutions to the current situation. The neighbourhood leaders who attended the convocation were detected and are currently being detained by the police under house arrest to be prosecuted.

Regarding the political decision in relation to the blockades, we consider that this should correspond to those who have been organizing them as a form of legitimate resistance, that is, to the members of the front lines and close logistical support. Those who have led the street confrontations, and have made up the dead, wounded and missing are those who have the moral authority to make this decision. The same must be said about roadblocks by transporters and peasants.

The gigantic marches that we have witnessed in Ibagué, Neiva and Bogotá in recent days and the social organizations that have joined such as transporters throughout the country and coca growers in the southwest confirm that this popular uprising is on the rise, which is why we believe the decisive factor is the opening of political alternatives "from below" to the crisis of peripheral capitalism in the country.

It is showing that **self-organization and direct democracy expressed in multiple forms of resistance contribute to the consolidation of a "parallel institutional framework" that goes beyond the narrow limits of representative democracy. This uprising went beyond the traditional representative character of the trade union organizations and the oficial national strike leadership, confirming that their narrow protest action does not correspond to the demands of the broad popular spectrum.** On 1 May, there was dramatic evidence of this. While in the street skirmishes police brutality had

already caused deaths and disappearances, the trade union federations called for a celebration of the workers' day with a "virtual parade". The distrust felt by neighbourhood and popular leaders in relation to the negotiations that the strike committee is trying to develop stems from this reality.

The popular uprising also demonstrates the inability of a congress and political parties mired in corruption and commitments to the businesses of big capitalists, as well as regulatory agencies and high courts that have played the role of accomplices in the face of the militaristic barbarism that we currently witness. **For this reason, an institutional crisis has opened that could end in the resignation of President Duque. The development of events and the relationships of forces that are established in the immediate future will determine if it is possible to realize this possibility, which would be a real blow to the neoliberal and militarist political regime. We agree that it is necessary to raise it from now on as it has been proposed, with increasing force, by the political and social organizations. Ignoring this possibility on the grounds that it would produce an "institutional vacuum" leading to the arrival at the Palace of Nariño of the vice president or president of Congress, who supposedly are worse than Duque, or that the resignation would open the path to a military coup, reasons why it is necessary to "defend Duque from Uribismo" which placed him in power, exempts him from political responsibility for collective murder against defenceless people, as head of the armed forces, and also starts from the mistaken criterion that the deepening of the institutional crisis that would open the popular overthrow of a reactionary government such as that of Duque, something unprecedented in the history of the country, could only be resolved within the framework of the same institutional framework that is collapsing.**

On the contrary, we consider that a popular triumph of these characteristics would open great possibilities for the

autonomous political action of the people and open the way to the convening of a Constituent and Popular Assembly. It would be the best way to isolate and defeat political reaction and the coup plotters, at a time when there is immense popular solidarity at the international level.

The social and popular leaders have also emphasized the following economic and social demands that we support and that can form a minimal emergency platform in the face of the impoverishment to which millions of Colombians have been subjected due to the neoliberal policies that continue to be imposed by Duque's government:

• **Prosecution and punishment of those responsible for the murders and disappearances** that occurred during the militarization of social protest. Punishment of those responsible for raping women. Dismantling of ESMAD and transformation of the police into a civilian body dependent on the Ministry of Government.

• **Stop the murder and massacres of social leaders.** Promote a humanitarian agreement with all the armed groups from now on in order to find a way out of the conflict that must conclude at negotiating tables differentiated according to the characteristics of each group.

• **A Basic Emergency Income for those in the informal sector and the unemployed.** To achieve this objective, it is necessary to suspend the payment of the public debt that currently represents 63% of Gross Domestic Product and carry out a democratic and redistributive tax reform establishing a wealth tax on the rich and super rich, not deductible from income tax; taxation of corporate dividends and inheritances, as well as the elimination of tax exemptions for large companies and the financial sector. Fulfilment of the peace agreements, particularly with regard to the voluntary substitution of crops and the implementation of collective projects that improve the standard of living of peasant and ethnic

communities, based on food sovereignty.

• **An employment generation programme for young people**, expansion of coverage and financing of enrolment of students in public universities.

• **Down with the genocidal government** of Iván Duque!

• **For an alternative solution** to the current crisis: **A Constituent and Popular Assembly**!

Reprinted from International Viewpoint

Spanish-state organisations declare international solidarity with the People of Myanmar

Ecosocialist.scot *is reproducing below an International Appeal for Solidarity with the People of Myanmar signed by progressive and socialist organisations in the Spanish State and that we support. It can be found in Castilian here: https://www.anticapitalistas.org/comunicados/manifiesto-de-solidaridad-internacional-con-el-pueblo-birmano/ The statement developed out of a similar initiative in France.*

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MANIFESTO WITH THE PEOPLES OF MYANMAR

On 1 February 2021, Burma's military (Tatmadaw) staged a coup, declared a one-year state of emergency and transferred all powers to the military junta. The Tatmadaw arrested the president, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and hundreds of elected representatives of the National League for Democracy (NLD).

Since then, the Burmese people have resisted this military coup through the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), taking to the streets and holding massive strikes which have paralysed part of the public administration, banking and businesses, demanding an end once and for all to the military power that has been in place since 1962. Protests have also spread to most of the regions where ethnic minorities live, demanding a new federalist constitution. In addition, the repression suffered by the Bamar (the majority ethnic group) is generating a nascent inter-ethnic solidarity movement that is quite unprecedented in Burma.

But the military junta seeks to crush democratic resistance at any cost: using war weapons against the population while occupying hospitals to prevent their treatment; employing death squads and paramilitary militias to kill civilians indiscriminately; mass arrests and torture, including the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. So far more than 500 people have been killed, hundreds are missing and thousands detained.

The movement continues its struggle under extremely harsh conditions and intense repression. We know that the victory of the democratic movement is possible, but the struggle will

probably be long, difficult and exhausting. That is why today, more than ever, the international and inter-nationalist support is essential, showing that the Burmese workers' and people's movement is not alone. That is why we want to express:

- **Our strong condemnation of the military coup and our support of the Burmese people** in their struggle for self-determination under democratic rule.
- **We demand an end to repression, the release of all those detained** and respect for the social, political and democratic rights of all the peoples of Burma.
- **We call on European companies, EU institutions and Member States to ensure the suspension** of all direct and indirect supply, sale or transfer to Burma of arms, ammunition and other military and security equipment, as well as training or other military and security assistance.
- **We demand that European governments and companies sever all ties with the Burmese military**, including the vast network of companies that control and financially support them and on which they rely for much of their power in the country.

Furthermore, the undersigned individuals and collectives call for international financial solidarity to support the democratic struggle of the Burmese popular classes.

Our solidarity focuses on the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), which includes health workers and "generation Z" (high school youth) who were the first to reject the coup, as well as trade unionists, including those of the CTUM trade union federation, which called for the general strike on 8 February. The MDC constitutes a framework for self-organisation of the resistance that is not subordinate to the NLD. Our financial solidarity will also support groups that defend the progressive aspirations of national minorities and associations that have been building solidarity between the Bamar (the majority

ethnic group) and the other peoples of the Union of Myanmar

SUPPORTED BY:

Adelante Andalucia – anticapitalistas – Attac espana – bng – CCOO – CUP – ecologistas en accion – EH Bildu – Euskal Sindikatua- Esquerra Republicana – Intersindical Alternativa de Catalunya – Izquierda Unida -Langile abertzallen bazordeak – Mas Pais- Movimente Assembleario de Trabajadores-as de Sanidad – Podemos

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End the system of private patents! Manifesto on Global Covid Response

Thanks to a huge scientific effort based on international collaboration and historic amounts of public money, humanity has been able to develop several effective vaccines against Covid-19 in less than a year.

However, this great achievement could be totally overshadowed by the greed of the pharmaceutical industry. In a situation as critical as the present, the exceptional nature of the measures demanded from the majority of the population must also apply to the private pharmaceutical industry and its permanent thirst for profit. The suspension of the Covid-19 vaccine patents must be a priority and a first step.

But we cannot stop there. Initiatives such as COVAX or C-TAP have failed miserably, not only because of their inadequacy,

but above all because they reflect the failure of the current system of global governance in which rich countries and multinationals, often in the form of foundations, seek to reshape the world order to their liking. Philanthropy and burgeoning public-private initiatives are not the answer. They are even less so in the face of today’s global challenges in a world dominated by states and industries driven solely by market forces and seeking maximum profits.

The health crisis is far from being resolved. The capitalist system and neoliberal policies have been at the helm at all stages. At the root of this virus is the unbridled transformation of the relationship between the human species and nature. The ecological and health crises are intimately intertwined. The same predatory neoliberal logic has exacerbated the consequences of both by applying, to the crises, private and competitive principles of management policy. The result is much more inequality, much more suffering and many more deaths in the name of the interests of a privileged few.

The pandemic has accelerated and deepened dangerous trends, social gaps and multidimensional phenomena that we have been observing for decades and in which the working classes, especially women and racialized people, suffer most. Women make up the majority of the health workers who have been on the front line in the pandemic, but also of those preserving life in the face of cuts to public services and social rights, of which they are the first victims.

Good health, access to health care and to vaccinations are universal human rights. Vaccines therefore should be considered a global public good. To ensure their universal accessibility, it is necessary and urgent to suspend the patents. This measure must be accompanied by mechanisms for the nationalization of private pharmaceutical industries and a strong investment in the development of public pharmaceutical industries in all countries. Decisive action is needed to

enable public planning of vaccine production and distribution, developing local production capacity where possible and complementing it with binding international solidarity in other cases.

Just as viruses have no borders, the fight against them must have none. Health chauvinism is another face of the reactionary preference trend that is sweeping the world. The peoples of the South must have access to vaccines on an equal footing with the rest of the world’s inhabitants. We welcome efforts made by Cuba to develop vaccines and treatments against the pandemic with the aim of making the results available to humanity. Global challenges such as a pandemic require appropriate global responses.

The corporate economy, blind faith in the market and the pursuit of profit have proven to be incompatible with the well-being of Humanity. Health is not a commodity. Economic recovery cannot be at the expense of health or the rights of the majority. We must choose: capital or life. We must act quickly and forcefully, create a global strategy of equal access and universal guarantee to high quality health care.
For all these reasons, we demand :

- The suspension of private patents on all technologies, knowledge, treatments and vaccines related to Covid-19.
- The elimination of trade secrets and the publication of information on the production costs and public investments used, in a clear and publicly accessible manner.
- Transparency and public scrutiny at all stages of vaccine development.
- Universal, free and open access to vaccination and treatment.
- The expropriation and socialization under popular control of the private pharmaceutical industry as a basis for a universal public health system that promotes the production of generic treatments and medicines.

- Increased public investment and budgets for public health and community care policies, including more staff, higher salaries and improved working conditions in these sectors.
- The introduction of taxes on wealth (wealth and income of the richest 1%) to finance the effort against the pandemic and to ensure a socially just and ecologically sustainable exit from the various crises of global capitalism.
- The suspension of debt payments for the duration of the pandemic and the cancellation of illegitimate debts and those contracted to finance the fight against the virus.

TO SIGN THE MANIFESTO:

Send an email to this address: manifiestocovid[@]gmail.com

List of signatories

Intercontinental organisations :

1. Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (CADTM) international network www.cadtm.org;
2. Global Campaign to Reclaim Peoples Sovereignty, Dismantle Corporate power and Stop Impunity https://www.stopcorporateimpunity.org/;
3. Global/Glocal Network for Quality Education *Red global/Glocal por la calidad educativa* https://redglobalcalidaded.wixsite.com/redglobalcalidadeduc/integrantes;
4. International Association of Health Policy (IAHP) https://iahponline.wordpress.com/;
5. International Peoples' Assembly (IPA) https://twitter.com/asambleapueblos;
6. Labour Network of Solidarity and Struggles ://www.laboursolidarity.org/;
7. People's Dialogue (south-south network) https://www.peoplesdialogue.org/about/;

8. People's Health Movement (PHM) https://phmovement.org/;
9. The Agora of the Inhabitants of the Earth https://agora-humanite.org/;
10. Transnational Institute https://www.tni.org/en/transnational-institute
11. World Social Forum Reflection Group https://www.foranewwsf.org/;
12. World March of Women https://marchemondiale.org/

Europe :

International organisations

1. CADTM Europe (Belgium, France, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg & Switzerland
2. European Network against Commercialisation of Health and Social Protection http://europe-health-network.net/

Austria:

1. Latin America Information Group *Informationsgruppe Lateinamerika* https://lateinamerika-anders.org/
2. Institute for Intercultural Research and Cooperation https://www.latautonomy.com
3. Zéro covid

Belgium:

1. A CONTRE-COURANT http://a-contre-courant.be/
2. ATTAC Wallonia-Brussels https://wb.attac.be/
3. CADTM Belgium http://www.cadtm.org/Francais
4. CEPAG https://www.cepag.be/
5. CETRI – Centre tricontinental, Belgique, www.cetri.be
6. Cultural Presence and Action *Présence et Action Culturelles* https://www.pac-g.be/
7. Forum North South *Forum Nord-Sud*
8. General Labour Federation of Belgium Wallonia *Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique*(FGTB) wallonne https://www.fgtb-wallonne.be/

9. Fonds Ernest Mandel (Belgique) https://www.facebook.com/Ernest-Mandel-Fonds-1952230961709990/
10. Formation Léon Lesoil (Belgique) http://formationleonlesoil.org/
11. National Employees' Centre *Centrale Nationale des Employés* (CNE-CSC) https://www.lacsc.be/cne
12. Struggle for health *La Santé en Lutte* https://lasanteenlutte.org/ https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063697504866
13. Walloon Anti-Poverty Network (RWLP) *Réseau wallon de lutte contre la pauvreté*

Bosnia-Herzegovina:

1. Association for Culture and Art CRVENA in Sarajevo https://crvena.ba/

Czech Republic:

1. Prague Spring 2 – Network against right wing extremism and populism – https://www.facebook.com/praguespring2/

England:

1. Zéro Covid (England & Wales) https://zerocovid.uk

France :

1. AITEC;
2. Appel Brevets sur les vaccins anti-covid, stop. Réquisition ! https://www.facebook.com/Stop-aux-brevets-R%C3%A9quisition-105952548197339/;
3. Association for Employment, Information and Solidarity (APEIS) *Association pour l'emploi l'information et la solidarité* https://www.apeis.org;
4. Association INDECOSA-CGT https://indecosa.fr/a-propos/;
5. Citizens' Science Association *Association Sciences Citoyennes* https://sciencescitoyennes.org/;

6. ATTAC;
7. Cedetim;
8. Cerises la coopérative ceriseslacooperative.info
9. CGT Sanofi https://www.facebook.com/sanoficgt/
10. Collective of employees in Anti-Sanofric struggle *Collectif des salariés en lutte Anti-Sanofric* https://www.facebook.com/LesSanofi;
11. Copernicus Foundation *Fondation Copernic* http://www.fondation-copernic.org/
12. Democratic Kurd council in France *Conseil démocratique kurde en France (anciennement: Fédération des Associations Kurdes en France*) https://cdkf.fr/a-propos/;
13. Emergency Workers Collective *Collectif Inter-Urgences* https://www.interurgences.fr/;
14. Fédération SUD chimie -Solidaire, unitaire et démocratique- https://sud-chimie-solidaires.org;
15. France Amérique Latine (FAL) : https://www.franceameriquelatine.org/;
16. Henri Pézerat Association(health, work, environment) *Association Henri Pézerat (santé, travail, environnement)* https://www.asso-henri-pezerat.org/;
17. Ipam;
18. Medicines Common Good *Médicament Bien Commun* http://medicament-bien-commun.org/;
19. National convergence of collectives for the defence and development of public service *Convergence nationale des collectifs de défense et de développement des services publics* https://www.convergence-sp.fr/;
20. Observatory of Transparency in Medicines Policies (OTMeds) *Observatoire de la Transparence dans les politiques du médicaments* https://www.facebook.com/OTMeds/;
21. "Our Health in Danger" Collective *Collectif « Notre Santé en Danger »*;
22. People's Health Movement France;
23. Revue Inprecor http://www.inprecor.fr/home;

24. Sud santé-sociaux http://www.sudsantesociaux.org/;
25. The University of the Common Good of Paris *L'Université du Bien Commun de Paris* https://www.facebook.com/Université-du-bien-commun-2187371374822819/;
26. Union Syndicale de la Psychiatrie uspsy.fr;
27. Union of General Medicine *Syndicat de la Médecine Générale* https://smg-pratiques.info;
28. Union syndicale Solidaire https://solidaires.org/;
29. WOS/agence des hypothèses https://wos-agencedeshypotheses.com;
30. Zero Covid Solidaire https://www.facebook.com/Zéro-Pandémie-Solidaire-113278857470238/?ref=page_internal;

Germany

1. Association of Democratic Doctors Germany http://www.vdaeae.de/
2. LabourNet
3. Socialist Newspaper *Sozialistische Zeitung* https://www.sozonline.de/
4. Zukunftskonvent
5. Zéro covid

Greece :

1. Expel Racism Initiative https://www.kar.org.gr/;
2. Initiative of Healthcare Workers for a Public Health – People's Right – Social Good *?????????? ??????????? ??? ??? ??????? ????? – ????? ???????? – ????????? ?????*;
3. Naturefriends Greece https://www.naturefriends.gr/;
4. Solidarity for All (Athens Greece) https://www.solidarity4all.gr/;
5. Sunday Immigrants School https://www.ksm.gr/;
6. Women's Rights Organisation (TO MOV) *???????? ????????? ?????????? ??V* tomov.gr

Hungary :

1. ATTAC Hungary http://www.attac.hu/

Ireland :

1. Campaign for an All Ireland National Health Service https://www.facebook.com/CampaignAINHS/

Italy :

1. ATTAC Italy https://www.attac-italia.org/
2. CADTM Italy http://italia.cadtm.org/

Portugal :

1. Amílcar Cabral Development Intervention Centre (CIDAC) *Centro de Intervenção para o Desenvolvimento Amílcar Cabral* www.cidac.pt

Slovenia :

1. Institut Mirovni https://www.mirovni-institut.si/en/ (Slovenia)

Spanish state :

1. Andalusian Workers Union *Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores/as* (SAT) https://www.facebook.com/SindicatoSAT;
2. ATTAC Spain https://attac.es/;
3. Audit of the Health Care Debt (Health debt) *Auditoria de la Deuda en Sanidad (Audita Sanidad)* https://auditasanidad.org/;
4. Basque Workers Solidarity (ELA) *Euskal Langileen Alkartasuna* https://www.ela.eus/es;
5. Citizen's Audit Platform on Debt *Plataforma Auditoría Ciudadana de la Deuda* https://auditoriaciudadana.net/;
6. Coordination Against the Privatisation of Health Care Coordinadora *Antiprivatizacion de la Sanidad* https://www.casmadrid.org/

7. Ecologists in Action *Ecologistas en Acción* https://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/;
8. Galician Inter-Union Confederation *Confederación Intersindical Galega* (CIG) https://www.cig.gal/;
9. Health Workers' Assembly Movement *Movimiento Asambleario de Trabajador@s de Sanidad*(MATS) https://mats-sanidad.com/;
10. Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak Workers Union (LAB) Basque country https://www.lab.eus/es/
11. Multinational Observatory in Latin America *Observatorio de Multinacionales en América Latina* (OMAL) https://omal.info/;
12. Navarra Health Platform *Plataforma Navarra de Salud /Nafarroako Osasun Plataforma* http://nafarroakosasunplataforma.blogspot.com/ https://www.facebook.com/Plataforma-Navarra-de-Salud-Nafarroako-Osasun-Plataforma-462069400539481/
13. Valencian Union Confederation *Intersindical Valenciana* (País Valencià) https://intersindical.org/

Switzerland :

1. CETIM https://www.cetim.ch/
2. MultiWatch https://multiwatch.ch/
3. World March of Women
4. Zéro covid

Africa

International organisations :

1. African Alliance WoMin. https://womin.africa/;
2. CADTM Afrique;
3. North African Network for Food Sovereignty https://www.siyada.org/ar/;
4. Pan African Association for literacy and Adult Education https://www.adeanet.org/fr/association-panafricaine-d-alphabetisation-et-d-education-des-adultes-

paalae;
5. Réseau nord-africain pour la souveraineté alimentaire https://www.siyada.org/ar/;
6. Rural Women's Assembly Southern Africa https://ruralwomensassembly.wordpress.com/ https://ruralwomensassembly.wordpress.com/

Democratic Republic of Congo :

1. CADTM Lubumbashi

Kenya :

1. Kenyan Peasants League www.kenyanpeasantsleague.org
2. Kenya Debt Abolition Network

Morocco :

1. Moroccan Association for Human Rights *Association marocaine des droits humains* (AMDH): http://amdh.org.ma/;
2. ATTAC CADTM Morocco https://attacmaroc.org/;
3. Democratic labour organisation *Organisation démocratique du travail*
4. Moroccan Network for the Defence of the Right to Health and the Right to Life *Réseau marocain pour la défense du droit à la santé et droit à la vie*
5. Southern Alternatives Forum *Forum des alternatives Sud* https://www.e-joussour.net/fr/

Senegal :

1. Pan African Education for Sustainable Development NGO (PAEDD) *La Panafricaine pour l'Education au Développement Durable ONG* ongpaedd.org;
2. Pan-African Youth Organisation *Organisation des Jeunesses Panafricanistes*;
3. Senegalese Social Forum *Forum social sénégalais*

Tunisia :

1. Al Warcha Media Association for Economic and Social Rights Association *Al Warcha médiatique pour les droits économiques et sociaux* https://www.inhiyez.com/;
2. Tunisian Women's Association for Research on Development (AFTURD) *Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement*
3. Tunisian Observatory of the Economy *Observatoire Tunisien de l'économie* http://www.economie-tunisie.org/fr

South Africa :

1. AIDC https://aidc.org.za/
2. The People's Vaccine Campaign

Americas :

International organisations :

1. ALBA MOVIMIENTOS http://albamovimientos.net/;
2. CADTM-Abya Yala Notre Amérique (CADTM-AYNA);
3. Council for Popular Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL) *Consejo de Educación Popular de América Latina y el Caribe* – https://www.facebook.com/CEAAL/;
4. Jubilee South Americas
5. Latin American and Caribbean Society for Political Economy and Critical Thinking (SEPLA) *Sociedad Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Economía Política y Pensamiento Crítico* https://sepla21.org/fr/;
6. Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), Steering Committee *Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, Comité Directivo* https://www.clacso.org/
7. Latin American Network for Access to Medicines (RedLAM), *Red Latinoamericana por el Acceso a Medicamentos* (Argentina, Brasil, Peru and Colombia) www.redlam.org
8. Our America Trade Union Forum (ESNA), *Encuentro Sindical*

Nuestra América http://encuentrosindical.org/

Argentina :

1. ATTAC – Argentina;
2. Argentine Workers' Central Union *Central de Trabajadores Autónoma regional* CTA-A Rosario https://www.ctarosario.org.ar;
3. Cooperative of Popular Educators and Researchers – Historic (CEIP-H) *Cooperativa de Educadores e Investigadores Populares Histórica, Argentina*;
4. Corriente Sindical Carlos Chile (Argentina) https://www.facebook.com/CorrienteCarlosChileCTAA/;
5. Darío Santillán Popular Front *Frente Popular Darío Santillán* https://abriendo-caminos.org/;
6. Front of Organisations in Struggle (FOL) *Frente de Organizaciones en Lucha* https://www.facebook.com/FOLFrenteDeOrganizacionesEnLucha/;
7. Fundación GEP (Argentina) Www.fgep.org;
8. Health Institute Patria *Salud Instituto Patria*;
9. Movement for Latin American Unity and Change *Movimiento por la Unidad Latinoamericana y el Cambio Social* http://mulcs.com.ar/ / Movimiento 8 de Abril)
10. National Federation of University Teachers (CONADU)-Historic, Argentina *Federación Nacional de Docentes Universitarios – Historica de Argentina*
11. People's Movement: For a Feminist Socialism from Below *Movimiento de los Pueblos: Por un socialismo feminista desde abajo* (Frente Popular Darío Santillán – Corriente Plurinacional / Izquierda Latinoamericana Socialista;
12. Santa Fe Teachers' Association *Asciación del Magisterio Santa Fe – Delegación Rosario* http://www.amsaferosario.org.ar/;
13. Sindicato ADEMYS;

14. SUTEBA de El Tigre

Bolivia :

1. Confederation of Urban Education Workers of Bolivia CTEUB *Confederación de Trabajadores de Educación Urbana de Bolivia*

Brazil :

1. ECCE Union of Education Professionals;
2. Homa – Human Rights and Business centre *Homa-Centro de Direitos Humanos e Empresas* http://homacdhe.com/index.php/home/;
3. National Association for Higher Education (ANDES) *Sindicato Nacional dos Docentes das Instituições de Ensino Superior*;
4. São Paulo Teachers' Union
5. São Paulo State Teachers' Union – Ourinhos;
6. São Paulo State Teachers' Union – São Paulo;
7. São Paulo State Education Teachers' Union – Litoral Sul;
8. São Paulo State Teachers' Union of Official Education – Osasco;
9. The National Union of Federal Servers of Basic, Professional and Technological Education (SINASEFE);
10. Union of Education Teachers of the State of São Paulo – Salto;
11. Union of Technical and Administrative Workers of UFRN and UFERSA;
12. Union of Bank Employees and Financiers of Bauru;
13. Union of Teachers of Official Public Education of the State of São Paulo – São Bernardo do Campo;
14. Union of Teachers of São Paulo State Official Public Education Union – Sumaré
15. Vinhedo Employees' Union

Chile :

1. National Federation of Associations of University

Officials of the University of Chile (FENAFUCH) *Federación Nacional de Asociaciones de Funcionarios de la Universidad de Chile*

Colombia :

1. Colombian Platform for the Audit of the Public Debt and the Recovery of the Commons *Plataforma Colombiana por la Auditoría de la Deuda Pública y la Recuperación de los Bienes Comunes* http://www.pacdeprebico.org;
2. Grupo Kavilando Medellin Colombia;
3. Inter-University Network for Peace (REDIPAZ) *Red Interuniversitaria por la Paz*;
4. Latin American Autonomous University, Socio-legal Research Centre of Colombia *Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana, Centro de Investigaciones Socio jurídicas de Colombia*;
5. National Federation of Colombian Bank Workers Unions (FENASIBANCOL) *Federación Nacional de Sindicatos Bancarios Colombianos* http://www.fenasibancol.org;
6. National Union of Bank Employees (UNEB) http://www.unebcolombia.org;
7. Research Group University de San Buenaventura Medellin (GIDPAD) *Grupo de Investigación Universidad de San Buenaventura Medellín*

Costa Rica :

1. Association of Secondary Education Teachers (APSE) *Asociación de Profesores de Educación Secundaria*

Ecuador :

1. National Union of Educators (UNE) *Unión Nacional de Educadores*;
2. Platform "It's worth of you Ecuador" https://vaportiecuador.wordpress.com/

El Salvador :

1. Alforja network *Red Alforja* http://enlazandoculturas.cicbata.org/?q=node/103

Haiti :

1. Haitian Advocacy Platform for Alternative Development (PAPDA) – *Plataforma Haitiana de Defensa para el Desarrollo Alternativo*. http://www.papda.org/

Honduras :

1. COPINH Honduras

Mexico :

1. Autonomous Movement for Community Emancipation (MAECC) of Oaxaca *Movimiento Autónomo por Emancipación Comunitaria de Oaxaca*;
2. Confederation of Retired, Pensioned and Older Persons (CONJUPAM) *Confederación de Jubilados, Pensionados y Adultos Mayores*;
3. Executive Committee, Section 9 Democracy (SNTE-CNTE) *Comité Ejecutivo Sección 9 Democrática SNTE-CNTE*
4. Mexican Plural Pedagogic Collective *Colectivo Plural Pedagógico Mexicano Kaichuk Mat Dha, Durango*
5. Mexican Union of Electricians *Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas* http://www.sme.org.mx/index.html;
6. Mujer, Pueblo – Magisterio. Cnte Durango Mexico https://www.facebook.com/puebloMagisterio/;
7. National Assembly of Electrical Energy Users (ANUEE) *Asamblea Nacional de Usuarios de la Energía E?ectrica*;
8. National Coordinating Committee of Users in Resistance (CONUR) *Coordinadora Nacional de Usuarios y Usuarias en Resistencia*
9. New Workers' Centre *Nueva Central de Trabajadores* https://nuevacentral.org.mx/
10. Workers Union of Higher Media Education Institute of CDMX (SITRAIEMS) *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto*

de Educación Media Superior de la CDMX

Panama :

1. Association of Educators of Veraguenses of the Republic of Panama *Asociación de Educadores Veraguenses de República de Panamá*
2. Critical Mass Panama *Masa Crítica Panamá*
3. Teachers' Association of the Republic of Panama (ASOPROF) *Asociación de Profesores de la República de Panamá*

Peru:

1. Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampis-Gtanw Nation *Gobierno Territorial Autónomo de la Nación Wampis-Gtanw* https://nacionwampis.com/;
2. Unified Union of Education Workers of Peru (SUTEP)

Puerto Rico :

1. Teachers Federation of Puerto Rico (FMPR) *Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico*
2. University of Puerto Rico Teachers Association *Asociación de Profesores de la Universidad de Puerto Rico*

United States of America :

1. New York Communities for Change https://www.nycommunities.org/

Uruguay :

1. Marcosur Feminist Articulation (AFM) https://www.facebook.com/ArticulacionFeministaMarcosur/
2. Plataforma Descam
3. International Network of University Professors and Academics on the State of the Public Debt *Red*

Internacional de Cátedras Instituciones y Personalidades sobre el estado de la Deuda Pública

Venezuela :

1. Centre for Research and Border Studies *Centro de Investigación y Estudios Fronterizos*
2. International Observatory on Educational Reforms and Teacher Policies (OIREPOD) *Observatorio Internacional de Reformas Educativas y Políticas Docentes*
3. International Research Centre other voices in Education (CII-OVE) *Centro internacional de investigaciones otras voces en educación* www.otrasvoceseneducacion.org
4. Popular Training School Our America (EFPNA) *Escuela de Formación Popular Nuestra América*
5. Venezuelan Forum for the Right to Education *Foro venezolano por el derecho a la educación*

Asia :

International Organisations :

1. Health Action International Asia Pacific (HAIAP), http://www.haiasiapacific.org Regional organisation – virtual HQ – Penang Malaysia;
2. International Network for a Human Economy Asia (RIEH) https://www.rieh.org/;
3. NGO Forum on ADB;
4. SAAPE https://saape.org/ South Asia
5. World March of Women, Asia

Bangladesh :

1. Bangladesh Working Group on External Debt (BWGED): https://bwged.blogspot.com ;
   CLEAN (Coastal Livelihood and Environmental Action Network): https://cleanbd.org

India :

1. Citizens Forum for Mangalore Development;
2. Collective for Economic Justice https://collectiveforeconomicjustice.wordpress.com/;
3. Growthwatch (India) https://growth-watch.blogspot.com/;
4. Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF) https://www.insafindia.com/;
5. Karavali Karnataka Janabhivriddhi Vedike;
6. Nadi Ghati Morcha;
7. People's Alliance of Central-East India (PACE-India);
8. Prantojon https://www.facebook.com/prantajan;
9. Progressive Plantation Workers Union (PPWU);
10. Tamil Nadu Land Rights Federation (TNLRF) https://www.facebook.com/TNLRF/

Japan :

1. ATTAC Japan

Malaysia :

1. HAIAP Regional organisation – virtual HQ – Penang Malaysia

Pakistan :

1. Haqooq Khalq Movement Pakistan
2. Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee

Philippines :

1. Sentro ng mga Progresibo at Nagkakaisang Manggagawa - SENTRO- (Philippines) www.sentro.org

South Korea :

1. KPDS (Korean Pharmacists for Democratic Society), Korea www.pharmacist.or.kr
2. People's Health Movement, South Korea

Sri Lanka :

1. Ceylon Estate Staffs Union (CESU), http://cesusrilanka.org/index.html;
2. Liberation Movement https://www.facebook.com/LiberationMovementLka;
3. Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform https://monlar.lk;
4. Movement for Nature Farming and Indigenous Livestock Farming;
5. National Fisheries Solidarity Movement www.nafso-online.org;
6. People's Alliance for Right to Land –PARL-, http://parlsl.com Sri Lanka;
7. Progressive Women's Collective https://www.facebook.com/progressivewomensc;
8. Protect Union;
9. Sri Lanka All Telecommunication Employees Union SLATEU https://www.facebook.com/slptsunion;
10. Telecommunication Engineering Diplomates' Union (TEDA);
11. United Federation of Labour (UFL)

Solidarity with Palestinians against neocolonial aggression

Statement of the Fourth International

In recent weeks, Palestinians in Jerusalem have mobilized en masse to defend their basic right – to live in their own homes, homes to their families for several generations – against the attempts of the Israeli government and extremist

settler organizations to drive them out and replace them with Jewish settlers in a policy that can only be called ethnic cleansing.

They have been confronted with violent colonial repression, which was expressed in particular with the attack on the Al-Aqsa Compound on Friday 7 May as end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approached.

Since 10 May, the Israeli army has been carrying out a violent bombing campaign against the Gaza strip in retaliation for the demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinans of Jerusalem and rocket attacks.

In Jerusalem and other mixed cities, as well as the violence perpetrated by the police and Israel Defence Force, far-right Jewish groups have attacked Arabs in the streets. In Jerusalem alone, hundreds of Palestinians have been injured and dozens imprisoned.

As a result of this violence there have been at least 83 deaths in Gaza (including 16 children) 3 in the West Bank. 7 Israelis have also been killed.

Western news sources lead on the rocket attacks from Gaza, Israeli prime minister Netanhayu and other politicians call for “calm” while Biden says that “Israel has the right to defend itself” and calls for a return to the situation pre-10 May as if that had been an acceptable situation. Almost inaudible criticisms of the Israeli settler policy do nothing to change this stance of the “international community” – they will back Israel to keep their status quo in the region.

There can be no calm in this situation of colonial aggression. There is not “equal responsibility” for the violence. The settler colonial state of Israel is practising a form of apartheid and ethnic cleansing and Palestinians are denied all democratic and national rights. There will not be a “just solution” without the accordance of full rights to the

Palestinians.

The current worldwide expressions of solidarity with the Palestinians – in widespread street demonstrations, in football stadiums from Chile to Scotland – must be strengthened and become an ongoing powerful movement for to hold Israel accountable for its crimes.

This is the meaning of the BDS (Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions) campaign, which must be strengthened and developed to impose sanctions against Israel.

Support for the Israeli state must stop!

An end to the civil and military occupation!

Equal democratic and national rights!

The right to self-determination and the right of return for the Palestinian people!

May 13 2021

Why is Welsh independence suddenly being taken seriously?

There has been a remarkable rise in support for a movement advocating independence for Wales, writes Geoff Ryan

At the beginning of 2020, just before the start of the pandemic, membership of **YesCymru** stood at about 2,000. In November, *writes Geoff Ryan*, I received my membership card: Number 15,706. Membership has further increased to about

20,000 today. That is a remarkable rise in support for a movement advocating independence for Wales. Especially since it was only formed in 2016. Moreover for more than a year it has not been able to follow up on the increasingly bigger demonstrations held in Caernarfon, Cardiff and Merthyr.[i]

Polls also show a big increase in support for independence with up to 40 percent of those expressing a view saying they would vote for independence if a referendum were to be held tomorrow. In some polls a majority of Labour voters have supported independence. Young people in particular are inclined towards independence. 16 and 17 year olds are able to vote in the Senedd elections on Thursday 6 May but at the moment it is unclear to what extent this will impact on the election result.

Labour Party supporters such as Michael Sheen[ii] and Charlotte Church have come out in favour of independence. Charlotte Church's support for independence is on the front page of the first edition of **YesCymru's** free paper which has been distributed to households throughout Wales. Former Wales and Everton goalkeeper Neville Southall and sports journalist Eddie Butler are prominent supporters of independence for Wales.

At least some of the mainstream press are taking the possibility of Wexit, as Sky News dubbed it[iii], seriously. This is also being taken up outside Britain. For example both the **Irish Times** and **South China Morning Post** have featured articles on Welsh independence.[iv]

So why has support for independence suddenly mushroomed?

The first thing to note is that, contrary to the arguments of the capitalist media and sections of the Labour Party, support for some form of independence has always existed in Wales.

Just before and after the First World War the South Wales Miners Federation supported a Welsh Parliament. They were joined by all the major Welsh Labour organisations.

Unfortunately the workers movement failed to put itself at the head of the fight for a Welsh Parliament, leaving it to the Liberals, so gradually the Welsh Labour movement became more 'British' in outlook the more it came to be dominated by the British Labour Party.[v] As a result devolution was rejected in a 1979 referendum and there was barely a majority for devolution when another referendum was held in 1997.

There have also been major struggles around the language question, particularly from the 1960s onwards. Despite significant victories there are still ongoing issues around the status of the Welsh language. Jacob Rees Mogg's recent description of Welsh as 'a foreign language' incensed many people in Wales. Not least because it showed an appalling ignorance on the part of this staunch British patriot of the connection between Welsh and the indigenous language of the original Britons. English, Mr Rees Mogg, with its Latin, Norman French, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian heritages is the non-native language.

The current discussion about whether of not Snowdon should only be called by its Welsh name Yr Wyddfa is also having an impact on attitudes in Wales; particularly after the ridiculing of Welsh on a recent edition of **Have I Got News For You**. Bizarrely support for the use of Yr Wyddfa has come from the Tory supporting Telegraph.[vi] There are also campaigns for the country to only be referred to as Cymru rather than its English name.

The Wales football team reaching the semi-finals of the 2016 UEFA championship (England lost to Iceland in the last 16) and Gareth Thomas winning the Tour de France in 2018 certainly increased a sense of Welsh identity and pride. The much improved form of the Wales rugby union team, winning the 6

Nations Championship after a disastrous 2020, has also strengthened Welsh national feelings.

But all these issues have reinforced a move that was already underway towards greater support for independence in Wales. They did not create it. What then are the major reasons for the rise in support for independence?

Basically there are 4 main reasons for the growth of the independence movement in Wales:

1. Brexit
2. Covid
3. Westminster interference
4. Scottish independence

1) Brexit

Unlike Scotland a majority of voters in Wales supported Brexit. Indeed, without that Welsh support Brexit would have been clearly revealed as the little Englander project it was. In fact if Wales had also voted to remain the break-up of the UK would probably have accelerated. Consider if a government in Westminster had tried to go ahead with Brexit against the wishes of three of the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It is the effect of Brexit on Wales, and Welsh farmers in particular, that has led to a change in views, with probably a majority now wishing they had voted remain. Many farmers have accused the Westminster government of a ‘Brexit betrayal’ after the farming sector’s 2020 budget was slashed by £95 million, despite the Tories having promised a year earlier to maintain agricultural development funding. Also the hostility of farmers has also increased because they have not received much of the money they were promised. In fact the Tories’ response is to centrally control all funding, by-passing the Welsh Labour government. This hostility to the devolved administration has undoubtedly increased support for a weakening of ties with England.

2) Covid 19

The Welsh Labour government has not performed massively better than the Johnson government in terms of reducing deaths from Covid. Nevertheless in every poll Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford is credited with performing much better than Johnson. Indeed Johnson is seen negatively in every poll in Wales. What the pandemic has revealed to much wider layers of Welsh society is that the devolved government has far greater powers than most people thought and that it can use them independently of Westminster. By taking control of dealing with the pandemic the Labour government in Wales has been able to demonstrate the benefits of devolved government (even within the limits currently in place). This is the main reason why Boris Johnson regretted allowing the devolved governments to take responsibility for the Covid crisis. At the same time he refuses to talk to the government in Cardiff.

And the Labour government has been able to take alternative roads to the Westminster government. **Find, Test, Track, Trace, Isolate** in Wales has been carried out by the public sector, unlike in England where vast sums have been handed over to Serco to run a frankly useless system. The Welsh government has been more inclined to act on the advice of scientists and take measures to reduce, or try to reduce, the spread of the virus. Unlike the government in Westminster, which refused to stop people living in areas with high levels of Covid travelling to Wales.

Certainly the Welsh government can be criticized for its slowness in reacting at the start of the pandemic, its tardiness in making the wearing of masks compulsory in shops and on public transport, its ending the autumn fire-break too quickly and several other mistakes. But the Labour government's failings are certainly far less than those of the Tories in Westminster and, despite the trolls on **WalesOnline** the majority of people are inclined to support

Drakeford’s measures. But most importantly in increasing willingness to consider independence is the fact that the Welsh government was able to take measures and was the vehicle for communicating with the people of Wales.

3) Westminster Interference

Interference from Westminster predates Johnson becoming PM. It was Theresa May’s government that refused to support the Swansea bay barrage scheme on the grounds of cost. At one and the same time this showed how dependent Wales was on Westminster and how little the Tory government cared about the people of Wales or the environment. Under Johnson that has become even more apparent. Although the Welsh government rejected the proposed M4 relief road on environmental grounds (as well as cost) Johnson has declared it must go ahead.

In the early days of the pandemic **BBC Wales** news reported, on at least 2 different occasions, that care homes in North Wales had had PPE taken from them and diverted to hospitals in England. Although Johnson denies this it is almost certainly true. In any case many people did believe the stories which reinforced a belief that Wales would always be subject to England unless it took measures to free itself.

As mentioned above in the section on Brexit the Johnson government has tried to seize control of the distribution of funds from the devolved administration and to bring in the Internal Market Act to undermine the ability of the devolved governments to resist Westminster diktats. The Crime, Sentencing, Police and Courts Bill will be imposed on Wales – not that South Wales Police need much encouragement to break up protests. Furthermore Wales representation at Westminster will be cut from 40 to 32 MPs.

In addition Johnson has instructed all public authorities to fly the Union Jack (known throughout much of the world as the Butcher’s Apron) on their buildings. He has understood that a

complete ban on flying the Saltire or the Red Dragon would spell disaster for his government but his diktat that they must be flown below the union flag is an unambiguous call for Unionism to be made the dominant legal position in Scotland and Wales. Devolution is to be forever subordinate. As can be imagined this did not go down well in Wales or Scotland.

4) Scottish Independence

The continued growth in support for parties in Scotland advocating independence has also had an impact in Wales. On one level there has been increasing contact and cooperation between Socialist Republican forces in Wales and Scotland. Contact and cooperation is continuing not solely around issues of independence but also around, for example, COP 26 in Glasgow. But on a more general level there is a growing feeling in Wales that if Scotland does break from the United Kingdom then Wales would have to follow suit if it does not want to be merely an appendage of England. This is far from a unique situation. Although the relative sizes of the parties involved are reversed, Wales following Scotland out of the UK is almost as inevitable as Croatia following Slovenia out of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia – though hopefully without the dreadful consequences.

Johnson's disparaging comments about Scottish devolution on a visit to Scotland and his regret that the Welsh government has powers over lockdown and coronavirus[vii] have also strengthened anti-unionist views. Not surprisingly Tory interference in Welsh decision making has increased support for independence. Or, at the very least, has fundamentally challenged the existing constitutional set-up whereby the United Kingdom is totally dominated by England.

Federal Responses

Mark Drakeford is undoubtedly a unionist. Yet he has begun to

question the current arrangements. His speech to the (virtual) Welsh Labour Party Spring Conference called unambiguously for ‘Home Rule’.[viii] Mick Antoniw, a left Labour Member of the Senedd, has written a pamphlet in which he argues for a new federal arrangement in which England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are equal partners.[ix] However, leaving aside the rather important issue of Irish reunification, Antoniw’s proposals are essentially a rehash of Gordon Brown’s Devo-max which was used to undermine the pro-independence vote in Scotland and, as a result, have seen support for independence soar. Antoniw also hopes that Keir Starmer will take up the cause of federalism. Given Starmer’s current inclination to wrap himself in the Union Jack even more than Johnson this is a forlorn hope.

The increase in support for independence in Wales has also led to calls for a separate Welsh Labour Party, again led by Mick Antoniw.[x] Earlier this year saw the formation of Labour For An Independent Wales (L4IW) which has 3 candidates on the Labour slates for the upcoming Senedd elections. Only 1 of them is a constituency candidate, the other 2 are on the regional lists and none of them have much hope of being elected but it is still an important achievement given that the sole supporter of an independent Scotland was removed from the Labour slate for the Scottish Parliament.

The moves within sections of Welsh Labour are inadequate but they clearly reflect a questioning among Labour Party members and supporters of the current constitutional setup in which England is able to totally dominate the other nations. Socialists can work with the advocates of federalism while at the same time criticizing the limits of the proposals and arguing for the need to go beyond federalism and create a Welsh Socialist Republic.

Socialist Republicanism

Outside the Labour Party a number of organisations have developed over the last year in support of a Welsh Socialist Republic: in particular **Undod** (Unity) and **Valleys Underground**. Undod has about 650 members spread throughout Wales. It is in favour of a Welsh Socialist Republic (as is L4IW and Valleys Underground) and is trying to construct an open, democratic organisation in which people from different political traditions and viewpoints can discuss and work together. It has a strong ecosocialist dimension and **Merched Undod** (Undod Women) are ensuring that it also emphasises feminism.

Valleys Underground describe themselves as explicitly Marxist. They originate from the South Wales Valleys, hence the name, but have now built a branch in Wrexham, North Wales. Like Undod and L4IW they argue for a Welsh Socialist Republic and are involved in practical ecosocialist activities such as cleaning up waste ground. There is a certain overlap in membership between Undod, Valleys Underground and, to a lesser extent, L4IW. All 3 organisations participate in YesCymru.

There are 2 important websites giving largely pro-independence views: Voice.Wales (not to be confused with Voice of Wales, a far right site) and Nation.Cymru. Both print articles primarily in English though some of the comments are in Welsh. In addition Undod and Valleys Underground also provide good reporting on events in Wales from a socialist republican viewpoint.

There has also been a growth in websites dealing with all aspects of Welsh life, including history, natural history, ecological issues and cultural matters – mostly bilingual sites.

And in addition, of course, there is Plaid Cymru which has taken a much more pro-independence position over the last year or so. However, the polls suggest that the growth in support

for independence has not necessarily led to an increase in support for Plaid.

Opposition to Independence

However, despite the unprecedented growth in support for independence in Wales there has also been increasing vocal opposition. The Abolish The Assembly Party is standing in the Senedd elections on Thursday 6 May – though the fact the Welsh Assembly became the Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament over a year ago doesn't appear to have impinged much on their political awareness. Despite their desire to abolish the 'Assembly' their candidates have indicated they would take up positions as MSs and take the not insignificant salaries. According to the polls Abolish could win between 0 and 7 seats from the regional lists. UKIP, which had 7 AMs at the last election before splitting several times, are unlikely to win more than 1 seat. Their leaflet in support of Neil Hamilton is thoroughly racist, anti-Black Lives Matter, anti-immigrants adnd anti-foreigners. It also calls for the scrapping of the Senedd. Perhaps surprisingly Reform UK, successor to the Brexit Party, is not overtly opposed to devolution and does not call for abolishing the Senedd. But like Abolish and UKIP their leaflets are all only in English.

Guardian columnist Simon Jenkins recently claimed that the biggest handicap to an independent Wales is hostility to 'newcomers'.[xi] He has clearly never read the YesCymru constitution, adopted in January 2020:

"2. YesCymru is a campaigning organisation with the aim of gaining independence for Wales in order to improve the way the country is governed. YesCymru believes that Wales would be better running its own affairs, as part of a wider European and international family.

YesCymru believes in an inclusive citizenship, which embraces the fact that all who choose to make Wales their home –

regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation – are full citizens of the new Wales."

Certainly the Constitution could be improved to show an understanding of the social model of disability, but otherwise this is not only a constitution socialists can support but one which we can advocate for every area of society. It puts the movement for Welsh independence in the forefront of the fight for civil and human rights for everyone.

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[i] On the rise of Yes Cymru see WalesOnline, 8 Nov 2020.

[ii] See the fascinating interview with Michael Sheen by Owen Jones. Available on You Tube.

[iii] Sky News 16 September 2019

[iv] Irish Times, April 23 2021; South China Morning Post, 29 January 2021

[v] See Gareth Miles and Robert Griffiths; *Socialism For The Welsh People*; 1979. Interestingly Griffiths, current General Secretary of the CPB, calls for a Welsh Socialist Republic at the end of the pamphlet – not something advocated today by the CPB even though support for such a demand is much higher than in 1979.

vi] Nation.Cymru, 29 April 2021

[vii] WalesOnline 23 Mar 2021

[viii] WalesOnline, 26 Feb 2021

[ix] See Constitutional reform is key: Labour needs an agenda for a radical federal UK in LabourList, 14 Jan 2021.

[x] Nation.Cymru, 22 Feb 2021

[xi] Nation.Cymru, 01 May 2021

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