

Remembering Bloody Sunday

Sunday 30 January 2022 marked the 50th anniversary of the massacre by the British Army of 14 innocent people in Derry. The BBC and RTE completely ignored a large commemorative march in Derry, addressed by among others former Westminster MP Bernadette Devlin McAliskey and civil rights activist Eamonn McCann who were on the original peaceful march in 1972 and were fired on by the British soldiers. Below we publish a report on the march by Irish revolutionary socialist John Meehan, from the Irish political blog [Tomás Ó Flatharta](#).

On Monday 31 January 1972, the day after the march, in the British House of Commons Bernadette Devlin (now McAliskey) then the independent socialist MP for Mid-Ulster, tried to challenge the lies of the Tory Home Secretary Reginald Maudling for twice claiming that it was the marchers who had fired on the British soldiers of the Paratroop Regiment – rather than the other way round. She was denied the opportunity to speak and berated for trying to tell the truth – that a British minister was a liar. Bernadette famously walked across the chamber and slapped Maudling on the face as a “proletarian protest”. against his lies Bernadette later said she regretted she had not got him by the throat. We reproduce a link to an interview with Bernadette on that day explaining why she did it. It took several decades and an independent inquiry before it was finally confirmed that those shot by the British soldiers were entirely innocent, and that Maudling had lied to the House of Commons – but we don’t think he’ll be the last British minister to be found out as a liar!

**Irish revolutionary socialist
organisation Socialist Democracy is
holding an online meeting on the politics**

of the last 100 years of the Partition of Ireland, with John McNulty speaking – Tuesday 1 February 2022 19.00 7pm London/Dublin time.

<http://socialistdemocracy.org/RecentArticles/DiscussionIreland100YearsOfPartitionCelebrationOfReaction.html>

The feedback I got all week, writes [Tomás Ó Flatharta](#) , was that the 2022 Bloody Sunday March in Derry today (Sunday 30 January 2022) would be huge. This turned out to be true. An initial report is below.

Here is the intriguing bit. The mass media (e.g. RTÉ Radio Bulletin this morning at 8.00am) reported lots of other stuff – for example, Dublin government taoiseach Micheál Martin laying a wreath – and said nothing about the march this afternoon at 2.30pm in Derry featuring speeches by Bernadette McAliskey, Éamonn McCann, and others. RTÉ is a public service broadcaster in Ireland largely funded by a license fee. It comes under pressure from the “great and the good” to toe the line and exclude radical voices. And sometimes it gets things spectacularly wrong – today was an example.

What is the key political message today : Prosecute the Generals! We will keep fighting – and, eventually, we might win. If we don't fight, we definitely lose.





Derry Bloody Sunday March 2022; Irish Soccer Player from Derry, James McClean, wears a black 14 armband; Craigavon 2 Campaigners on the Derry March; Derry Trades Council on the 2022 March (main picture)

It is very similar to what happened on the day of the 2016 100th anniversary monster parade in Dublin supporting the 1916 Rising – the Irish establishment media disgraced itself reporting on tiny religious ceremonies in Ballygobackwards and the like. It ignored tens of thousands on Dublin streets participating in a colourful parade.



Limerick Soviet Banner Carried on April 2016 Commemoration of the Irish 1916 Easter Rising

The weather did not stop the people of Derry as thousands took part in the March for Justice on the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday.

British Army Paratroopers shot dead 13 and wounded 14 civilians during a civil rights march on Sunday, January 30, 1972. A 14th person died later from his injuries.

People from all over the island and beyond took to the streets of Derry, leaving Creggan at 2:15 this afternoon and marching peacefully through the streets of Derry finishing at Free Derry Corner.

The route retraces the original route of the civil rights march 50 years ago in 1972. Many held signs demanding justice from the British Government for those who lost their lives.

When the crowds returned to the Bogside, there was a rally at Free Derry corner with Bernadette McAliskey, née Devlin, and well-known civil rights campaigner Eamonn McCann among the speakers.

Irish civil rights leader, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, gave a powerful speech to the crowd, "People walk this road every year, there has to be another generation of people, like the young people here," she said.

"I'm so glad to see so many young faces here. One thing that is certain, Bloody Sunday will never be forgotten.

"Again, as we have done every year, reminding people that Bloody Sunday was not just about the people who were killed, not just about the city and it was not just the first of many killings that broke our hearts for thirty years, this was different.

"This was a day when the British Government policy which had started weeks and months before, came to fruition on the street.

"Internment was introduced to try and break the people. They have responded with more marches and strikes. People tend to forget history, but nowhere in the six counties has forgotten.

"It was that kind of mass action that the British Government was afraid of. They were afraid of the marches as a result.

"It is the same today, what they are afraid of is this here. They are not afraid of the lone gunman, they are not afraid of the sniper, they are not afraid of the secret army. They can infiltrate, they recruit agents out of them.

"What they are afraid of is this here. Masses of people who won't quit. People who will tell their children and their grandchildren.

"If I don't see the British Government in the dock, my children, my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren will see them in it some day."

https://www.derrynow.com/news/derry-news/732173/one-thing-that-is-certain-bloody-sunday-will-never-be-forgotten.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0IYJ29T5Ft62ic8HG6lViFyLgJN6Bh2szGupNNu0feG-J4t6KDtgt2QrLY



The establishment media has not said too much about a general strike which swept across Ireland because of Derry's Bloody

Sunday – resulting in the burning 🌍 of Dublin's British Embassy on Wednesday February 2 1972. Listen to a fascinating account by historian Brian Hanly here : <https://www.leftarchive.ie/podcast/35-bloody-sunday-reactions-in-the-republic-of-ireland/?fbclid=IwAR2Z1L0Ur9K5oSTq3iYaDfsEpJLGazkTCSawrRss0HyXy8B10qA7gq6hxXo>

In summary, let us record : In 1972 the Dublin Government caught up with the public mood across Ireland and declared a "National Day of Mourning" on the day of the funeral for the 13 civilians murdered by the British Army Paratroop Regiment on Derry's Bloody Sunday. A general strike swept across Ireland, giving a mandate to people on a huge march – Called by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions – who burned the British Embassy to ashes. Wednesday February 2 1972 – A day to be proud of a Risen People in Dublin.

John Meehan January 30 2022

Bernadette Devlin delivers a proletarian protest on Monday 31 January 1972

[Bernadette Devlin delivers a proletarian protest \(31/01/1972\) – YouTube](#)



Bernadette Devlin delivers a proletarian protest (31/01/1972)

Bernadette Devlin McAliskey won two parliamentary elections in Mid-Ulster as “Unity” and an Independent Socialist. She took her seat in the House of Commons, unlike the abstentionist wing of the Republican Movement, and used it as a platform across the British Isles to stand up for workers’ rights. She lost her seat in 1974 when the Social Democratic & Labour Party stood against her and handed the seat to a conservative Unionist. She survived an assassination attempt by loyalist paramilitaries. Bernadette went on to stand in Dublin for the Irish Parliament (Dáil Éireann) as a candidate of the Irish section of the Fourth International and she still speaks at revolutionary socialist meetings to this day – here is her speech on the 100th anniversary of the Irish Easter Rising to a [meeting of British Fourth International supporters](#) in 2016 in London: <https://youtu.be/J9QCArSU3-g>

Scotland's renewables sell-off – right direction, wrong road!

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was over the moon when she reacted to the outcome of last week's sale of rights to develop wind farms off the coasts of Scotland, *writes Iain Bruce for ecosocialist.scot*.

The [ScotWind](#) auction of licenses to 17 projects covering 7,000 km² of seabed could lead to the generation of another 24.8GW of clean energy in the next ten years or so. That's two-and-a-half times the amount the Scottish government had expected, and two-and-a-half times the offshore wind capacity that Scotland currently has operating or soon to come online. It would effectively double the entire installed wind energy capacity of the UK, including offshore and onshore – providing, in theory, enough electricity to power more than half, possibly three quarters, of all the homes in Britain. Obviously, this could be a significant step towards decarbonising the energy supply this decade, which is essential to keep global warming increases below the critical level of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

On the main BBC Scotland news that night, Sturgeon said the nearly £700 million due to her government in option fees was just the start. As the projects were implemented, she expected £1 billion in supply chain investment for every 1GW of power generated. She called it “truly historic” in terms of the scale of the opportunity. An industry representative was even more fulsome. For Scotland this was a moment akin to the beginning of North Sea Oil in the 1970s. Two days later, the

First Minister tweeted a screenshot of a Zoom meeting she'd just held with executives from the multinational energy companies that had won the rights. They include BP, SSE and Shell, from the UK and the Netherlands, Iberdrola, the Spanish parent company of Scottish Power, as well as Vattenfall of Sweden, Falcke Renewables of Italy, Baywa of Germany and Deme of Belgium. Nicola Sturgeon said they'd told her how they would help to put Scotland at the forefront of offshore wind power globally.

ScotWind auction slammed

The ScotWind auction was immediately slammed by some on the left of the pro-independence movement. Their criticism centred on the fact that the licences had gone to foreign companies with little guarantee that future benefits, or jobs, would come to Scotland. Robin McAlpine, the former director of Common Weal, pointed out that the amount those companies paid for their licences was a pittance compared with what they can expect to make from selling the electricity they generate – they could pay it off with a couple of days' wind, he claimed. He also calculated that, per Gigawatt, it was barely a third of what the Scottish government had said it hoped to bring in.

These are serious arguments, and in the week since the auction results were announced they have gained traction in some expected, and unexpected quarters. [Conter](#) used a simplified version to denounce an alleged irrevocable turn to the right by the Scottish Green Party – a misplaced and somewhat sectarian criticism towards the base of the Scottish Green Party in our view. Anas Sarwar, the leader of the Scottish Labour Party, attacked the Scottish government at First Minister's questions in the Holyrood Parliament for selling out Scottish jobs and selling off Scottish assets *"to foreign multinationals with woeful human rights records"* (sic). He echoed the Common Weal argument that the Scottish National Party (SNP) administration's failure to deliver on its promise

to set up a state-owned energy company had led to this new “*privatisation*”. Neil Mackay went over the top in The Herald and accused the SNP of “Thatcherism-lite”. Common Weal has now developed its case in more detail in a 14 page report just published, entitled “[ScotWind: Privatising Scotland's Future Again](#)”. The left-wing Labour MSP, Mercedes Villalba, retweeted the report approvingly, demanding “*socialist ambition*” and a “*people's government*” that would “*advance democratic worker ownership of the economy*”.

Sovereignty

The counter argument, not only from the SNP but from some on the radical left of the pro-independence movement, points to the ever-present issue of sovereignty.

It questions some of the basic premises of the Common Weal argument, in particular the possibility of a devolved Scottish government, given the current limitations on its legal and fiscal powers, establishing a public energy company capable of taking on an electricity generation project of the kind and scale of ScotWind. It points out that these limitations are precisely one of the strongest arguments for independence. The reasoning runs something like this:

After the 2014 Independence Referendum, one concession from the government in Westminster was to transfer to Holyrood complete control over Crown Estate Scotland, the body that granted the ScotWind licences. That means the Scottish government is now, effectively, the landlord of the seabed up to 200 miles off Scotland's very large foreshore. As landlord, it can charge for the licences to exploit the resources, as it just has done, and when production begins it will be able to charge rent.

This is also the means by which onshore wind farms have already been bringing in a tidy sum for some of Scotland's big private landowners. Although such deals are shrouded in

secrecy, as far back as 2012 the Earl of Moray was reckoned to be making £2 million a year from the 49-turbine farm on his Doune estate in Perthshire, and the Duke of Roxeburghe just a bit less from a slightly smaller development in Lammermuir Hills. On a similar basis, the Scottish government might be able to charge as much as £400 million a year in rent, according to some calculations, as and when all the ScotWind projects start to generate electricity, although the Common Weal report estimates this income at between £50 and 90 million a year. In either case, it is still a pittance compared with what the companies stand to make.

Reserved power

However, the argument continues, energy policy itself, including taxation, regulation and ownership, remains a legal power reserved for the UK government. That means firstly that the tax paid by the corporations on their profits from wind power will go into the coffers of the Westminster government, not Holyrood. Nor would Holyrood benefit from the substantial fees for connection paid to the national grid.

Secondly, it remains very unclear what levers the Scottish government could use to ensure the companies keep their promises – for example to create supply chain jobs in Scotland – or even to control where the energy goes. There is currently nothing like the capacity to bring ashore and distribute an extra 25GW of clean energy, and apparently no plan to install the connections required, so it is likely that the companies will choose immediately to re-export a large part of the wind energy to Europe.

Thirdly, and perhaps most decisively, under the existing constitutional settlement, the Scottish government cannot nationalise all or part of the industry in order to ensure its aims are met. The National Energy Company mooted by the Scottish government in 2017 was an electricity **distribution**

company. The idea seems to have fallen victim to the pandemic and the more recent crisis in the UK's gas retail sector that has led to the collapse of over 20 energy distribution companies. There appears to be some doubt about whether the Scottish government with its current powers could set up an electricity generating company, but even if it could, it seems certain that the fiscal limits on Holyrood's ability to borrow would mean it could never raise anything approaching the amount of investment required to develop offshore projects on the scale of the ScotWind ones.

Alternative – towards radical independence

Whichever side of this argument you come down on, the issues of revenue and control, ownership and sovereignty, must be an important part of the alternative we need to develop as Scotland moves towards independence. The experience of other small, resource-rich countries, combining measures of nationalisation, raising royalties and rewriting the service contracts on offer to multinationals, may have useful lessons here, both positive and negative. And the efforts of Bolivia or Venezuela in the first decade of this century, to assert sovereignty over their natural resources **and** redirect revenue towards social spending, may have a lot more to teach us in this respect than Norway.

But these aspects are not enough. On their own they risk leaving us with a narrow nationalist, technocratic response, which will certainly be insufficient to address the gravity of the global climate crisis we face, and the depth of the changes we need in the ways we live. They have to be integrated into a wider, deeper, more ambitious and more urgent vision of the transition ahead, one that is inspired by the principles of climate justice that were expressed so impressively on the streets of Glasgow in November. If there

is one thing that we should have learned from the breadth and diversity of the protests during COP26, it is that such climate justice is inseparable from social justice, in all its dimensions. That means bringing together the rights of workers and working-class communities in the global north, including those who are affected by the dismantling of fossil industries, with the rights of those in the global south who are most affected by climate change, especially women, Indigenous communities and the migrants who will be forced to move on an ever vaster scale (including to Scotland), and with the rights of nature itself (something a future Scottish state should write into its constitution, following the example first set by Ecuador back in 2008).

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GMB trade union members, including striking bin workers, turned out for the Fridays For the Future demonstration in Glasgow on 5 Nov

Building a Vision

That vision needs to build out from three main pillars.

Firstly, we need **a transition that is just** – in the full sense of the word. Of course everyone, including the Scottish government, *talks* about a just transition. But it is not enough just to mention, or hope, that wind farms and other renewables will create thousands of jobs for those whose jobs must go in oil and gas. We need a planned transition which includes both, and many other kinds of job too, where the workers and the communities involved are not just consulted, but play a leading, decision-making role, so that they can choose and exert control over their own futures. We need not just some “green jobs” but a complete refocus and massive change to develop what has been called “green, purple and red jobs”.

Secondly, we need a profoundly different grasp of **what we are transitioning from and to**, and a much more creative vision of how to do it. We must not think of renewable energy simply replacing fossil fuel energy, so that electric cars can replace petrol ones while everything else goes on more or less as is. We need to reduce sharply the amount of energy we use, and that means radical changes to the ways we travel, where we live and where we work, how we heat our homes or obtain our food, and indeed profound changes to what we value for a good life, over and above the consumption of more and more stuff – stuff that too often has been hauled backwards and forwards across the globe before it gets to us. This means we also need a wider rethink of how we produce our energy. Obviously, nobody wants just to switch off the lights, so we may still need some large-scale clean energy generation projects like ScotWind. And the complexities of technology, supply chains and finance may leave us with no choice but to do some

business with big energy companies, for a limited period and on strictly regulated conditions. But all this needs to be put alongside, and subordinated to, a new emphasis on the local generation and consumption of clean energy – local energy that is publicly owned and controlled by the community.

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Thirdly, we need to make absolutely sure that **whatever we do to achieve this transition is not trashing the environment, living conditions or rights of other communities in other parts of the world, especially in the Global South**. Exactly how much balsa wood went into the wood resin sandwiched between fibre glass in those wind turbine blades? Which tropical forest was that balsa wood dragged out of? How much say did the people living there have, and how much benefit or destruction did it bring them? The same goes for the lithium in the batteries that will store all that clean energy. We can only ensure positive answers to these questions if we build on the close relations and solidarity with movements and communities in the South that flourished on the streets of Glasgow last November.

The transition to zero carbon has to be a shared and collaborative project across the world – part of a Radical Global Green New Deal – not a privilege for the North at the expense of the South.

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The Urgency of Independence

Here in Scotland, these three pillars are yet more arguments for the urgency of independence. They obviously cannot be achieved within the confines of the current devolution settlement. But this is also where the real weakness of the current Scottish government approach becomes clear. It is a weakness that runs much deeper than an alleged dispute over whether or not it could have set up a publicly owned generation company to take advantage of the ScotWind licences – important though that issue is.

The SNP-led administration likes to broadcast its green commitments, not totally without justification. Scotland's legally-enshrined target of zero carbon by 2045 is not nearly soon enough, but in Europe it is equalled only by Germany and Sweden. Scotland was the first and only country of the Global North to respond to the demands of governments in the South and make a symbolic pledge during COP26 – albeit a paltry £2 million – to a fund to pay for the loss and damage already suffered by those countries as a result of climate change. The latest ScotWind auction shows the government is taking seriously the need for big and rapid increases in renewable energy. Given the gravity of the climate crisis, these have to be good things, even if they are by a long way insufficient.

False Narrative of 'Net Zero'

The problem is that all of this is underpinned, and ultimately undermined, by the fact that Scottish government policy remains wedded, apparently unquestioningly, to the false narrative of *net zero* by 2045, with all its accompanying false solutions of negative emissions technologies and offsets, including carbon capture and storage (CCS), hydrogen, Bio Energy with CCS (BECCS) and nature based solutions to be used as offsets. This is the same narrative that the UK government as COP26 President worked hard to impose in Glasgow in

November; the same narrative that many fossil fuel companies are using to justify their continuing extraction of oil and gas through to the mid century and beyond; the same narrative that other core sectors of international capital, especially in finance, are using to back up their green capitalist revolution; and the same narrative that was called “The Big Con” by Friends of the Earth.

It is also the same narrative that was massively rejected by protesters on the massive demonstration in Glasgow on 6 November and throughout the COP.



Global Climate Justice campaigners march in Glasgow Nov 2021 (Photo: M Picken)

For core sections of the SNP leadership, this is a weakness that is embedded in their fundamental social democratic vision of society and economy, in their basic belief that, with a bit of a tweak and a bit more regulation, the free market can solve the greatest existential threat that humanity has ever faced. Well, it cannot! Many of the 100,000+ members of the SNP surely know that. So does the membership of their governmental partners in the Scottish Green Party. Even many Labour members and supporters know the free market does not work. That is why one of the greatest challenges now for climate activists in Scotland is to work with those people and with others, in the Indy movement, in the trade unions, on the

left, to *shift this narrative*, to dismantle the myth of net zero and encourage the movement onto a much more inspiring path – that of climate justice, which also means social justice and national justice.

26 January 2022

Iain Bruce is a member of ecosocialist.scot living in Glasgow

Catalonia: Police reveal complicity in hiding 2017 terrorist attacks to “scare” Catalan independence movement

The astonishing news revealed this month in Catalonia is that it has been confirmed that the Spanish state police deliberately refused to warn of an impending terrorist attack in Barcelona in order to “scare” the Catalan independence movement. Lorena Sorentes reports for ecosocialist.scot.

José M. Villarejo, the former police commissioner of the Spanish Police (“Policía Nacional”), has leaked serious information about the involvement of the Spanish intelligence services (the CNI) in the terrorist attacks that Barcelona and Cambrils suffered during summer in 2017 leading to the death of 15 people [These events are known in Catalonia by the date abbreviation “17A” – the caption in the picture above can be translated as “We Remember 17A”].

According to Villarejo, the CNI miscalculated their operation of intending to “scare” Catalonia a few months before the

independence referendum that was going to be held in October 2017.

Villarejo had been previously distanced from participating in the trial and investigation of the jihadist attacks, where as well as 15 deaths hundreds were also injured. But the judge gave him the opportunity to make a statement at the Spain's National Audience Court in Madrid in January. He accused the commander of the CNI of deliberating letting the Ripoll jihadist cell act carry out their terrorist plan. The intention of the CNI was to frighten the Catalan people and institutions as a punishment against the Catalan government's independence referendum, taking place across the nation on the 1st October; and that they gave the jihadist imam of Ripoll, whose extremist ideas were known by Spanish authorities, the opportunity to radicalise the perpetrators of the massacre in Barcelona and the parallel attacks in Cambrils and Alcanar.

The former police commissioner also declared that the CNI had been warned about the intentions of jihadists, linked to Daesh/"Islamic State", in the Catalan capital of Barcelona, but the intelligence services alleged there were not reliable sources to prove what would end up happening in Las Rambla, the main street in Barcelona at the centre of the attack where a terrorist van was driven into crowds on 17 August 2017.

The victims' families had asked for an investigation involving the Spanish intelligence agency, as they were suspicious of the connections between the CNI and the imam, and had opened a website to demand that the truth could come out as soon as possible. Some of them have been denouncing the obvious links that the Spanish institutions had with the Ripoll religious leader since the beginning of the trial, their demands being ignored by Catalan and Spanish authorities.

The fact that the terrorist activity was not reported due to its location (the Catalan nation) and political interests from the Spanish central administration shows how imperialist

states are capable of using undemocratic methods to suppress dissent if this threatens their authoritarian rule.



Tributes to those killed and injured in the 17A terrorist attacks

Solidarity with the uprising in Kazakhstan! Online meeting 22 January and updated Statement

Around 200 activists from over 40 countries have signed have signed a worldwide statement of solidarity with the uprising in Kazakhstan – published below.

The statement was coordinated by [Paul Murphy](#), an eco-socialist member (TD) of the parliament in the Republic of Ireland state and includes members of parliament in Ireland, Denmark and

Switzerland, city councillors in Greece and Sweden, a member of the European Parliament from the Spanish State, and dozens of trade union, socialist, and human rights activists from around the globe. ecosocialist.scot is delighted to sign the statement and among the other signatories from Scotland are Frances Curran, former Scottish Socialist Party Member of the Scottish Parliament and activist in Socialists for Independence, Glasgow SNP councillor Graham Campbell, members of the Republican Socialist Platform and ScotE3 organisations, and other trade union, community, independence and socialist activists.

The statement rejects the idea that the uprising in Kazakhstan is a result of foreign intervention but is about the rights and demands of working people sick of a tyrannical dictatorship. It calls for the overthrow of this dictatorship and the rights of working people to control democratically the vast natural resources and wealth of Kazakhstan. The statement also rejects the intervention of foreign troops from the Russian state and condemns the hypocrisy of the EU and USA.

There will be an online public meeting organised by the statement coordinators and supported by ecosocialist.scot on Saturday 22 January 6pm GMT/UTC. The meeting has also been sponsored by the Republican Socialist Platform in Scotland and Anti Capitalist Resistance (England/Wales). Sign up at: tinyurl.com/uprising2022



**Zoom meeting, Saturday, January 22nd, 10am PT / 6pm UTC/GMT
/ 19h CET**

Ainur Kurmanov, Socialist Movement Kazakhstan – with a report, Q&A and discussion.

This meeting is organized by **AntiCapitalist Resistance** (England and Wales), **Lernen im Kampf** (Germany), **RISE** (Ireland), **Reform & Revolution caucus** in DSA (USA). Supported by ecosocialist.scot and **Republican Socialist Platform** (Scotland).

Solidarity with the uprising in Kazakhstan

(Statement issued 12 January 2022)

We, socialists, trade unionists, human rights activists, anti-war activists and organisations have watched the uprising in Kazakhstan since 2 January with a sense of deep solidarity for the working people. The striking oil workers, miners and protesters have faced incredible repression. The full force of the police and army have been unleashed against them, instructed to ‘shoot to kill without warning’. Over 160 protesters have been killed so far and more than 8,000 have been arrested.

We reject the propaganda of the dictatorship that this uprising is a product of “Islamic radicals” or the intervention of US imperialism. There is no evidence of that whatsoever. It is the usual resort of an unpopular regime –

to blame 'outside' agitators.

Instead, the trigger of the protests was the rise in fuel prices. This was the straw that broke the camel's back, in a country where immense oil wealth exists side by side with terrible poverty and exploitation. It is also the result of the crushing weight of a brutal dictatorship on people's backs. This regime has liquidated all opposition parties, imprisoned and tortured trade union and human rights activists, and was responsible for a massacre of striking oil workers in Zhanaozen ten years ago.

The position of all the major capitalist powers is clear. Putin stands full square behind the regime. The Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) has sent 3,000 troops to Kazakhstan to intimidate protesters. Chinese President Xi Jinping also announced his support for the Kazakhstan government and claimed the unrest was the deliberate result of "outside forces."

The US administration has called for "restraint by both the authorities and protestors". The EU has similarly called on protesters to "avoid any incitement to violence" and called on authorities "to respect the fundamental right to peaceful protest and proportionality in the use of force when defending its legitimate security interests"!

Unsurprisingly, they all prioritise 'stability' for their oil companies who are benefiting from the exploitation of the natural resources and Kazakh workers.

In response to the class solidarity of the capitalist regimes, we respond with working class solidarity and commit to raise the following demands in our trade unions, parliaments and organisations:

- Solidarity with those rising up against the dictatorship in Kazakhstan

- *End the repression of the protests*
- *Release all the detained protesters and political prisoners*
- *No to Russian and CSTO intervention – withdraw the troops now*
- *No to the hypocrisy of the EU and US who equate the revolt of the masses with the brutal violence of the regime*
- *Down with the dictatorship*
- *Support the call from oil workers for nationalisation of the oil wealth and major industries under workers' control*
- *Support the building of an independent trade union movement and socialist movement in Kazakhstan*

Add your name to the solidarity statement

By filling in the form below and clicking the 'Sign the statement' button you are agreeing to have your name added to the public list of signatories of this statement and to be contacted with updates about future Kazakhstan solidarity statements and actions should they be needed.

Name

First Name

Last Name

*Email **

*Country **

*Organisation and/or your role **

Are you signing in a personal capacity?

☐ *I am signing in a personal capacity only, any organisation mentioned is for identification purposes only*

Sign the statement

Albania

Redi Muci

Aotearoa / New Zealand

International Socialist Organisation

Joe Carolan, Unite Union, Senior Organiser

Argentina

Christian Castillo, por la Dirección Nacional del Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas (PTS)

Nicolás del Caño, Diputado Nacional por la Provincia de Buenos Aires por el Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores – Unidad, dirigente del Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas (PTS)

Myriam Bregman, Diputada Nacional por la Ciudad de Buenos Aires por el Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores – Unidad, PTS, Abogada del CEPRODH – Centro de Profesionales por los Derechos Humanos

Alejandro Vilca, Diputado Nacional por la Provincia de Jujuy por el Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores – Unidad, dirigente del Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas (PTS)

Raúl Godoy, ex Diputado provincial de Neuquén por el Frente de Izquierda. Dirigente del PTS, ex Secretario General de SOECN (Sindicato de Obreros Ceramistas), obrero de la fábrica ex-Zanon recuperada por sus trabajadores

Eduardo Ayala, trabajador de Madygraf (ex Gráfica Donneley recuperada por sus trabajadores), PTS

Claudio Dellecarbonara, dirigente por la minoría de Asociación Gremial de Trabajadores del Subte y Premetro (AGTSYP) y referente de línea B de Subterráneos Buenos Aires. Diputado Provincial (Buenos Aires) electo por el Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores Unidad, PTS

Australia

Caitlin Doyle-Markwick, Solidarity (IST), Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Miroslav Sandev, Solidarity / Teacher's Federation

Luke Alexander, NTEU

Dani Cotton, National Tertiary Education Union, Branch Committee, University of Sydney

Susan Price

Mick Armstrong, Socialist Alternative, National Executive

Austria

Christian Zeller, Netzwerk Ökosozialismus, Global Ecosocialist Network, Professor of Economic Geography, University of Salzburg

Manfred Ecker, Gewerkschaft der Privatangestellten GPA, Member

David Heuser, Linkswende

*Heidi Specht, Arbeiter*innenstandpunkt*

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Chile's victorious "new left" brings hope, but it's all to play for

Former student activist Gabriel Boric, 35, will become the youngest president in Latin American history when he takes over as Chile's head of state this March *writes Franck Gaudichaud*. But with capital already taking flight and the right on the rise across the continent, he isn't in for an easy ride.

Many Chileans breathed a sigh of relief on the night of 19 December – not just in the headquarters of the Chilean left

but also in their homes and on social media – at news of the electoral defeat of the reactionary neoliberal far right, nostalgic for the old dictatorship (1973-89). José Antonio Kast had lost the presidential race to the leftwing coalition Apruebo Dignidad (AD, Approve Dignity), led by Gabriel Boric, an alliance of the Communist Party (PC), Frente Amplio (Broad Front, FA) and regional green parties. Crowds rejoiced in the streets of Santiago and nationwide. The sounds of car horns and singing went on late into the night. The former laboratory of neoliberalism had turned to the left.

The result had not been a foregone conclusion, however, given the high number of undecided voters. In the first round 53% of the electorate didn't vote, confirming a trend observed since Chile's transition to democracy in 1990 and especially pronounced since the end of compulsory voting in 2012: a huge abstention rate and growing disenchantment with a democratisation process characterised by uninterrupted neoliberalism and many lingering legacies from the dictatorship.

Between the two rounds of voting, Boric's campaign team tried to reach out beyond Santiago's middle-class, his core demographic, to remoter parts of the country, including rural areas and poor neighbourhoods. Their aim was to mobilise the abstainers and close the gap in areas where Kast had received strong support. It worked: turnout jumped to almost 56% in the second round, and for the first time over eight million Chileans voted. Boric beat Kast by more than ten points.

Boric's campaign manager Izkia Siches, 35, played a decisive role in this winning strategy, successfully revitalising the campaign. Siches, who was president of Colmed, the Chilean Medical College, during the pandemic, is known for her opposition to the incumbent president Sebastián Piñera's health policy. Early election data suggests that women, the working class and the young were the key factor behind the victory, contributing significantly to the almost one million

difference in votes between the candidates. The left did especially well in Santiago's poor western districts, scoring over 70% in some of them. Estimates indicate that 68% of women under 30 voted for Boric, while Kast won among people over 70 [1]

The first-round result was a surprise: Kast, a 55-year-old ultraconservative Catholic lawyer and father of nine, came first with 28%, ahead of Boric on 25.8%. However, hope of a decisive Boric victory remained, given his exceptional trajectory over the past decade: he had begun in the autonomous left of the 2000s, then led the University of Chile Student Federation (FECH) in 2011, during the great mobilisation of young people for "free, public, quality" education.

Reformist and post-neoliberal

He entered parliament in 2013 as an independent without any party support, an achievement in the Chilean electoral system, which favours coalitions of centrist parties over independents. He was then re-elected alongside figures from the student movement such as Camila Vallejo of the Communist Party and Giorgio Jackson, who became his right-hand man. Boric and Jackson co-founded the FA in 2017, strategically positioning it between the historical Communist left, whose touchstones were Castro and Bolívar, and the traditional parties of the old centre-left Concertación, the coalition of the Socialist Party and Christian Democrats which governed from 1990 to 2010 and was reviled for its faithful adherence to neoliberalism.

This institutional, frenteamplista (broad-front) "new left" which sought to be reformist and post-neoliberal, was a far cry both from the "radical left" label that the international press lazily applied to it and the accusations of communism in Chile's dominant media. Winning the primaries against the very

popular (and more leftwing) Communist mayor of Recoleta, Daniel Jadue, Boric and the FA saw their tactics pay off.

Boric's presidential manifesto contained a new fiscal policy aimed at taxing the wealthy and the big companies to fund social reforms. These included public health; education; the return of the pension system (privatised by General Pinochet) to state control; the legalisation of abortion and the promotion of the rights of women and sexual minorities; the quest for a greener economy; and the negotiation of new fundamental rights for the Mapuche people.

High turnout against far right

This platform successfully rallied people from far beyond Apruebo Dignidad. But the spectacular increase in turnout in the second round – especially in the cities, and in regions that had been hostile to the left in the first round (such as the northern port city of Antofagasta) – was above all a reaction to the emergence of the far right, at whose rallies pro-Pinochet chants were often sung. So some Chileans voted against Kast as much as for Boric, as demonstrated by the many declarations by social and feminist collectives and organisations, such as the Popular Assembly of La Granja in Santiago, which lent its support to “stand up to fascism”, without giving Boric carte blanche. [2]

In his first speech as president-elect, Boric stressed he would serve as president for all Chileans, and alluded to Salvador Allende, the socialist president who died in the 1973 coup. He also reiterated his support for the ongoing constitutional process, “a source of world pride”: “For the first time in our history we are writing a constitution in a democratic and equal manner ... Let us all take care of this process so that we have a Magna Carta that is a meeting point and not a source of division.”

Following the October 2020 referendum and the election of a

Constitutional Convention by universal suffrage last May, Chile is at last on track to replace the 1980 constitution inherited from Pinochet. [3] The traditional centre-left and centre-right parties are in a minority in this body, which is dominated by independents (partly from social movements, especially feminist and indigenous peoples' organisations) and representatives of the left from the PC and the FA. Kast, by contrast, has consistently expressed a wish to scupper the constitutional project.

Boric has said he plans to implement "structural changes without leaving anyone behind; grow economically; convert what are for many consumer goods into social rights regardless of wallet size", but he has also sought to reassure his opponents by promising to be "responsible". In the period between the two rounds of the election he reorientated his programme towards the centre, angering the Communists.

Boric began to look more like the parties in the former Concertación, even adding some of their most prominent economists to his team – such as the former head of Chile's central bank Roberto Zahler and the ultra-liberal Ricardo Ffrench-Davis – to try to "reassure the markets". In addition to seeking the support of former social-liberal presidents Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet, Boric addressed business leaders at its Enade 2021 convention.

Crisis in "neoliberal paradise"

Having committed to respecting the austerity budget for 2022 passed by Congress, he revised his fiscal ambitions downwards: his plans to raise new taxes have progressively gone from the equivalent of 8% of GDP over two mandates to a much more modest objective of 5% over four or five years, depending on the economic growth rate. This change was presented as a sign of his fiscal "responsibility" and determination to control inflation. But the issue of inequality (the richest 1% capture

about a third of Chile's income), precarity and debt are at the root of the crisis in this "neoliberal paradise". [4] The themes of crime and drug trafficking also appeared in Boric's speeches, a response to Kast's successful deployment of the language of security.

According to New York Times journalist Binyamin Appelbaum, what Gabriel Boric is defending is simply "social democracy"; in no sense could his project be called "communist". [5] Despite the – often fake – alarm of Kast supporters, Boric has never mentioned the possibility of even partial nationalisation of the country's vast natural resources, currently in the hands of the multinationals and bourgeois exporters. Chile possesses huge lithium and copper deposits, but Boric has spoken only of increasing the "royalties" that private operators pay. Allende nationalised copper, which he called "Chile's salary", but that doesn't feature in the programme of this "new left", and its Communist allies don't believe that the time is yet right to raise the question of nationalisations.

Despite the victorious coalition's caution, some of the elite still regard it suspiciously. The stock market and the currency both plunged at the news of the result. The day after the election, Ignacio Walker, a former Christian Democrat minister and paragon of "Chilean-style" neoliberalism, expressed concern about whether the "social democratic" and "reformist" orientation of the newly elected government – which he welcomed – would turn out to be a façade for a return to the "'refounding' zeal that has characterised the Communist Party and the Broad Front parties". [6]

The Communists' participation in the government is a cause for concern in high places, and for some it raises the spectre of a return to the "Chilean path to socialism" and Popular Unity, the coalition that backed Allende (1970-73). However, the PC has insisted it will respect Boric's commitments, as when it showed moderation in joining the "New Majority" at the start

of Michelle Bachelet's second term (2014-18).

'Social peace and the new constitution'

Some of the social movements of the left have criticised Boric, as they are less concerned than he is with achieving consensus. As a result, the label of amarillo (yellow) has sometimes stuck to him. He has indeed remained vague on the Mapuche question (especially their right to self-determination and the restitution of ancestral lands) and the issue of labour law. He has opted not to support the proposal for a general amnesty for those the social movements refer to as the "political prisoners of the revolt" (of October 2019), some of whom have been in prison or under house arrest for two years without trial.

This inevitably brings up the president-elect's controversial role in the protests of October 2019, an explosion of rage at the "neoliberal model" that nearly toppled the Piñera government and was met with a level of state repression unseen since 1990. Boric is one of the deputies who in November 2019 helped devise the agreement for "social peace and the new constitution", which was signed by the right and centrists but rejected by the PC and some of the FA, who condemned it as a stitch-up that ignored the will of the protesters. Some activists regard this agreement, which enabled the establishment of the Constitutional Convention, as a lifeline for Piñera and an attempt to channel the protests into institutions while the country was in a state of emergency.

A month later, Boric also voted for the even more controversial "anti-barricade law", which gave legal backing to state repression at a time when the police's human rights abuses were being severely criticised at home and abroad. Boric and his FA colleagues later apologised for voting with the right. Finally, in a region where the left shows

unconditional support for the Cuban revolution, some saw Boric's support for the 2021 Cuban anti-government protests as a betrayal.

The spirit of rebellion of October 2019 is very much alive in Chilean society. It was evident in the slogans the crowd chanted as they celebrated the left's victory on the streets and in Santiago's renamed Dignity Square on 19 December. And even if the territorial assemblies have lost their dynamism after months of pandemic and economic crisis, many demands for social justice remain and the fire of revolt is still smouldering.

The new president, who's a former activist and excellent organiser, knows this. He has promised a "fairer Chile" and "to extend social rights", while acknowledging that "the days ahead will not be easy"... Already, the country is experiencing considerable capital flight, which will reduce his room for manoeuvre. He will have to deal with a legislature that will be largely hostile, because even though the old parties were excluded from the second round of the presidential election after finishing third and fourth in the first round, they maintain their presence at municipal and regional level and in Congress.

Tough negotiations ahead

The right won a Senate majority in November's parliamentary election. The lower house is split between the left/centre-left and right/far-right. The parliamentary left is stronger, especially the Communists (with 12 seats) and Apruebo Dignidad, with 37 (in a 155-seat body), while at the same time it has consolidated its municipal base in key cities such as central Santiago, Valparaíso, Viña del Mar and Valdivia. But progressive politicians face tough negotiations over any major reform with the centrists and the parties of the former Concertación coalition, which Boric has long disdained and which remains hostile to any significant change.

And though Kast has just lost a battle, he is far from defeated. His rise may only just be beginning. That, at any rate, was his message to his supporters on the night of his defeat. The “Chilean Bolsonaro” wants to keep making advances: as the brother of an economy minister under the dictatorship and son of a German Nazi, he might seem a throwback to the old authoritarianism of the 1980s.

But that would be to underestimate a phenomenon at work throughout Latin America: the emergence of radical rightwingers, who mobilise moral discourse, the evangelical churches and Catholic hardliners, xenophobic agitation against migrants and fear of feminist gains and the LGBTQ movement. Kast congratulated himself for entering parliament in force with 15 deputies (and one senator), at a time when the traditional right retains its hegemony in the conservative arena, even if it has decreased from 72 to 53 deputies.

Undoubtedly, the Chilean people have won an important victory, which explains this election’s regional and global impact. But now the real work begins.

Source: Translated by George Miller for [Le Monde diplomatique \(English edition\)](#).

Footnotes

[1] *La Tercera*, Santiago de Chile, 20 December 2021

[2] Marco Teruggi, ‘De la abstención al voto anti-Kast: las razones de protagonistas del estallido’ (Abstaining from the anti-Kast vote), *Sputnik Mundo*, 17 December 2021.

[3] See Franck Gaudichaud, ‘Who wins in Chile’s new constitution?’, *Le Monde diplomatique*, English edition, April 2021.

[4] See Luis Sepúlveda, ‘Chile, no peaceful oasis’, *Le Monde diplomatique*, English edition, January 2020.

[5] *Diario Financiero*, Santiago, 8 December 2021.

[6] *El Mostrador*, Santiago, 20 December 2021.

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Reprinted from International Viewpoint, 13 January 2022, <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7478>

Protests rise against repression in Kazakhstan

An uprising has begun in Kazakhstan but has been met by brutal repression and a Russian intervention. ecosocialist.scot condemns the repression and supports the uprising. We reproduce statements from Russia, Kazakhstan and a report on London protests. Further coverage to come.

For a democratic and socialist Kazakhstan! Stop the intervention, release the detainees! Statement of

the Russian Socialist Movement

Mass protests have been going on in Kazakhstan for several days. The detonator of the uprising was the rise in prices for liquefied gas, but it is obvious that the contradictions, which eventually led to a social explosion, accumulated in Kazakhstan for years.

At the moment, the protesters are forming their own self-governing bodies, in some cities administrative buildings and offices of law enforcement agencies have been taken by storm.

Despite the fact that the country's nominal president, Kosym-Zharmat Tokayev, tried to calm the people down by freezing gas prices and the resignation of the government, the protests only intensified and entered a new phase, which speaks of deep-rooted discontent with authoritarian-bureaucratic capitalism in Kazakhstan.

The vanguard of the protest is the working class, and we are convinced that only it will be able to carry through to the end the democratic transformations, without which the struggle for freedom, democracy and socialism is impossible. Only the working people and all the progressive forces of Kazakhstan will be able to bring the revolution to its goal, without looking back at the lulling speeches of the government and not handing over the fate of the protest into the hands of "democratic" opposition politicians.

We stand in solidarity with the insurgent people of Kazakhstan, demanding:

- Immediately release all detained protesters and political prisoners.*
- Stop the military intervention of the CSTO member states.*

We call on the Kazakh left to participate in the protests and defense of Kazakhstan against military incursion. Introduce a

socialist agenda into the program of the insurgent people of Kazakhstan and build their own independent political organization.

The statement was signed by:

- *Russian Socialist Movement,*
- *Executive Committee of the movement “Labor Russia”,*
- *Altleft.org website editorial office,*
- *Interregional Coalition of Left Forces “Left Bloc”,*
- *Marxist Tendency.*

6 January 2022

Reproduced from Fourth International/International Viewpoint:

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7469=>

Statement of the Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, there is now a real popular uprising. From the very beginning the protests were of a social and class nature, as the doubling of the price of liquefied gas on the stock exchange was only the last straw in the overflowing cup of patience. After all, the protests began in Zhanaozen on the initiative of oil workers, which became a kind of political headquarters for the entire protest movement.

The dynamics of this movement are indicative as it started as a social protest, but then it began to expand, and the labour collectives used the meetings to put forward their demands for a wage increase of 100%, the cancellation of the results of optimisation, the improvement of labour conditions and freedom of trade union activity. As a result, as early as 3

January the entire Mangistau region was gripped by a general strike, which spilled over into the neighbouring Atyrau region.

As early as 4 January, oil workers at Tengizchevroil, where American companies have a 75% stake, went on strike. It was there that in December last year 40,000 workers were laid off and a new round of layoffs was planned. They were supported later in the day by oil workers of Aktobe and West Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda regions.

Moreover, in the evening of the same day, strikes of miners of Armelormittal Temirtau in Karaganda region and of copper smelters and miners of Kazakhmys corporation began what is essentially a general strike in the whole extractive industry of the country. There were also demands for higher wages, lowering of the retirement age, the right to trade unions and strikes.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, open-ended strikes already started in Atyrau, Uralsk, Aktyubinsk, Kyzyl-Orda, Taraz, Taldykorgan, Turkestan, Shymkent, Ekibastuz, in towns of Almaty region and in Almaty itself, where barricading of streets during the night of 4-5 January led to the open clash of demonstrators with the police, as a result of which the city administration was temporarily seized. This gave Kassym-Jomart Tokayev grounds for declaring a state of emergency.

It should be noted that these demonstrations in Almaty were mainly composed of unemployed youth and internal migrants, living in the suburbs of the megalopolis and working in temporary or low-paid jobs. And attempts to placate them with promises to reduce gas price to 50 tenge, separately for the Mangistau region and Almaty have not satisfied anyone.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's decision to dismiss the government, and then to dismiss Nursultan Nazarbayev, the chairman of the Security Council, did not stop the protests either, as mass

protest rallies began on 5 January in those regional centres of Northern and Eastern Kazakhstan, where there were none before – in Petropavlovsk, Pavlodar, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Semipalatinsk. At the same time, in Aktobe, Taldykorgan, Shymkent and Almaty, attempts were made to take the buildings of regional administrations by storm.

In Zhanaozen itself, the workers formulated new demands in their indefinite rally – the resignation of the current president and all Nazarbayev officials, the restoration of the 1993 Constitution and the related freedoms to create parties and trade unions, the release of political prisoners and the end of repression. The Council of Aksakals [Elders] was established as an informal governing body.

In this way, demands and slogans were transmitted to the entire movement, which are now used in various cities and regions, and the struggle was given a political content. There are also attempts on the ground to create committees and councils to coordinate the struggle.

At the same time, troops were brought to Almaty, Aktau and Zhanaozen. While in the Mangistau region, all passed peacefully, and the soldiers refused to disperse demonstrators, in the southern capital skirmishes began, and during the night of January 5 to 6 special forces were brought in to cleanse by force the airport and the neighbourhoods occupied by the insurgents. According to various reports, dozens of demonstrators have been killed.

In this situation there is a danger that all protests and strikes will be violently suppressed and the country must be completely paralysed by a general strike. It is therefore urgent to form united action committees along territorial and industrial lines to offer organized resistance to the military-police terror.

In this connection we also need the support of the entire

international workers' and communist movement and left-wing associations, with the aim of organising a major campaign in the world.

The socialist movement in Kazakhstan demands:

An immediate cessation of hostilities against its people and the withdrawal of troops from the cities!

The immediate resignation of all Nazarbayev officials, including President Tokayev!

Release of all political prisoners and detainees!

Ensuring the right to form their own trade unions, political parties, and to hold strikes and meetings!

Legalisation of the activities of the banned Communist Party of Kazakhstan and the Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan!

We call on all workers and employees of the country to implement in practice the demand of the murdered oil workers of Zhanaozen – to nationalize, under the control of labour collectives, all extractive and large-scale industry in the country!

Reproduced from Fourth International/International Viewpoint – <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7468>=

Report of London Picket of Kazakhstan Embassy

Around 50 people braved teeming rain and the challenges of travelling during the pandemic to protest against the barbarous actions of the Kazakh regime against its own people, writes Terry Conway.

Called by [AntiCapitalistResistance](#) (ACR) and supported by the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), [Labour Representation Committee](#) (LRC), [rs21](#), [Workers Power](#), [Socialist Alternative](#), [Workers Liberty](#) and a number of individual activists, people had been galvanised by the speed and depth of working class resistance to the major attacks on their living standards that the removal of the price cap on liquefied gas – and then outraged by the repression that followed.

Russia sent 2,500 troops into the country, on Thursday in response to an appeal from President Tokayev who was clearly worried he was losing control. The night before the rally, Tokayev ordered troops to shoot to kill protestors, who he has consistently labelled “outside agitators”. It is difficult to know how many have been murdered – even the BBC balks at using Tokayev’s term of “eliminated” without comment. Certainly thousands have been arrested.

Meanwhile China’s President Xi also expressed support for the regime. While the European Union is worried about Russian intervention, it makes little criticism of the Tokayev regime, seeming to blame the protestors for the violence.... UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said: “People have the right to peaceful protest and freedom of expression. At the same time, protesters, no matter how angry or aggrieved they may be, should not resort to violence against others.”

Biden and his team have made similar comments.

Britain is certainly not absent from this gang of thieves. Johnson has echoed the comments of other world leaders in recent days – not a surprise when he welcomed the Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov to London in late November, saying he looked forward to working with him on “[global security](#)”.

And of course, as was pointed out at the protest, Tony Blair

acted as advisor to former president Nursultan Nazarbayev, in power for more than three decades until 2019 and who still has a significant influence.



The rally was chaired by the ACR's Simon Hannah who read part of the statement of the Kazakh Socialist Movement. Then we heard from Yuliya Yurchenko speaking on behalf of the Ukrainian Social Movement and Chris Ford from the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign who read messages from the Ukrainian Socialist League and from Ukrainian socialist writer and historian Marko Bojcun.



Other speakers were from Socialist Alternative, Pete Firmin from LRC, Steve McSweeney from Workers Power and journalist Paul Mason. Paul, as a member of the NUJ, sent particular solidarity to journalists in Kazakhstan, trying to disseminate news of the resistance under impossible conditions.

A police van arrived quite early on and spoke to the organisers but then moved back. During the speeches one of the protestors noticed the poster on the embassy window – Kazakhstan a great place to visit and amended it to Kazakhstan a great place to overthrow the president. Shortly afterwards

the police moved in and arrested the comrade and took him to Charing Cross police station, saying he would be charged with criminal damage.



This was despite the fact that others in the crowd removed the graffiti before he was taken away and took timed photographs to show no damage had in fact been done. A number of speakers made the point that the police were more concerned about protecting the property of a repressive murderous regime than respecting our democratic rights to protest. Such sentiments are undoubtedly bolstered by the Police bill wending its way through Westminster.

During the action at the embassy we heard that there was a gathering of the Kazakh community in Trafalgar Square and made our way to join them, The organisers who were clearly inexperienced, seemed nervous about being joined by the left, though they were happy to borrow our megaphone. Later John McDonnell MP who had been speaking at an event in another part of the square to mark the shameful 20th anniversary of

Guantanamo Bay came and addressed them so some links were made.

As Simon Pirani argues [here](#), the left needs to urgently discuss the most effective forms of solidarity we can develop with the people of Kazakhstan, of the other Eastern European countries and with those in Russia itself. The ACR is committed to being part of this process.

Thanks to Steve Eason for the photos.

10 Jan 2022

Reproduced from Anti Capitalist Resistance

<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/london-picket-of-kazakhstan-embassy/>

A Year In The Life of the Welsh Underground Network

One of the exciting developments in Welsh politics during 2021 was the creation of the [Welsh Underground Network](#) – a group of Marxist activists committed to independence for Wales and with an orientation towards community politics. Below we republish their review of the year written by secretary of the WUN, Joseph Jones who visited Glasgow and met with members of the [Radical Independence Campaign](#) and [ecosocialist.scot](#) in November during COP26.

As we have finally reached 2022, now's the time to reflect on the promises we made to ourselves this time 12 months ago, and what we've achieved in this long, and for many, difficult year.

At the risk of sounding like a Christmas advert – it's genuinely been a year like no other.

For the Organization I've been lucky enough to Chair for over two years – the Welsh Underground Network, it's been a year of amazing growth, of challenges, of triumphs, and of forging links – between ourselves, and the communities we operate in.

I thought I'd write this as a way to sum up the year we've had, to recollect, and to help us plot where we intend to go in 2022.

1: Becoming the WUN

The biggest thing to happen to us in 2021 has undoubtedly been the birth of the WUN itself.

In April 2021, we were thrilled to announce the [launch of Wrexham Underground](#) – our Chapter in North Wales. For the near two years previous, we had been solely Valleys Underground, but had dreams of expansion.

With Wrexham's dramatic launch – starting with a beautiful banner display across a busy motorway – we launched a National Organization, and have since had applications from across Wales.

In the last fortnight, we are thrilled to close off the year with the [launch of our Swansea Chapter](#) – bringing the total number of active chapters to three.

We've also managed to increase the number of working groups within the WUN itself. With the establishment of a [Women's Working Group](#), a [Trans Working Group](#), and a [POC Working Group](#), we are attempting to ensure the voices of everyone are not only included, but amplified, to ensure a Socialist Welsh Republic for all, not just some.

2: Events, events, events.

Despite the many, many, many limitations of the year, the WUN has been able to organize a variety of events and actions.

Starting off in 2019, our goal was to be active, be seen, and to do good work in the community. We've faced quite a few bumps along the way, but I'm immensely proud of the work our Members have done this year.

A point of pride has been our free food events.

From Wrexham City Center, to the Gurnos Shops in Merthyr, Blackwood, Swansea, Lansbury Park, and the Fernhill Estate, our Members have been active across Wales – providing hot food, hygiene products, and basic supplies to those who need them.



Members of our Wrexham Chapter conducting a free-food event. We've also been active in community clearups, helping work on the derelict Fernhill Allotments, helping renovate the Cefn Fforest Miner's Institute, and continuing our work with the Foundation for Jewish Heritage on the Merthyr Synagogue.



Members of our Valleys Chapter active in the Cefn Fforest Miner's Institute.

Members have also conducted a number of online events this year too. From our regular RedReads bookclub, to live-streamed panels, to [film screenings for charity](#), we have attempted to find new ways of reaching people due to the strains of Covid.

Members of the WUN have also been present at a variety of demonstrations in Wales this year.

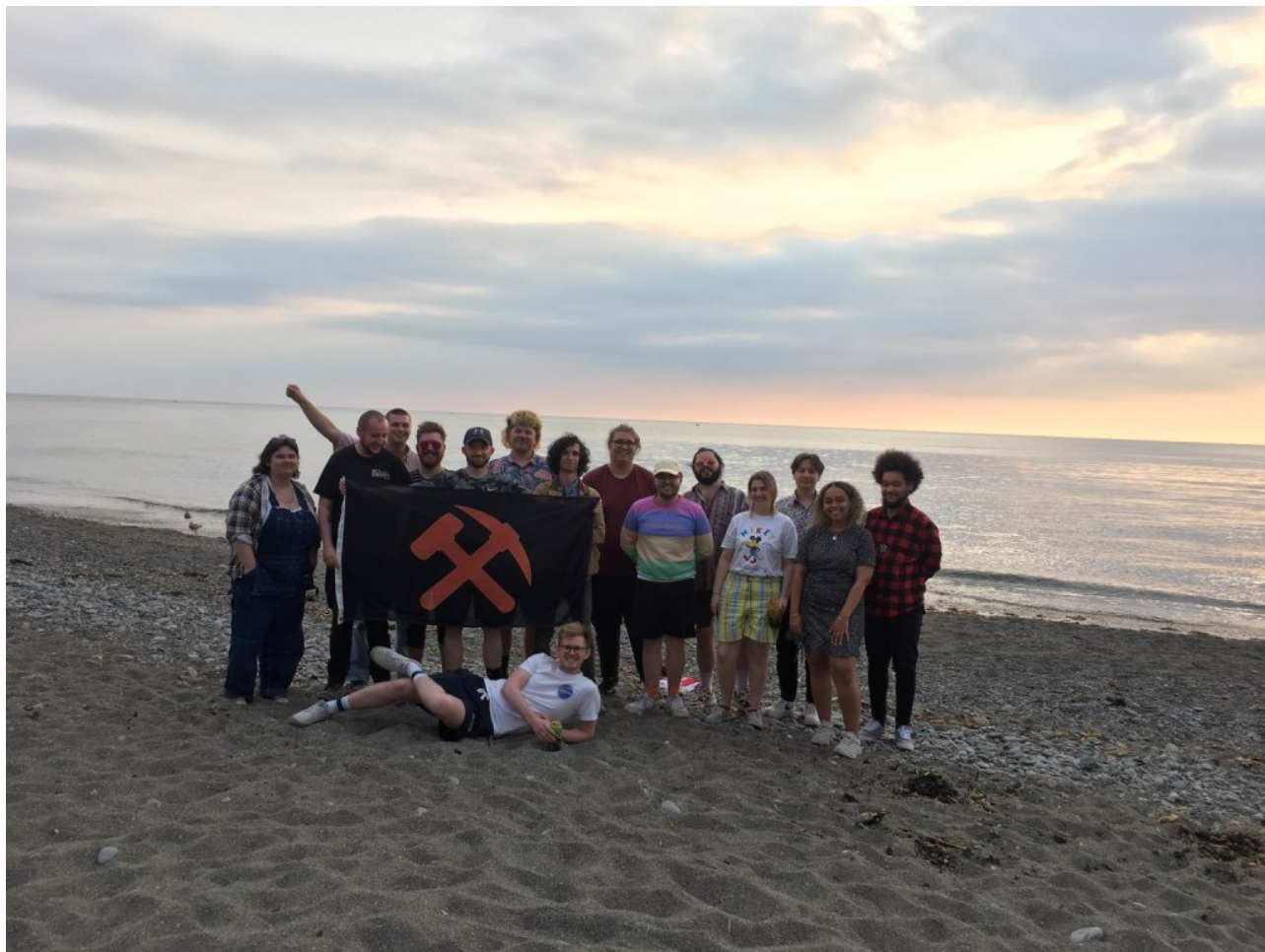
The disgusting, yet unsurprising horror in America regarding Racism has fuelled a cry across the world for basic justice.

In Wales, we have so much to do.

Our Members were in attendance at a variety of BLM protests, and have since made strong links with BLM's active campaigns across Wales.

Members have also participated in action regarding Kill the Bill demonstrations, building links with other activists in our fight against the encroaching erosion of our liberties by an increasingly authoritarian right-wing state.

In a momentous occasion for us, we also held [our first WUN Congress in Aberystwyth](#), where members from across Wales came together to socialise, create a Constitution, sort out internal affairs, and plan for the upcoming year.



Members at our first-ever WUN Congress in Aberystwyth.

3: Building links

As already mentioned, the WUN have increased our attempts to build links with other activists this year, making connections with groups and organizations not just in Wales, not just within the UK, but across the World.

Our Valleys Chapter were thrilled to host the Zapatistas this summer, giving a Radical History tour of Merthyr Tydfil to the delegation of Revolutionaries.

Some of our Members have also built links with

Internationalist groups, such as Palestine Action. In late November, members were 'allegedly' involved in an [action conducted by PA](#) in Wrexham against a Drone manufacturer.



...alleged Members of the WUN at the Palestine Action Occupation of Solvay Drone Materials Factory.

I myself was lucky enough to boost links on behalf of the WUN with the Radical Independence Campaign in Scotland this Autumn, [speaking at their COP26 Summit Event](#) on Revolutionary Nationalism.

4: The Walk



Yours truly, having just finished the WUN Long March (three months after starting...)

Speaking for myself, the year was marked largely by the WUN Long March. From August until November, roughly 70-odd days, [I walked and wild-camped the entirety of the UK – Land's End to John O'Groats.](#)

It was a hard slog, I won't lie. I had heatstroke, fell down a cliff, ruined two tents, and travelled through a variety of rough weather.

The result though was almost £2,000 raised for the WUN's community projects. I was pleased along the way to meet up with Socialist activists, and [build bridges with Groups and Organizations](#) on behalf of the WUN.

Conclusion

2021 for the WUN was a monumental year, perhaps the best year of our existence. We've had challenges, of course, but what our Members have achieved has been phenomenal.

I would like to thank everyone on behalf of the WUN for your support, your patronage, and your aid in making 2021 a year like no other.

In 2022, let's make this the year of action, of physical aid, and of new horizons.

We wish you all the very best for the coming new year, and hope you find what you're looking for.

Joseph Jones, Chair of the WUN. First published at <https://welshundergroundnetwork.com/2021/12/31/2021-the-year-in-review/>

The Island and the River

COP26 brought all the world and its political issues to the Clyde for a few weeks in November. Catching a quiet moment away from the demos and kettles, Paul Inglis [of ecosocialist.scot] spoke to Paul Figueroa, a prominent member of the Puerto Rican Independence Party visiting Scotland during the conference. Ranging across the history of the island and its politics, particularly the issues of climate change and imperialism, this interview presents the cause of

Puerto Rican independence to a Scottish audience.

Puerto Rico is not usually an island that occurs to the Scottish political imagination. Our international awareness, at least within the independence movement, is mostly centred on places like Catalunya and Wales, with an occasional (but rather reserved) glance at the Basques now and then. We draw lesson and inspiration, if at all, from a fairly small pool of contemporary national movements, and barely look beyond Europe in the process. Apart from fairly predictable Euro-centrism, this narrowness of outlook speaks to the fact that our most ready analogues are afforded by countries in similar social and economic situations.

Not just the enthusiasts of the left but most indymarchers would point out that Scotland has little in common with the historical experience of colonised nations like Egypt or Angola, never mind ongoing anticolonial struggles like those in Puerto Rico or the Mapuche lands. Scotland is simply not a colonised country (though of course one could speak of a form of internal colonialism practiced by both Scots and English against the Gaels) and only in the wildest dreams/tweets of certain sectors of the indy movement do the problems imposed on us by Westminster bear even slight resemblance to anything visited upon the Kurds by the Turkish government.



As such, it is either by an unconscious or a tactful choice that we generally keep our eyes on European matters. This certainly avoids falling into ridiculous and insulting direct

comparisons between ourselves and peoples who are currently experiencing brutal, life-or-death struggles for freedom, but I also believe it can accidentally result in a different, and distinctly limiting, kind of euro-centrism, one that assumes offhand that little of the previous or current history of national liberation in Africa, Asia and Latin America can teach us anything.

So keen are we to not seem appropriative or offensive that we can risk ignoring great and helpful lessons. Just think about the challenges that the national question sets before Scottish socialists on a daily basis: What sort of classes (or fractions of classes) take part in the national movement? Where do the goals of the working class and the nationalist bourgeoisie/middle class diverge? How does imperialism constrict and hinder self-determination? How does the socialist movement orientate itself amidst all this? We should realise that these exact questions have troubled national movements past and present all over the globe, and that the ways in which they attempted to give answers yield a vast storehouse of reference material for us to consult. As long as we do not pretend that we can simple harvest direct or ready-made lessons, there is a lot that we can gain by looking beyond Europe, and we should not be afraid to do so.

It was for this reason that I was excited to sit down and speak to Paul Figueroa, a member of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), amid all the rush and activity of COP26. Paul, who stood as the PIP's candidate for council in San Juan during the 2020 elections, had come here during the conference on the invitation of Scotland's Radical Independence Campaign to speak at a meeting of the COP26 protest coalition's "Peoples' Summit", and to make international links and connections. Naturally then, it was the perfect opportunity to find out what the fight for Puerto Rican freedom can teach us here in Scotland.

My first question dealt with the topic that was on everyone's lips during those November weeks: Climate change. I asked Paul a question with two parts: What does climate change, and what would climate justice mean for Puerto Rico? Climate change is a bleak prospect in general, obviously, but for an island nation it is especially pressing. Paul said that "if austerity and privatisation don't kill off the Puerto Rican people, climate change will," pointing to the fact that for every one centimetre rise of the sea, the island loses a yard of coast. Not only this, but there is the impending threat of consistent drought and the danger that an increase in landslides means for a mostly mountainous country like Puerto Rico.

The problem with getting climate justice, Paul explained, is that the kinds of steps Puerto Rico must take to help tackle climate change are essentially blocked off by the economic interests of the United States of America. In the last year, the entirety of the island's energy grid was privatised, falling into the hands of an American company, Luma Energy, which has stated that it has no interest in pursuing green energy. Indeed, American interests have even pushed the Puerto Rican government to enact what Paul termed a "tax on the sun"-that is, a tax on anyone going off the fossil fuel-based grid to use solar power. As a Caribbean country, the green alternative for Puerto Rico is naturally solar energy, but Luma is standing in the way of this in favour of fossil fuels. Just as the grid is controlled by an American company, so too is the supply of coal and gas, most of which comes from the firm Applied Energy Systems. This leaves Puerto Rico dependent on the USA for energy when a safer, cleaner alternative is right at hand. And the fruits of this toxic, dirty dependency are dearly bought. Paul was stark on this point: "For island nations, climate change is a matter of life and death." To underline this, he gave the example of the town of Peñuelas, where the coal ash from the power plants is dumped. It has the highest rate of cancer and birth defects in Puerto Rico.

All of this for the profit margins of the Yankee coal industry, and the stuffed pockets of West Virginian members of congress. And they too, like Luma Energy, lobby the Puerto Rican government to keep their vested interests secure. In contrast to this, climate justice would mean an opportunity for Puerto Rico, and Puerto Ricans, to make their own climate policy, not lobbyists from Wall Street or Washington. This is a freedom that has long been denied the Puerto Rican people, held down as they are by the United States' political and economic imperatives. Considering a situation like that, Paul was not enthusiastic about COP26's significance for the island. Discussing Puerto Rico's lack of representation on international bodies like the United Nations, CARICOM (Caribbean Community), CELAC (Community of Caribbean and Latin American States) and the OAS (Organisation of American States), Paul argued that the island therefore lacks a seat at the table for global discussions and decisions which will be crucial for its future. Frustrated by "the posturing of the larger countries and leaders like Biden and Johnson", Paul felt that "they need to decide if they lead, follow or get out of the way" and let the countries with the most at stake have the deciding say.



Unavoidably, this talk of freedom to make choices, and the obstacles to that freedom, led into a discussion of the

colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico. How did this state of affairs, where the USA, and American businesses, can do what they like with Puerto Rico, come to be? In order to get an idea of why, I next asked for some historical background. Of course, the history of any land is a rich and varied ocean, and the story of Puerto Rico is no exception. Therefore, Paul aimed at giving me a quick gloss, one that covered the key points.

He started at the beginning of Puerto Rico's time as a colony, with the Spanish invasion of Borinquen, as the island is known in the indigenous Taino language, in 1493. From there stemmed three hundred years of indigenous and enslaved African rebellions, centuries of continuing struggle against imperial Spanish rule. One of the most important uprisings of this Spanish colonial period was el Grito de Lares (the Cry of Lares) in 1868. This was an insurrection, beginning in the town of Lares, which aimed at independence and a Puerto Rican republic- The first such national rebellion in the island's history. And while it may have been defeated, Lares was the birth of the Puerto Rican national consciousness, identity and flag. Thirty years later, the Spanish-American War saw Puerto Rico, as well as Cuba and the Philippines, wrenched from the grip of Spain by a new colonial overlord, the United States of America,

Any hopes that Puerto Ricans might have had for a better future without Spanish control were quickly dashed, as the American takeover precipitated a dramatic, costly change in the island's fortunes. Immediately following their victory, the United States devalued the currency by 40%, stopped Puerto Rico from controlling its own trade with other countries, and began breaking up the networks of small farmers that underpinned Puerto Rico's economy in favour of large scale, industrial sugar farming run by a handful of absentee American businesses. The result was a strengthening of the sort of export-crop monoculture that has thus far played such a

limiting, exploitative and destructive role in the history and ecology of the Caribbean. While the United States profited from its new colony, Puerto Rico came to be known during the Twentieth Century as “the Poorhouse of the Caribbean.”

Not just economic damage, but cultural oppression came with the Americans. Most blatantly, there was the attempt to make the Spanish language illegal, to anglicise the country. In a particularly crass move, the island’s name was even officially changed to the more Anglo-sounding “Porto Rico” from 1899 to 1932. Students of Russian history might here be reminded of the old empire’s attempts at forcibly “Russifying” its national minorities, or perhaps the long campaign against Gaelic by first the Scottish and then the British state has sprung to your mind. The Americans also attempted to clamp down on Puerto Rican holidays and foist their experiment with booze prohibition onto the island too.

These simultaneous cultural and economic troubles, and their joint link to the effects of American imperialism, meant that the independence movement and the workers’ movement became easily and naturally connected. Paul gave the example of how, from the 1930’s to the 1950’s, there were more than two hundred workers’ strikes, and almost all of them were led by the nationalist party. In 1950, the nationalists would take the fight for independence even further, renouncing pacifism and launching a war for independence that, like el Grito de Lares almost a century prior, was defeated. The years following this setback marked the most intense period of persecution for independence supporters, with the Americans bringing in a gag law which made the Puerto Rican national anthem illegal and banned meetings or discussion of both independence and socialism. This, coupled with the “Carpeteo”, the constant FBI and police spying on independence supporters, spurred the emergence of clandestine militant groups on the lines of the Guevarist guerrilla strategy popular across Latin America in that era.

These days did not yield a favourable environment for the PIP. Unlike the nationalist party and the guerrilla groups, the PIP does not uphold armed struggle as a strategy or tactic. But with the repressive Carpeteo making open organising for independence and socialism difficult, the PIP quickly went from being the main opposition party to a minority party, holding just two percent of the vote right up to the present day. As for the armed conflict, it would continue into the early 2000's, with the 2005 assassination of guerrilla leader Filiberto Ojeda Rios by the FBI marking something of a turning point for the independence movement- People who wouldn't necessarily have agreed with Ojeda Rios' methods or politics were incensed by his murder, and took to the streets protesting against U.S. intervention in Puerto Rican politics.

Paul saw this as one of the chief causes of a renewed interest in Puerto Rican independence since the millennium. Another lies in the concurrent dispute taking place over the island of Vieques, one which had a similar galvanising consequence for the movement. Vieques is an island of the Puerto Rican archipelago which the U.S. military used as a testing ground for above-ground and underwater bombs from 1941 onwards. After an American bomb accidentally killed David Sanes, a Vieques citizen, the PIP launched a campaign against bomb testing which saw activists sailing from the main island to Vieques on fishing boats to camp out on the beaches and occupy U.S. military property. Even with arrests and repression, the sustained militancy of the campaign led to a success, with the U.S. military withdrawing from Vieques in 2003. In a speech celebrating this victory, the president of the PIP, Rubén Berríos Martínez, said: "Yesterday Lares, today Vieques, tomorrow Puerto Rico!"

This recent history brought us up neatly to the matter of my next question, which turned on contemporary events and their significance for the Puerto Rican independence movement. Paul emphasised the importance of the Puerto Rican economic crisis,

which has been ongoing since 2006. To prop up the economy, the island's government has taken on a great deal of debt since the crisis- fifty billion dollars from 2006 to 2016, which dwarfs the twenty billion dollars of debt accumulated between 1952 and 2006. By 2016, the former governor Alejandro García Padilla had declared the debt unpayable, calling on the U.S. government to address the debt crisis.

At the level of normal peoples' lives, the figures Paul had for me were grim ones- From the beginning of the crisis in 2006, around a quarter of Puerto Rico's population has migrated away to the United States. There is a poverty rate of sixty percent, and the island is one of the top five countries of the world for income inequality. In a typical austerity response by the government, huge swathes of Puerto Rican society have been privatised- Healthcare, the highways, public transport, energy and sections of the education system. In particular, the marketisation of education can be seen in how university tuition fees have more than quadrupled since 2006.

The youth of Puerto Rico, the first-time voters of today, Paul continued, "are people who have never had a memory of Puerto Rico in prosperity, of Puerto Rico not in a time of crisis. They see no opportunity or future in their own country." A result of this is that the fear people have traditionally had that independence and socialism would cause massive poverty has tended to fall away. After all, Paul pointed out, Puerto Rican people "are living those conditions right now under a U.S. flag."

This growing discontent manifested in 2019 with the "Ricky Renuncia" protests against governor Ricardo Rosselló over the government's response to Hurricane Maria and his overall apathy to the problems of the people. From that movement, Paul traces a new openness to Puerto Rican independence and new youth participation in the electoral process, this from a youth that tends to be overwhelmingly pro-independence. An illustration of this is the PIP's recent electoral fortunes,

with an increase from two percent of the vote in 2016 to almost fifteen percent in 2020 during a five-way race. Paul was understandably very, very hopeful about these new developments among the youth.

Of course, the problems of austerity have continued to make life tough, especially because they are imposed from outside with little Puerto Rican say in the matter. There is the continuing issue of the Control Board, an unelected body of seven people chosen by the U.S. president and salaried with Puerto Rican tax money who are in charge of overseeing Puerto Rican finances and repayment of the debt. The board have proven voracious, bringing in a forty year long hike on sales tax and a forty year tax on electricity to make up for the period when energy was nationalised. PROMESA, the law that inaugurated the board, states that the Control Board will exist until Puerto Rico has had five consecutive years of balanced budget. However, the Board recently marked its fifth anniversary without a single year of balanced budget. Paul pointed out that like any austerity program, the point is not to save the economy but simply to perpetuate the problem, to asset strip and transfer whatever wealth isn't nailed down into rich pockets. In contrast to this, the PIP's position is that the Board should be abolished, PROMESA repealed, and Puerto Rico's debt should be forgiven. As ever, an essential part of any meaningful self determination is economic sovereignty.

Bringing things to a close, I asked Paul what importance the solidarity of other independence movements, like ours in Scotland, has for the Puerto Rican struggle. "No country exists in a vacuum," Paul began. Discussing world politics today, he was struck by the way in which independence movements are on the rise across a variety of nations, like Scotland, Wales and Catalunya. He was also very impressed by Barbados' recent steps towards becoming a republic. He explained that local actions and developments like the ones

already mentioned have repercussions on a global scale, so that what might seem on first glance to be isolated fights for self determination end up taking on a significance that leaps borders and crosses oceans to inspire and teach others. It is well to remember, even if we never learn of them, that we in Scotland have sympathisers and admirers all across the world, and our struggles, and, I hope, our victories, will cheer and excite the passions of a great multitude of fellow fighters.

Secondly, solidarity matters to Paul because part of the essential groundwork for Puerto Rican independence is establishing relationships with other countries and movements. After all, Paul argued, "independence is not to separate us from the United States but to unite us with the rest of the world." And this unity is to be a different kind of unity from the one-sided, opportunistic unity Puerto Rico has thus far experienced with the United States. The PIP looks for relationships of reciprocity, solidarity, camaraderie and respect with other countries- International co-operation, not exploitation. That wish, to be an active and progressive player in the wider world, not just one part in a stifling union with an imperialist power, is something I'm sure Scottish readers will readily sympathise with. It is a fine sentiment, and Paul summed it up wonderfully by once more quoting Rubén: "One day we'll be able to hug our brethren from across the world and say to them: Comrades, we have arrived late to freedom, but because of that we love it even more." May the day arrive swiftly!

If you want to keep up with Paul Figueroa and the PIP, you can follow them on social media:

Paul's Twitter: [@paul_delpip](https://twitter.com/paul_delpip)

Paul's Facebook Page: [@paulfigueroapip](https://www.facebook.com/paulfigueroapip)

The PIP's Twitter accounts: [@PIPTwitteando](https://twitter.com/PIPTwitteando) [@PIPSanJuan](https://twitter.com/PIPSanJuan)

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Beyond Glasgow – what happened at COP26 and where we go next

It is a month since Alok Sharma as president, fighting back some tears, brought down the gavel on the 26th Conference of the Parties – the United Nations climate summit in Glasgow. The initial flurry of reactions and comments has subsided. Here in Scotland we have already seen some early signs of the impact – with the beginnings of a victory against the development of a new offshore oil field at Cambo. On Saturday, 4 December, activists in Glasgow held a first gathering to take stock and plan future steps.

So this is intended as a contribution to that process of weighing up what happened, both inside the official talks, and outside in the struggle for climate justice. We need to do this as fully and accurately as we can, to provide a guide for what we do next.

This is perhaps most urgent in Scotland, where the huge protests on the streets of Glasgow on the 5 and 6 November

have had a major impact on the political and ideological landscape, and could have a lot more in the years to come if we are able to learn the most useful lessons, and build on them. But it is also important for the climate movement in England and the rest of the UK, which faces a possible moment of refoundation.

And it is not without significance at a global level, where, as a representative of one Indigenous organisation who made it to Glasgow argued, it is time to be thinking about a new kind and scale of international coordination.

Three outcomes

We can divide the main conclusions from COP26 into three. The most important has to do with the success of those mobilisations outside the official talks, and we'll come back to that.

The second was also immediately obvious to many, and relates to the spectacular failure of the official summit, when measured against its own stated objectives. World leaders definitively did not “embrace their responsibilities” to “act now”, as the UK presidency had asked them to six months earlier, when Alok Sharma stood in front of the huge, commercial Whitelee wind farm, 15 kilometres south of the COP26 venue on the Clyde, and called on them to “pick the planet”.

They did not bring to Glasgow the commitments that would keep global warming at less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century. Those were not tears of joy on Alok Sharma's face as he had to close the summit ~~summit~~ with a watered-down target on “phasing down” coal power. The concluding statement by the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, used diplomatic language but left little room for doubt: “unfortunately the collective political will was not enough to overcome some deep contradictions. ...We

are still knocking on the door of climate catastrophe. ...We did not achieve these (*ie. the main*) goals at this conference.”

The third kind of conclusion is less obvious. It got little mention in the mainstream media coverage, and for the most part lies buried in the detail of the deliberately opaque discussions on wrapping up the rulebook for the Paris Agreement and related “technical” aspects. Here we find the moves made by governments and the private sector, including fossil fuel companies and big banks, to put in place the procedures and organisational infrastructure to secure the still evolving, and still contradictory, ruling class response to the climate emergency.

It was not an accident that the largest single delegation at COP26, bigger than any single government, was constituted by lobbyists from the fossil fuel industry. There were at least 503 of them and there have been no reports of tears on their faces.

The second biggest delegation was the Brazilian one. It had 480 members, including many lobbyists from the agribusiness, mining and forestry sectors, all with a special interest in resolving the rules around carbon markets, for example. Their moves made significant progress in Glasgow. But they did not have it all their own way.

They were thwarted, or maybe just delayed, on several key questions by the pressure of civil society on the inside of COP26 – for example the inclusion of forests as tradable carbon credits under Article 6, or the use of nature based solutions as offsets (see below).

It is at the intersection between these three levels that the future of the climate movement, and indeed of humanity, will be decided. So let us look more closely at the last two, before returning to the movement itself.

The Glasgow Get-out

The final “agreement”, officially called the Glasgow Climate Pact, but dubbed by some in the climate movement as the Glasgow Get-out, is a laboriously constructed work of smoke and mirrors. In some ways, it is ambitious. It is certainly longer and more wide-ranging than such “cover decisions” (the technical term for these interim negotiated texts) usually are. In line with the latest scientific reports from the IPCC, it focuses much more sharply than the 2015 Paris Agreement itself on 1.5 degrees maximum warming as the key goal. It stresses the need for “accelerated action in this critical decade”. It even has a few seemingly specific promises, like developed countries doubling by 2025 their financial contributions to the Adaptation Fund, to help countries in the global south adjust to the climate change that is already on the way [[This was seen as a gain for developing countries made during the talks. No such provision had been on the formal agenda, and when it first appeared in the draft texts the language had been much vaguer. The final text takes 2019 as the baseline, meaning that developed countries are *urged* to come up with an additional US\$40 billion a year for adaptation by 2025. However, this is still well short of what is needed. The UN Environment Programme estimates the current annual need at US\$70 billion, and suggests this is likely to quadruple by 2030. It also remains unclear that developing countries accept this is not part of the US\$100 billion a year that they promised back in 2009 and have still failed to deliver.]]

Some of this sharper language is the result of hard-fought battles by poorer countries and civil society delegates, over the position of commas and this or that adjective. But more than anything it reflects the understanding by most imperialist governments that, at the very least, they have to be seen to be taking the climate crisis seriously. They know that the level of concern among their citizens has increased very significantly in just the last few years, even the last

few months, as floods and fires have ravaged Europe and North America as well as India, China or Bolivia. People expect their governments to act. And these governments in turn fear that public concern will deepen. When their discourse of vandalism or even terrorism leveled at direct action groups largely falls flat; when very large numbers of people actually sympathise with people gluing themselves to motorways, or Indigenous communities occupying oil wells and blocking mines, the authorities know the situation is serious.

The gaping hole in the Glasgow Climate Pact is the almost total absence of detail. There is virtually nothing specified about who will do exactly what by when, and how anyone will be able to verify it, much less enforce it. In the English language, a pact usually means an agreement to do something. In that sense, this is not a pact at all – more of a political statement about a series of things the parties agree (more or less) that they would like to see happen.

The two main, overlapping, texts of the Glasgow Climate Pact have 71 and 97 points respectively. [[In characteristically confusing fashion, there are three versions of the main cover decision text, one for each of the three meetings that officially took place in parallel under the ~~the~~ umbrella of COP – firstly the COP26 itself, that is the 26th Conference of the Parties of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; secondly the CMP16, the 16th Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which is largely irrelevant and whose texts say very little: and the CMA3, or the 3rd Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, which actually has most detail in relation to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.]] Almost all of them begin with words like *recognizes*, *expresses*, *notes*, *stresses*, *emphasizes*, *urges*, *invites*, *calls upon*. Only one point in the COP.26 version of the Pact begins with *resolves*, while the longer,

CMA.3 text has 6 points that begin with *decides* and 3 with *resolves*. These very few “decisions” all refer to organisational questions of arranging future meetings and work processes and mechanisms. None of them refer directly to the substantive issues of emissions cuts or climate finance.

From Binding to Voluntary to Proclamation

This illustrates one of the two overarching developments in the UN climate negotiations that we need to note if we are to make sense of what happened in Glasgow. This is how the process has moved away from any kind of binding commitments, of the sort contained in the Kyoto Protocol that came into force in 2005. During and after COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, the U.S. and the EU systematically assaulted this approach. This meant that the Paris Agreement in 2015, while achieving advances in some respects, contained only voluntary commitments to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. These were the core of the famous NDCs, or nationally determined contributions. The whole point of COP26 – the reason it was hailed as a make or break moment – was that this was the time, five years on from the Paris Agreement, by which the 193 signatories were meant to have come up with their enhanced NDCs, their plans to make the bigger cuts and provide the greater finance, that would allow global warming to be kept below 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably below 1.5 degrees. But it was entirely up to each party to announce whatever it wanted, whenever it wanted. There was never going to be, and never could be, given the nature of the Paris Agreement, a deal negotiated in Glasgow to ensure this outcome.

The scale of the shortfall left by these voluntary contributions on the core issue of emissions cuts, or mitigation as it is called in the language of the UNFCCC, is tucked away in paragraphs 22 and 25 of the CMA.3 version of

the final text. The first *recognises*, what the IPCC Report on 1.5 Degrees had brought to the fore of the climate change agenda in 2018, that “limiting global warming to 1.5 °C requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around midcentury, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases”. Now the climate justice movement centred around the COP26 Coalition has questioned, at length and in depth, the scale, timing and distribution of these IPCC targets, including especially the new and very unscientific mantra of net zero by 2050. And not of course because they are too ambitious.

However, even against these inadequate targets, paragraph 25 “*Notes with serious concern* the findings of the synthesis report on nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, according to which the aggregate greenhouse gas emission level, taking into account implementation of all submitted nationally determined contributions, is estimated to be 13.7 per cent above the 2010 level in 2030”. The failure of COP26 to achieve its main objective could hardly be clearer. If you add up all the new, more ambitious plans (enhanced NDCs) submitted by 151 parties up to day 3 of the COP (2 November, 2021), they project not a cut of 45% in CO₂ emissions by 2030, but an increase of 13.7%.

This is not a small discrepancy that we can make up later. It is a colossal move in the wrong direction.

Carbon Action Tracker, a well-respected research body, calculated that these pledges would, at best, keep warming to 2.4 degrees Celsius by 2100. More probably, given the recurring failure to meet even inadequate promises, we would end up with 2.7 degrees. Others regard even this as over optimistic.

The fact that the Glasgow Pact does call on countries to

submit new, more ambitious NDCs by COP27, in Egypt next year, and on a yearly basis after that, was held up as evidence of greater ambition. It is certainly an improvement on the 5-year cycle agreed in Paris. But the fact this call was made at all only highlights the spectacular failure to meet the targets needed by COP26.

The UK presidency knew well in advance the dimension of this failure. Its strategy was to seek to bury it in a welter of rhetoric about keeping 1.5 alive. That is the function of the more ambitious language in the final text. The same concern, to be seen to be taking action, characterised the flurry of announcements made during the World Leaders Summit, which took up the Monday and Tuesday of the first week of the COP.

First there was the pledge by 130 countries to “halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030”. Then it was 109 countries promising to cut 30% of methane emissions by 2030, 190 countries announcing commitments to phase out coal power, and 30 countries and financial institutions to stop financing fossil fuel development overseas. Beyond the headlines, it was never perfectly clear who had agreed to do quite what.

And some of the announcements began to unravel as soon as they were made. For example, critics immediately pointed out that most of the deforestation pledge was the same as the 2014 New York Declaration on Forests, which had produced no results at all. The environment minister of Indonesia, which had been touted as one of the key signatories, took to twitter to call the pledge “clearly inappropriate and unfair”. Bolivia, one of very few countries taking a firm climate justice stance inside the COP26, was also listed as a signatory; but when we interviewed the Bolivian president, Luis Arce, on the day of the announcement, he told us his country had not signed and was still evaluating the pledge.

As Alex Rafalowicz from Colombia told one of the daily

Movement Assemblies in Glasgow that week, the COP process has moved from binding agreements through voluntary targets to the rhetoric of grandiose but unverifiable announcements.

Forget Equity

This shift in the shape of the UN climate talks – to abandon binding agreements – goes hand in hand with another – the shift away from the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. (CBDR) This principle of CBDR was enshrined in the UNFCCC by the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. It means that those countries who historically have been most responsible for putting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere since the beginning of the industrial revolution, the industrialised countries of the global north, the Annex 1 countries, in the terminology of the Convention, should take the major responsibility to address the climate change that has resulted. It became an important part of the movement to demand climate justice.

During the discussions on a new treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol, at Copenhagen and the COPs that followed, the U.S. and its allies attacked the principle of CBDR on the grounds that *all* countries needed to do their bit, just as it sought to overturn the practice of binding agreements. In part this opposition was due to the predictable reluctance of imperialist countries to pay for the harm they have done. But it also had to do with the growing obsession in Washington, under Obama and since, with the threat posed to U.S. hegemony by China.

The Paris Agreement retained some of the language about CBDR. But the practice had already moved on. And without any mechanism to enforce commitments, any differentiation between the amount done by rich countries and poor countries would also be entirely voluntary.

This accentuated move away from equity was a hallmark of the

Glasgow COP, in every area and at every step, even if developing country delegations did manage to get a few references to CBDR re-inserted into the Glasgow Climate Pact. It is inscribed in the dominant narrative of “net zero by 2050”, which the UK presidency tried so hard to impose. Many global south delegates described this as carbon colonialism. That is because it completely contradicts any idea that there is a finite carbon budget, an amount of carbon dioxide and equivalent gases that the human race can still afford to emit while keeping warming to 1.5 degrees, and that the rich countries *have already spent all of their share* of that budget. What is left, about 600Gt of CO2 equivalent, should therefore be reserved, as far as possible, for countries of the south so that they can combat extreme poverty.

Net zero is centred on the notion that rich countries and major corporations can continue to emit greenhouse gases, either because they will pay someone else not to (offsets), or because they will use some untried or non-existent technology to remove those gases from the atmosphere in the future. So in addition to these two bogus premises (that offsets can lead to real cuts in emissions, and that we will eventually be able to count on negative emissions technology), the net zero narrative depends on jettisoning any pretence of justice for those in the global south who are the main victims of climate change. It calls on all countries to pursue this common goal of net zero by the middle of the century, while glossing over the fact that the route envisaged to get there is conceived entirely with the financial and technological capacities of rich countries in mind.

It was this sleight of hand that allowed the UK presidency, and the mainstream, northern media to blame India, and indirectly China, for that last minute watering down of the wording on “phasing down” instead of “phasing out” unabated coal power. Of course, India, like China, does want to get off the hook of its own dependence on coal. But the point it was

making was that it is not fair – and it is not in line with the CBDR principles of the UNFCCC – to expect developing countries with high levels of poverty to implement the same scale of mitigation at the same speed as rich countries. In fact earlier in the week, India had proposed language suggesting that all fossil fuels should be phased down, not just coal. But the ~~the~~ U.S. and Europe were having none of that.

The other side of this shift away from equity was clear in the attitude displayed by rich countries in Glasgow to climate finance. After shuffling numbers and dates backwards and forwards, they still ended up with ~~still~~ no commitment on when they would come up with the US\$100 billion a year they had promised back in 2009 to provide by 2020 to help developing countries transition to clean energy and green technologies – a figure that had been pulled out of a hat at Copenhagen to placate governments in the South incensed by the assault on CBDR, and which had been woefully adequate even then. Another UN report recently suggested the amount needed would be more like US\$6 trillion. The important thing to understand here is that such significant sums of climate finance are an absolute prerequisite for a just transition at a global level. Without such support, most countries in the South would have no way of moving towards zero carbon by investing in renewable energy, recycling, clean public transport, electric vehicles and so on.

Even worse, rich countries steadfastly resisted the attempts by developing countries to agree a common definition of climate finance. That may sound bureaucratic, but governments in the South wanted to make it clear that to qualify as climate finance it should be new money, given in the form of grants or other kinds of concessional finance (eg. loans at below market level interest rates). By rejecting a common definition, rich countries signaled their intention to continue fudging their already paltry commitments, by re-

labelling existing development aid as climate finance and including commercial loans that will only increase the debt burden of the south and the profits of northern banks.

Led by the U.S. and the EU, they also refused to apply a 5% levy on the buying and selling of carbon credits between governments, which developing countries wanted as a reliable source of finance for the Adaptation Fund.

Perhaps most tellingly, the U.S. flatly refused to countenance a separate stream of funding to pay for Loss and Damage, which has been one of the most pressing demands of many southern countries for the last several COPs. This means money to pay for the damage already caused by climate change, including extreme weather events like hurricanes and floods. The prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne, told leaders on the second day of the COP that countries like his may be forced to seek redress in the international courts, if no loss and damage funding were agreed. The country's second island of Barbuda was rendered uninhabitable by Hurricane Irma in 2017. The U.S., however, terrified of admitting liability for such costs, would only accept a minimal move of funding the operations of the Santiago Network, set up at COP25 but not activated, to advise and give technical support to nations facing such losses. As another southern delegate wryly commented, what we don't need is more consultants flying around the world to tell us what loss and damage is.

Article 6 – the architecture of climate capital

These apparently obscure details all feed into that third kind of conclusion we mentioned above. Somewhere just below the radar of the mainstream media, COP26 made significant advances towards putting in place the structures and procedures by which a significant section of international capital is seeking to put the climate crisis at the centre of its

business model for the decades to come. The centrepiece of this project is Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Article 6 deals with three kinds of what is called, euphemistically and misleadingly, “voluntary cooperation” between countries aimed at allowing “higher ambition in their mitigation and adaptation actions”. Essentially, this means offsets and carbon markets. In other words, Article 6 establishes the mechanisms by which high-emitting countries (mainly in the global north) can massage their promises to cut emissions (their NDCs), by continuing with some of those emissions (or even most of them), if they pay someone else (mainly countries in the global south) *not* to emit (or to absorb) an equivalent amount. Paragraph 6.2 refers to such “cooperation”, or trade in carbon credits, bilaterally between parties or countries. Paragraph 6.4 refers to such carbon trades on a wider basis between public and private entities, in other words to carbon markets as such. Paragraph 6.8 refers to “non-market” approaches to such exchanges, mainly involving the aid programmes of rich countries.

These mechanisms are absolutely central to how imperialist countries have approached the climate crisis and the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions. They are what makes it possible for them to “commit to” the goals of “net zero by 2050” and the like, because they make it possible, in theory, for capitalism to look like it is taking bold steps to confront the crisis, while in fact only making comparatively modest changes to how it operates in the foreseeable future. That is, they seem to offer the possibility of pushing off into the future the existential contradiction that confronts capitalism, between its inherent obligation to grow and the environmental imperative that we consume less.

In the mean time, they also hold out the offer of a major new area of accumulation to a sector of global capital, especially finance capital. This is what David Harvey would call accumulation by dispossession – in this case the dispossession

is of vast swathes of “nature” in the global south, bought up (or seized) from local, sometimes Indigenous communities, by northern governments and companies to offset their failure to cut emissions at home.

Not surprisingly, discussion of the precise rules that would govern how this vital piece of the jigsaw operates have been complicated and fractious. The battles have been shrouded by impenetrable jargon, but mostly they had to do with accountancy – with who would be able to include what, and when, as part of these carbon trades, and consequently who would benefit most. Successive COPs following Paris failed to reach an agreement. Civil society groups argued that no agreement would be better than a bad one, and almost any agreement on these terms would be a bad one. At Madrid they staged a last-minute protest that helped to block a deal. The problem was kicked down the road to Glasgow.

In Glasgow, there was an agreement on the rules for Article 6. The logjam seems to have been broken by a clever accounting suggestion from Japan. This is undoubtedly a significant victory for those banking on the future of offsets and carbon markets. Alongside the agreements reached on the timeframes for reporting emission cuts and standards of transparency, it means the rule book governing the Paris Agreement is now, in general terms, complete. However, not all the details are resolved. The example of forests illustrates how battles will continue to be fought over this market-driven agenda for the climate crisis.

Contrary to what some climate activists assume, forests have not so far been part of the UNFCCC’s carbon trading regime. In the Paris Agreement they come under Article 5, not Article 6. So there have indeed been programmes like REDD+, which provide for what are called “results-based payments” to countries that reduce their emissions from deforestation and conserve forests as carbon sinks. But such forest protection has not been able to generate carbon credits that could be traded on carbon

markets, and which could therefore be bought by other governments or companies to offset their continued emissions and therefore help those countries meet their NDCs. Of course, many forest communities and others in the global south thought this was clearly the direction of travel, and feared the aim of many northern delegations was to turn the world's forests into one more thing that could be bought and sold so that they could avoid making the emissions cuts that are needed.

In the run-up to Glasgow, a concerted campaign in this direction was mounted by the ill-named Coalition for Rainforest Nations (CfRN), supposedly represented at COP26 by Papua New Guinea. The CfRN claims to include 50 rainforest nations. However, the give-away is in the preposition. Because this is not an alliance *of* countries, but a “not-for-profit”, set up “*for* rainforest” nations by two graduates of Columbia Business School, from the U.S. and Italy, one of whom was brought up in Papua New Guinea. Its offices are in Manhattan, its board and staff are almost all investment bankers, and since 2005 it has been *the* main proponent of putting a price on the world's rainforests, in theory as a way of compensating countries for conserving them. Since then it has led the promotion of RED, REDD and REDD+, each of which took a step closer to making forests one of the most important offsets on sale in the world's carbon markets.

The CfRN, supported by several northern country delegations, pushed hard for COP26 to include emissions reductions from REDD+ to be included as carbon credits under Paragraph 6.2. This would cover both past REDD+ reductions, from 2015 to 2021, and a fast track for such reductions in the future from 2021, thus for the first time allowing the governments of high-emitting countries to buy up such “forest credits” as a way of achieving their NDCs. They also supported draft wording for Para 6.4 that would define carbon “removals” as relating specifically to the agriculture, forestry and land-use sector, thus putting forests directly into the carbon markets for the

first time. Environmental campaigners from Brazil and elsewhere argued strongly that these moves would be disastrous for forest communities in Amazonia and elsewhere, and for the forests themselves, because they would unleash an even more intense wave of land grabs and commercial pressure on their territories, as rich countries and big corporations scrambled to buy up the rights to keep on polluting.

In the end, these campaigners won a small victory. REDD+ reductions were not mentioned in relation to 6.2, and the reference to forestry in 6.4 was replaced by a more generic definition of removals. However, these may be temporary stays of execution. Forests are not excluded under either mechanism, and there will surely be new attempts to include them explicitly when some of the further definitions come up for discussion.

Some initial conclusions for the movement

These three kinds of outcome from COP26 point to three kinds of conclusion that may help to orient our future action.

1. It is increasingly unlikely – one could say it is increasingly close to excluded – that the 197 parties to the UNFCCC will ~~not~~ take the action needed in the current decade – either ~~neither~~ in terms of emissions cuts or ~~nor~~ in terms of climate finance for the global south – to ensure that global warming will remain below 1.5 degrees Celsius. At least not unless there is a dramatic shift in the political balance of power that forces their hand.
2. There will continue to be mass pressure, from public opinion and from protests on the streets and in communities, to demand that those governments do take such action.

This is not because most of these people trust their governments to do what is needed. Most of the 100 or 150 thousand on the streets of Glasgow certainly don't. The same goes for many of the millions more who watched with sympathy. Almost certainly, most of those protesters already think "system change" is needed, although they may not be clear what that might involve.

But for the moment, they still see putting pressure on governments as the best available option. The more those governments don't take such action, and the more the impact of extreme weather events is felt in major population centres, the more the movement may radicalise.

There is already widespread sympathy for others taking direct action. That sympathy may increase. In some specific circumstances, the mass movement itself may resort more to direct action to block mines, power plants or whatever.

But overall, and unless there is a dramatic shift in the political balance of power, the mass movement will not take upon itself the task of shutting down the fossil fuel industry, as some are suggesting it should.

3. While governments in the global north will continue to claim they are working to keep 1.5 alive, the most coherent sectors of the capitalist class, especially in the financial sector, will be working hard and fast to put in place the mechanisms that can turn the climate and biodiversity crises into a new, core domain for capital accumulation. Of course, much of the ruling class in the global south is already well integrated into this project. Governments and civil society organisations that are not will continue to fight their corner within the framework of the UN climate talks. They don't have much choice. There may be increasingly sharp contradictions between some of them and the way the governments of the global north are driving the

process forward at their expense. But there will also be many occasions where these representatives of the global south, both governments and sometimes movements, buy into the short term benefits apparently on offer from global capital and its market mechanisms for addressing the climate crisis. One example of this is how even some radical sections of the Indigenous movement in Brazil have been tempted to sign up to aspects of the commodification of forests, as a way of getting much-needed cash to their communities.

It is understandable that point one above will lead to, indeed has already produced, calls to radicalise the movement. In part those calls are right. But it would be a bad mistake to misinterpret this. The temptation to “disengage from the COP” altogether and “set our own agenda” risks driving a wedge between some of the more radical sections of the climate justice movement, still a relatively small minority, and those much bigger forces that were both on the streets in Glasgow and were represented, in a mediated form, by some of the governments of the global south and many of the civil society groups that operate and fight within the UNFCCC process. Many Latin American Indigenous organisations, to take that prominent example again, were very active both on the streets of Glasgow, and inside the Blue Zone.

When 1000 delegates walked out of the Blue Zone on the final Friday, it was the biggest such revolt in the history of the COPs, at least since the Alba countries banged the table and rejected Obama’s stitch-up in Copenhagen. 750 civil society delegates packed out one of the main halls for an impromptu People’s Plenary, which ended with them singing “power to the people”. Then they were joined by several hundred more who couldn’t get in, to march through the Scottish Events Campus venue singing “the people are going to rise like the water... I hear the voice of my great grand daughter, calling climate justice now”, and finally to exit the blue zone and link up

with the movements protesting outside the gates. It was a powerful and moving illustration of the kind of links that are possible, and necessary.

What we need to find, in Scotland as in other parts of the UK and around the world, are the particular organisational forms that can bring these different component parts together – into a more lasting, consistent and potent force – not to drive them apart.

Climate Justice, Social Justice and Independence in Scotland

Here in Scotland, the aftermath of COP26 presents us with a special opportunity. This can be illustrated with one short story, told backwards.

At the time of writing, the private equity-backed oil exploration company, Siccar Point Energy, has just announced it is “pausing” its project to develop the Cambo oil field, located 1,000 metres below the North Sea to the west of the Shetland Islands. Although not a big field, and economically a marginal one, for campaigners and the UK government alike, Cambo had become symbolic of the confrontation between an official strategy of maximum fossil fuel extraction on the road to a low carbon future, and the demand to leave it in the ground, now. For the campaigners, Siccar’s announcement feels like a big victory.

Siccar’s decision came 8 days after Shell pulled out of its 30 percent stake in the project, saying “the economic case... is not strong enough at this time”.

Just over two weeks earlier, on 16 November, Scotland’s First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, for the first time expressed open opposition to the new oil field, saying it should not get the green light and was incompatible with targets for “net zero”.

Previously she had only called for a reassessment of the project by the UK government, which has the power to approve oil exploration licenses.

Ten days before that, Glasgow hosted the biggest climate demonstration ever seen in the UK, and one of the biggest protests of any kind ever held in Scotland.

When Shell announced its decision to pull out, Friends of the Earth Scotland quite rightly commented that "People power has made the climate-wrecking Cambo development so toxic that even oil giant Shell doesn't want to be associated with it any more." That was true. But there was a step in between as well. Two steps in fact: government, and the national question.

The fact that so many people demonstrated in Glasgow, and that "Stop Cambo" was one of their most visible demands, no doubt had an impact on Shell. The oil giant can do without this or that new oil field the size of Cambo (170 million barrels over 25 years, about the same as Saudi Arabia produces in three and a half weeks). And it is concerned about its image, especially that it is now publicly committed to becoming "net zero" by mid century. But those demonstrations were probably not the decisive factor in its decision. The threat of climate campaigners waging legal warfare and dragging the project through endless appeals and court delays probably weighed heavier.

However, that huge protest in Glasgow surely did weigh large in Nicola Sturgeon's shift to opposing Cambo. And Nicola Sturgeon's change of heart probably had an even greater bearing on Shell's economic calculations. The Scottish government may not have the power to say yes or no to new oil fields, but it could make the practicalities of access and operations a lot more difficult. And even Shell can probably see that well before the end of the 25-year life span of the oil field and its economic viability, there is a realistic possibility of Scotland becoming an independent country, with

a government that may now want to get rid of all such oil fields.

This is one concrete example of how the national question is sharpening the climate question in Scotland, and vice versa.

The combination between the insulting exclusion of Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP government by the Johnson-Sharma UK unionist presidency of COP26, and the historic scale of the mobilisation on Scottish streets, has increased the pressure on an ambiguous SNP government, and already brought some modest results, like that over Cambo. The Scottish government budget, revealed last week, also makes some partial steps in a positive direction, with addressing the climate crisis made one of its three top priorities. This of course has coincided with the incorporation into government of the Scottish Green Party – significantly to the left of the Greens in England, Germany, or probably anywhere else in the EU. The Scottish government took another very small but symbolic step in the first week of COP26, when it became the first administration in the global north to make a concrete offer, of just £1 million, later increased to £2 million, to a fund for loss and damage in the Global South – an initiative which was promptly trashed by the Biden administration.

In the other direction, the climate question is itself beginning to bisect, and polarise, the national struggle. It may be little more than a footnote, of some interest in Scotland but not much elsewhere, but this has become clear in the attitude of the former First Minister, Alex Salmond. Salmond broke with Sturgeon and formed last year **Alba**, a supposedly more radical nationalist party, backed by a strange amalgam of anti-trans “feminists” and misogynist leftists. After Sturgeon came out against Cambo, he promptly attacked her for selling out Scotland’s right to its own oil and putting jobs at risk.

In other words, the issues of climate justice and climate

action now traverse the national struggle in Scotland, just as the issue of closing down North Sea oil and the need for a just transition led by workers in the sector cuts across and polarises the trade union movement in Scotland.

These are potentially explosive combinations. Climate struggles are already stoking national demands, and they could add a whole new dimension to the struggle for independence. At the same time, any advance towards an independent Scotland is necessarily going to pose the issues of climate justice much more sharply. The SNP government has taken some modest, positive steps, just as it has in various areas of social policy. But its overall “social liberal” orientation and its attachment to market-led policies means it is still wedded to the vision of net zero (by 2045) and illusions about carbon capture and storage, about Scotland as a powerhouse and exporter of renewable energy and so on. Dismantling the net zero narrative and its attendant false solutions therefore takes on a particular importance here in Scotland, both for the climate movement and for the radical wing of the pro-independence movement.

The big challenge in the coming months – and it is a challenge that needs to be embraced swiftly, or the moment will have passed – is to find the organisational forms and the political initiatives that can capture, consolidate and develop the energy, the diversity and the political radicalisation that burst onto the streets of Glasgow in November. This will need some sort of specific initiative here in Scotland, but an initiative that is articulated with similar, appropriate moves in other parts of the UK and internationally.

Iain Bruce, 11 December 2021

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Ukrainian history holds lessons for Scottish socialists

Paul Inglis of ecosocialist.scot writes on Marko Bocjun's recent book [*The Workers' Movement and the National Question in Ukraine, 1897-1918*](#)

The *Historical Materialism* book series has been the source of a number of useful works for my political thinking over the years. Previous volumes I've encountered, like Alan Sennett's book on Revolutionary Marxism in the Spanish revolution and Ralf Hoffrogge's book on Richard Müller and the German workers' councils, have served as both examples of erudite scholarship and as powerful influences on the way I think about socialist politics, strategy and tactics. One of the latest entries in the series, Marko Bojcun's *The Workers' Movement and the National Question in Ukraine, 1897-1918*, looks set to hold a similar place in my estimation going forward.

This book presents a fascinating account of a lesser-known movement for leftists today, telling the fraught story of the Ukrainian working class movement, its political parties and organisations, and how they faced up to the national question amid the revolutionary tumult of the year 1917. Reading the book, it is like hearing about something of a lost world – tendencies and movements shrouded by the success of the Bolsheviks in the conflicts that followed the collapse of the Russian Empire. Furthermore, it is simply solid, detailed writing on the national question, and like any good writing on the national question, it has a relevance that leaps beyond

its own subject matter and which sheds light on other national struggles and movements, past and present.

As someone who has hitched my political commitments as a socialist to the opportunities and risks presented by the cause of Scottish independence, I am always interested to learn more about national movements from all over the world: how they organised, how they fought, what kind of compromises they made, and especially where they failed. In short, lessons of history! I think it is a shame that for a lot of the left and the national movement more broadly here in Scotland, there is a tendency to act like the only comparable situations for us are Catalunya, the Basque Country and Quebec, presumably because these are contemporary movements in Western nations.

As long as we don't pretend there are any directly, exactly comparable situations, we can take valuable lessons from national movements both here and across the Global South, and from across history – specifically lessons pertaining to questions of approach and attitude. How does the working class get involved with national movements? How do we bring the class on board? What attitude should we take towards the moderate or liberal political parties and groups? How do we manage to get socialists from the larger nation, in our case England, to consider our national movement seriously and enlist their support? These are questions that face us today as they faced the Ukrainian socialists.

Bojcun's book contains much on the specific historical difficulties of Ukrainian socialism and nationalism and the lessons gathered therein, but I wanted to focus this short article on some of the questions and thoughts about Marxism that I had running through my mind as I read the work, particularly the discussions in the third chapter on *Social Democracy and the National Question*.

It is very useful that this book not only gives a historical narrative of Ukrainian socialism, but also addresses

theoretical concerns, problematising classical Marxist thinking on the national question – Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Lenin and Luxemburg – and subjecting them to analysis and criticism in the light of contemporary nationalist movements in Eastern Europe. I was excited to see this as I have in recent years, especially as I have become more interested in the national question, come to believe that there is an unfortunate weakness in the Marxist “canon” where the national question is concerned, one that plagues it to this day. Where thinkers like Marx or Engels can be thrilling and enlightening on a wealth of matters, they can be flippant, arbitrary and cruel when speaking about the fate of “smaller” nations.

Take, for example, the remarks from Marx’s early work, quoted by the author, on how Scots, Gaels and Basques are “historically unprepared for nationhood”, national leftovers that “will become and will remain until their final extermination or denationalisation fanatical partisans of counterrevolution, since their entire existence is in general a protest against the great historical revolution”. The thoughts of Engels on the South Slavs, which I first encountered in Mark Leier’s excellent biography of Mikhail Bakunin, are a similarly crass diatribe.

In this conception, the smaller nations of the world were simply written off as barriers to the centralising tendency of capitalism towards more unified, larger states and, apparently, a more effective and efficient development of the productive forces conducive to building socialism.

What use is any of this to socialists in these smaller nations? Leaving aside the more complex tapestry of uneven economic development that resulted from the spread of global, imperialist capitalism and which calls into question the effective base for socialism that such great power “assimilation” has given us, the brutal reality of how stateless people have been forcibly integrated into larger nations through repression should give us all pause when we

read of “denationalisation” and the like. No culture disappears from the scene of history cleanly, and no language simply dies out gently.

Now, to their credit, Marx and Engels of course came to a more sophisticated position on small nations in their later years, particularly regarding Irish freedom, but the “great power assimilationist” tendency in Marxism still runs through the thought of Kautsky, Lenin and Luxemburg, as the author shows. I quite enjoyed the exploration of the ambiguities of Lenin’s writing on the right of nations to self determination, and the criticisms of the Ukrainian socialist Lev Yurkevych on this matter – how Lenin sort-of wants to have his cake and eat it by both supporting the right to national self determination but also discouraging it, lauding the advantages of big states and bourgeois development. Another area of Yurkevych’s criticism looked at Lenin’s assertion that the achievement of democratic multinational states would see strivings for complete freedom of secession weaken.

This, considered in light of the modern day, feels like wishful thinking. The national question is alive and well in multinational democracies like the United Kingdom and Spain, and even if it is countered that this fact is only because of democratic deficits in these big states, it should be kept in mind that the centralising tendency of states like the United Kingdom and Spain has precluded the kind of genuine national autonomy that would render secession irrelevant. One need only think of the “fruits” yielded by Spanish democracy to the Basques in the 1980s, and how they can be measured in murdered, tortured and unlawfully detained independence activists.

What I feel all of this criticism poses, and what I would hope all of you bear in mind as you read this work, and other works like it, is: how do we overcome this weakness in Marxist theory, and how do we do better in the future? How do we conceive a radical alternative to the current state of affairs

that genuinely grants self-determination and security to national cultures, no matter how small? This is especially pertinent for us Scots, because we absolutely must make sure that, whatever Scotland emerges from the next period, the Gaelic language and culture is preserved and supported, and that the Gaels have whatever autonomy they feel is appropriate. To do otherwise would be to continue the historical record of the British state.

Watch a recording of the full event with Marko Bojcun below



Paul Inglis is a member of the RSP and Socialist Resistance, based in Glasgow. This article is adapted from Paul's spoken contribution at a joint RSP/SR meeting in September 2021 to discuss Bojcun's book.

[Ukraine, Marxism and the National Question: A Conversation With Marko Bojcun – YouTube](#)

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<https://republicansocialists.scot/2021/11/ukrainian-history-holds-lessons-for-scottish-socialists/>