Against War and Climate Change – Scotland must break with ‘net zero’ and NATO

The latest report by the world’s scientists doesn’t mince its words *writes Iain Bruce*. The impacts of climate change are being felt sooner, more deeply and more often irreversibly, than they had previously predicted. The threat to human wellbeing, even the ability to eat, is ever deeper, and ever closer. And for the first time, the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) puts inequality and the need for social justice at the centre of its analysis. The fact that the “people and ecosystems least able to cope are being hardest hit” is a constant theme throughout this report by the IPCC Working Group II on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. The arguments for climate justice, which includes social justice, racial justice, gender justice, made so forcefully on the streets of Glasgow barely 100 days ago, seem to be finding their echo in the scientific community.

Yet the urgent message compiled from work by scientists across the world, risks being lost in the fog of war.

As the 195 member countries of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change were meeting last week to agree on the summary to this report, the delegates from Ukraine had to drop off the Zoom call, because they heard explosions outside. It was a poignant reminder of the connections between the multiple crises and threats that human society now faces.

Some of those involved in the report have already expressed their fear that the war in Ukraine may destabilise the UN climate talks system and divert attention from the seriousness of the threat to human wellbeing and the need for urgent action. But the connections run deeper. Sections of the Tory

right argue that the need for NATO's European members to break their dependence on Russian fuel means more oil and gas will be needed from elsewhere – whether shale oil from the United States or additional gas from the North Sea. NATO becomes another justification, alongside the fiction of 'net zero', for fossil capital to continue business as usual while talking of a transition to clean energy.

The Scottish government has taken a principled position against the Russian attack on Ukraine and in favour of a more generous welcome for those fleeing the war. But it fails to identify NATO's responsibility. As David Harvey has pointed out, Putin's 'Great Russian' chauvinism has been fed by three decades of humiliation at the hands of western imperialist powers. It cannot be understood apart from the years of neo-liberal shock therapy and the mendacious expansion of NATO. Despite its commitment to removing the British nuclear weapons arsenal situated at Faslane on the Clyde, the SNP has been committed to NATO membership since its 2012 Conference controversially reversed its previous opposition.

There is a parallel with the SNP government championing more solidarity with countries in the global south around climate change. On the one hand it tries to promote a fund to pay for the loss and damage they have already suffered from climate change, while remaining wedded to the narrative of 'net zero' that allows the fossil fuel industry to continue to extract oil and gas from the North Sea.

Among its other stark warnings, this latest IPCC report severely undermines the case for 'net zero', which invariably includes a projection of temporarily overshooting the critical limit of 1.5 degrees of global warming. It states, "Even temporarily exceeding this warming level will result in additional severe impacts, some of which will be irreversible.

The links between war, fossil fuels and climate change are not that difficult to see. As radical climate activist Daniel

Tanuro explains in his summary of the IPCC report, that ecosocialist.scot publishing here,

Impacts of warming: faster and more severe than expected, says IPCC



https://www.ecosocialist.scot/?p=1155

we need to seize on the connection the scientists have made between the threat of climate change and inequality.

In Scotland that means building the movement for independence on a basis of climate justice in the fullest sense.

28 February 2021

Iain Bruce is a journalist and climate activist living in Glasgow.

Impacts of warming: faster and more severe than expected, says IPCC

Daniel Tanuro writes on the latest UN climate report.

The report of the IPCC's Working Group II on impacts and

adaptation to climate change sends out a strident cry of alarm: the disaster is more serious than projected by the models, its effects manifest themselves more quickly and all the risks increase. The poor, indigenous peoples, women, children and the elderly are increasingly at risk, especially in countries of the Global South. The policies followed to limit the damage are inadequate, run counter to sustainability and deepen social inequalities. The authors call for an inclusive approach to transform society at all levels.

The findings

Ecosystems everywhere are altered by climate change. For some of them, the limits of adaptation are exceeded (especially in polar and equatorial regions) – they will not be able to regenerate naturally. Some extreme events exceed the averages projected for the end of the century. Species are already disappearing due to global warming.

The human consequences are worrying. Forest and peatland fires, drainage of wetlands and deforestation result in some carbon sinks becoming sources (the Amazon rainforest, in particular). The productivity of agriculture, forestry and fisheries is declining, posing a threat to food security. The verdict of the scientists is categorical: the global food system is failing to meet the challenge of food insecurity and malnutrition in a sustainable way.

Water issues are particularly worrying. While half of the world's population experiences severe water scarcity at least one month a year, half a billion people live in areas where average precipitation is now at the level of rainfall that previously only occurred every six years. Melting mountain glaciers cause flooding or shortages downstream, and water-borne diseases affect millions more people in Asia, Africa and Central America.

In general, the health consequences of global warming are

serious, and increase inequalities. In countries highly vulnerable to global warming (where 3.3 billion people live), mortality due to floods, droughts and storms is fifteen times higher than elsewhere on Earth. Some regions of the globe are approaching or already experiencing a level of heat stress incompatible with work. Several phenomena related to global warming (heat, cold, dust, tropospheric ozone, fine particles, allergens) promote chronic diseases of the respiratory tract. The destruction of natural habitats and the migration of species promote zoonoses.

Climate change has become a major driver of migration and displacement of human populations. Since 2008, twenty million people have been forced to move every year due to extreme weather events (especially storms and floods). These human tragedies mainly affect South and Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and small island states. Other populations are unable to leave regions that have become inhospitable, because they lack the means or for other reasons.

Large urban concentrations in the Global South are particularly exposed to the combined impacts of climate change and the social determinants of vulnerability. This is especially the case in the informal peripheries – without water supply or sewers, often established on slopes exposed to landslides – (where women and children are in the majority). In sub-Saharan Africa, 60% of the urban population lives in the informal extensions of cities; 529 million Asians live in the same precarious conditions.

Projections

The projections are even more worrying than the findings, and can be summed up in a few words: escalation of threats.

According to the authors, any additional short-term warming increases the risks to ecosystems in all regions. The projected percentage of species at high risk of extinction at

1.5°C, 2°C and 3°C is 9% [see Footnote 1], 10% and 12% respectively (NB: the range of uncertainty is wide, the reality could be more serious), with a qualitative leap between +1°C and +3°C. Extreme weather events and other stressors will increase in magnitude and frequency, accelerating ecosystem degradation and loss of ecosystem services. At 4°C of warming, the frequency of fires will increase, for example, by 50 to 70%. Changes in ocean water stratification will reduce nutrient fluxes. Time lags in the development of phytoplankton may reduce fish resources.

Extra warming will also increase pressure on the food system and on food security. The negative impacts of global warming will become prevalent for all food systems and regional inequalities in food security will increase, researchers say. Depending on the scenarios, the global biomass of the oceans will decrease by 5.7% to 15.5% in 2080-2099 relative to 1995-2014, and the number of undernourished humans will increase by tens of millions by 2050.

The water issue will become acute in terms of sustainability. Under the median scenarios, by 2100, high mountain glaciers will disappear by 50% in Asia. At 1.6°C warming, the number of people displaced in Africa by floods will increase by 200% (and by 600% at 2.6°C). At 2°C of warming, extreme agricultural droughts will increase by 150 to 200% in the Mediterranean basin, western China and high latitudes of North America and Eurasia. At 2.5°C, 55% to 68% of commercially exploited freshwater fish species in Africa will be at risk of extinction.

Rising sea levels will become increasingly threatening: risks in coastal regions will increase particularly beyond 2050 and will continue to increase thereafter, even if warming stops. The risk will increase by 20% for a rise of 15cm, will double for a rise of 75cm and will triple for a rise of 1.4 meters (NB: such a rise is likely during this century). Africa is also very threatened here: from 108 to 116 million people

affected by 2030, and up to 245 million in 2060. Developed countries are not immune: the risk will be multiplied by ten in Europe. 2100, and even faster and more with a constant policy.

The consequences for health are in tune, and sharpened by “the degradation and destruction of health systems”. A high emissions scenario would increase the annual number of climate deaths by 9 million in 2100. In a medium scenario, this number would increase by 250,000/year in 2050. The ranks of victims of malnutrition will swell, especially in Africa, South Asia and Central America. In all scenarios, parts of the globe that are densely populated today will become unsafe or uninhabitable.

If inegalitarian policies continue, the number of people living in extreme poverty will increase from 700 million to one billion by 2030. The authors refer to this as crossing “social tipping points”.

Major Concerns

As in previous reports, the WGII identifies five “major Reasons for Concern” (RFC): unique ecosystems under threat, such as coral reefs and mountain environments (RFC1); extreme weather events (RFC2); social distribution of impacts (RFC3); some aggregate global effects, such as the number of climate deaths (RFC4); single large-scale events, such as the dislocation of ice caps (RFC5).

For each of these RFCs, the authors compare the current level of risk to the level of risk assessed in their previous report (IPCC 5th Assessment Report, 2014). The level of risk refers to the objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted in Rio (1992): “to avoid dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”. The conclusion of the comparison should sound like an alarm siren: the risk has become high to very high for the five RFCs

in all scenarios (even if the level of warming remains low). Staying below 1.5°C would allow the risk to remain “moderate” for RFC 3 , 4, and 5, but it’s already high for RFC 2, and it’s going from high to very high for RFC1.

We know that some emission mitigation scenarios rely on a “temporary overshoot” of 1.5°C, while remaining “well below 2°C” (Paris agreement). The scientists say this would entail severe risks and irreversible impacts. In addition, it would increase the risk that large quantities of carbon stored in ecosystems would be released (as a result of fires, melting permafrost, etc.), which would accelerate climate catastrophe.

Limits to adaptation, unfair policies

Governments say they have a policy of adaptation to the inevitable part of climate change, as provided for in international agreements. The GTII report takes stock of this approach: 1°) it is unfair and inefficient, and benefits more well-off incomes than the poorest; 2°) instead of complementing the essential drastic and rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, it serves as a substitute, so that global warming worsens, which reduces the possibilities of adaptation, to the detriment of the poor ; 3°) the room for maneuver is further reduced due to the deployment of measures aimed at circumventing the reduction of emissions (for example: carbon capture and storage, tree plantations, large hydroelectric dams) to the detriment of indigenous peoples, poor communities and women.

The report clearly states that “dominant development strategies run counter to climate-sustainable development”. Several reasons are put forward: the widening of income inequalities, unplanned urbanization, forced migration and displacement, continuously rising greenhouse gas emissions, the continuation of changes in land use, reversal of the long-

term trend towards longer life expectancy.

According to the authors, it is crucial to develop an inclusive, fair and just policy, particularly with regard to indigenous peoples whose knowledge must be valued. The empowerment of marginalized communities is decisive for the co-production of a sustainable climate policy. Governments' lack of social justice is singled out as the greatest obstacle, particularly in the face of the challenges of the food-energy-water nexus.

Health, education and basic social services are vital to increasing the well-being of populations and the sustainability of development, the report reads. It is therefore a priority to increase the financial means of the global South, where the cost of adapting to global warming will very quickly exceed the 100 billion dollars a year that the North has promised to pay (but has not paid) to the Green Fund for the climate. The report cites amounts of 127 to 290 billion dollars/year in 2030-2050, which could go up to 1000 billion.

The IPCC WGII report obviously does not provide a social strategy for dealing with capitalist climate catastrophe: the general tone is one of good intentions and pious wishes for the inclusion of all social actors. But social movement activists will find here two things that are useful in their fight: a scientific confirmation of the extreme gravity of the impacts of global warming, and a rigorous demonstration of the systemic injustice of climate policies.

28 February 2022

Footnote 1: 9% extinction is more than a thousand times the natural rate of species extinction

Daniel Tanuro, a certified agriculturalist and ecosocialist

environmentalist, writes for Gauche-Anticapitaliste-SAP, Belgian section of the Fourth International. He is also the author of Green Capitalism: why it can't work (Resistance Books, Merlin and IIRE, 2010) and Le moment Trump (Demopolis, 2018).

Rising Clyde – new Scottish Environment Show, starts 7 March

Following the success of the daily 'Inside, Outside' Climate Shows from Glasgow on YouTube during COP26 last November, Iain Bruce is presenting **Rising Clyde**, a new monthly Scottish Climate Show with interviews and discussion.

Here is a preview:

It is being hosted on the first Monday of each month on the Independence Live YouTube channel and Scottish Independence Podcasts.

The first episode begins Monday 7 March at 7pm and is titled **'After COP26: What Next for Scotland?**".



A letter to the Western Left from Kyiv

"The 'anti-imperialism of idiots' meant people turned a blind eye to Russia's actions"

We republish below an important open letter from Taras Bilous a leading activist of the Ukrainian democratic socialist organisation Social Movement, republished from Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and originally published by Open Democracy.

I am writing these lines in Kyiv while it is under artillery attack.

Until the last minute, I had hoped that Russian troops wouldn't launch a full-scale invasion. Now, I can only thank those who leaked the information to the US intelligence services.

Yesterday, I spent half the day considering whether I ought to join a territorial defence unit. During the night that

followed, the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyi signed a full mobilisation order and Russian troops moved in and prepared to encircle Kyiv, which made the decision for me.

But before taking up my post, I would like to communicate to the Western Left what I think about its reaction to Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

First of all, I am thankful to those Leftists who are now picketing Russian embassies – even those who took their time to realise Russia was the aggressor in this conflict.

I am thankful to politicians who support putting pressure on Russia to stop the invasion and withdraw its troops.

And I am thankful to the delegation of British and Welsh MPs, unionists, and activists who came to support us and hear us in the days before the Russian invasion.

I am also thankful to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign in the UK for its help over many years.

This article is about the other part of the Western Left. Those who imagined 'NATO aggression in Ukraine', and who could not see Russian aggression – like the New Orleans chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

Or the DSA International Committee, which published a shameful statement failing to say a single critical word against Russia (I am very thankful to US professor and activist Dan la Botz and the others for their critique of this statement).

Or those who criticised Ukraine for not implementing the Minsk Agreements and kept silent about their violations by Russia and the so-called 'People's Republics'.

Or those who exaggerated the influence of the far-Right in Ukraine, but did not notice the far-Right in the 'People's Republics' and avoided criticising Putin's conservative, nationalist and authoritarian policy. Part of the

responsibility for what is happening rests with you.

‘Campism’

This is part of the wider phenomenon in the Western ‘anti-war’ movement, usually called ‘campism’ by critics on the Left. British-Syrian author and activist Leila Al-Shami gave it a stronger name: the “anti-imperialism of idiots”. Read her wonderful 2018 essay if you haven’t done so yet. I will repeat only the main thesis here: the activity of a large part of the Western ‘anti-war’ Left over the war in Syria had nothing to do with stopping the war. It only opposed Western interference, while ignoring, or even supporting, the engagement of Russia and Iran, to say nothing of their attitude to the ‘legitimately elected’ Assad regime in Syria.

“A number of anti-war organisations have justified their silence on Russian and Iranian interventions by arguing that ‘the main enemy is at home,’” Al-Shami wrote. “This excuses them from undertaking any serious power analysis to determine who the main actors driving the war actually are.

Unfortunately, we have seen the same ideological cliché repeated over Ukraine. Even after Russia recognised the independence of the ‘People’s Republics’ earlier this week, Branko Marcetic, a writer for American Left magazine Jacobin, penned an article almost fully devoted to criticising the US. When it came to Putin’s actions, he went only as far as remarking that the Russian leader had “signal[led] less-than-benign ambitions”. Seriously?

I am not a fan of NATO. I know that after the end of the Cold War, the bloc lost its defensive function and led aggressive policies. I know that NATO’s eastward expansion undermined efforts directed at nuclear disarmament and forming a system of joint security. NATO tried to marginalise the role of the UN and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and to discredit them as ‘inefficient organisations’.

But we cannot bring back the past, and we have to orient ourselves on the current circumstances when seeking a way out of this situation.

How many times did the Western Left bring up the US's informal promises to the former Russian president, Mikhail Gorbachev, about NATO ("not one inch eastward"), and how many times did it mention the 1994 Budapest Memorandum that guarantees Ukraine's sovereignty? How often did the Western Left support the "legitimate security concerns" of Russia, a state that owns the world's second-largest nuclear arsenal? And how often did it recall the security concerns of Ukraine, a state that had to trade its nuclear weapons, under the pressure of the US and Russia, for a piece of paper (the Budapest Memorandum) that Putin trampled conclusively in 2014? Did it ever occur to Leftist critics of NATO that Ukraine is the main victim of the changes brought about by the NATO expansion?

Time and again, the Western Left responded to the critique of Russia by mentioning US aggression against Afghanistan, Iraq and other states. Of course, these states need to be brought into the discussion – but how, exactly?

The argument of the Left should be, that in 2003, other governments did not put enough pressure on the United States over Iraq. Not that it is necessary to exert less pressure on Russia over Ukraine now.

An obvious mistake

Imagine for a moment that, in 2003, when the US was preparing for the invasion of Iraq, Russia had behaved like the US has in recent weeks: with threats of escalation.

Now imagine what the Russian Left might have done in that situation, according to the dogma of 'our main enemy is at home'. Would it have criticised the Russian government for this 'escalation', saying that it 'should not jeopardise

inter-imperialist contradictions'? It is obvious to everyone that such behaviour would have been a mistake in that case. Why was this not obvious in the case of the aggression against Ukraine?

If the US and Russia reached an agreement and started a new Cold War against China, would that really be what we wanted?

In another Jacobin article from earlier this month, Marcetic went as far as saying that Fox News's Tucker Carlson was "completely right" about the "Ukrainian crisis". What Carlson had done was question "Ukraine's strategic value to the United States". Even Tariq Ali in the New Left Review approvingly quoted the calculation of German admiral Kay-Achim Schönbach, who said that giving Putin "respect" over Ukraine was "low cost, even no cost" given that Russia could be a useful ally against China. Are you serious? If the US and Russia could reach an agreement and start a new Cold War against China as allies, would that really be what we wanted?

Reforming the UN

I am not a fan of liberal internationalism. Socialists should criticise it. But this does not mean that we have to support the division of 'spheres of interest' between imperialist states. Instead of looking for a new balance between the two imperialisms, the Left has to struggle for a democratisation of the international security order. We need a global policy and a global system of international security. We have the latter: it is the UN. Yes, it has plenty of flaws, and it is often the object of fair criticisms. But one can criticise either to refute something or to improve it. In the case of the UN, we need the latter. We need a Leftist vision of reform and democratisation of the UN.

Of course, this does not mean that the Left should support all of the UN's decisions. But an overall reinforcement of the UN's role in the resolution of armed conflicts would allow the

Left to minimise the importance of military-political alliances and reduce the number of victims. (In a previous article, I wrote how UN peacekeepers could have helped to resolve the Donbas conflict. Unfortunately, this has now lost its relevance.) After all, we also need the UN to solve the climate crisis and other global problems. The reluctance of many international Leftists to appeal to it is a terrible mistake.

After Russian troops invaded Ukraine, *Jacobin's* Europe editor David Broder wrote that the Left "should make no apologies for opposing a US military response". This was not Biden's intention anyway, as he said multiple times. **But a large part of the Western Left should honestly admit that it completely fucked up in formulating its response to the "Ukrainian crisis".**

My perspective

I will finish by briefly writing about myself and my perspective.

Over the past eight years, the Donbas war has been the main issue that has divided the Ukrainian Left. Each of us formed our position under the influence of personal experience and other factors. Thus, another Ukrainian Leftist would have written this article differently.

I was born in the Donbas, but in a Ukrainian-speaking and nationalist family. My father became involved in the far-Right in the 1990s, observing Ukraine's economic decay and the enrichment of the former Communist Party leadership, which he had been fighting since the mid-1980s. Of course, he has very anti-Russian, but also anti-American views. I still remember his words on 11 September 2001. As he watched the Twin Towers falling on TV, he said that those responsible were 'heroes' (he does not think so anymore – now he believes that the Americans blew them up on purpose).

When the war began in Donbas in 2014, my father joined the far-Right Aidar battalion as a volunteer, my mother fled Luhansk, and my grandfather and grandmother stayed in their village which fell under the control of the 'Luhansk People's Republic'. My grandfather condemned Ukraine's Euromaidan revolution. He supports Putin, who, he says, has "restored order in Russia". Nevertheless, we all try to keep talking to each other (though not about politics) and to help each other. I try to be sympathetic towards them. After all, my grandfather and grandmother spent their whole life working on a collective farm. My father was a construction worker. Life has not been kind to them.

The events of 2014 – revolution followed by war – pushed me in the opposite direction of most people in Ukraine. The war killed nationalism in me and pushed me to the Left. I want to fight for a better future for humanity, and not for the nation. My parents, with their post-Soviet trauma, do not understand my socialist views. My father is condescending about my 'pacifism', and we had a nasty conversation after I showed up at an anti-fascist protest with a picket sign calling for the disbanding of the far-Right Azov regiment.

When Volodymyr Zelenskyi became president of Ukraine in the spring of 2019, I hoped this could prevent the catastrophe that is unfolding now. After all, it is difficult to demonise a Russian-speaking president who won with a programme of peace for Donbas and whose jokes were popular among Ukrainians as well as Russians. Unfortunately, I was mistaken. While Zelenskyi's victory changed the attitude of many Russians towards Ukraine, this did not prevent the war.

In recent years, I have written about the peace process and about civilian victims on both sides of the Donbas war. I tried to promote dialogue. But this has all gone up in smoke now. There will be no compromise. Putin can plan whatever he wants, **but even if Russia seizes Kyiv and instals its occupational government, we will resist it. The struggle will**

last until Russia gets out of Ukraine and pays for all the victims and all the destruction.

Hence, my last words are addressed to the Russian people: hurry up and overthrow the Putin regime. It is in your interests as well as ours.

25 February 2022 Republished from Ukraine Solidarity Campaign https://ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org/2022/02/25/a-letter-to-the-western-left-from-kyiv/

[Кампанія Солідарності з Україною (ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org)]



Women’s Climate Strike: Vigil and Rally March 7-8 in front of Scottish Parliament Edinburgh

Women’s Climate Strike: Vigil and Rally

7pm on March 7th to 7pm on March 8th

In front of the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh

International Women’s Day (IWD) is an international awareness day, celebrated annually on March 8 to commemorate the cultural, political, and socioeconomic achievements of women. It is also a focal point in the women’s rights movement, bringing attention to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, and violence and abuse against women.

Women’s Climate Strike call all from around Scotland to gather with women & FINT (female, intersex, non-binary, trans) outside the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood, for a ‘drop-in’ 24-hour vigil and rally for Climate & Nature.
Come and stand for the whole vigil or for couple of minutes (whatever you can manage); in solidarity with women and girls

already being impacted disproportionately by climate chaos around the world.

Women are carrying the weight of the inaction and yet still we wait for meaningful action to be taken to avert the rapidly unfolding climate and environmental crisis.

We will wait no longer. We want a seat at the table and we want climate justice now!

The 24-hour 'drop in' vigil will take place from 7pm on 7th March to 7pm on the 8th March. We can come together, act as one, and have immense power during this International Women's Day!!

Facebook Event for the vigil

In Edinburgh: there are these preparation activities:

Saturday, 26th and Sunday, 27th February: 11:00am to 1.00pm
Handing out flyers
Middle Meadow Walk, Edinburgh (in front of Sainsbury's)

Saturday, 5th March: 1-5 pm
Art / banner / placard making
Out of the Blue Drill Hall, 36 Dalmeny St. (off Leith Walk)
Facebook Event

If you want to be involved on March 7th or 8th, there are ways to support: as a Police Liaison, Legal Observer, or with the Wellbeing team.
If you are interested in taking part in these roles: reply to this or email selin.tekin.au@gmail.com.

All information reproduced from an appeal by XR Scotland

Oppose Russian Occupation – Solidarity with an Independent Ukraine!

ecosocialist.scot joins the worldwide condemnation of the Russian occupation of Ukraine and declares its solidarity with the resistance and its support for an Independent Ukraine.

Below we are publishing statements by two Scottish organisations – from Colin Fox of the Scottish Socialist Party and from Lynn Jamieson of Scottish CND; both organisations support Scottish independence and are opposed to NATO and its nuclear weapons being based in Scotland. We also welcome the support given to the UK-wide Ukraine Solidarity Campaign by organisations such as Republican Socialists and call for affiliations and support from across the labour and independence movements in Scotland for this campaign. Finally in order to help our readers keep up with events in Ukraine from a radical and ecosocialist perspective we are providing a link to the English-language Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières ("Solidarity Europe") website, which is compiling reports from the labour and radical movements across Europe and the globe on opposition to the Russian occupation. Further coverage of the situation in Ukraine and the solidarity movement will follow.

Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Statement on theRussian Invasion of Ukraine

Scottish CND unequivocally condemns Russia's military actions in Ukraine and the threat to use nuclear weapons.

For the UK to apply the use of force, individually or through NATO, would escalate conflict and increase the likelihood of nuclear misadventure through weapons use or involving the15 nuclear power stations in Ukraine. We urge respect for international humanitarian and human rights law and accession, and compliance with international treaties to reduce nuclear weapons risks, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.The international community must stand united in ensuring that we protect and support civilians, and Scotland must strongly reject the violations of international law by Russia and the disregard for Ukraine's sovereignty as an independent state.

Nuclear weapons do not deter conflict but make the world more dangerous, elevating the risk of a massive humanitarian catastrophe. We ask people in Scotland to help find ways of providing humanitarian support to the people of Ukraine and of enhancing dialogue with people in the Ukraine and Russia.

Lynn Jamieson (Chair) on behalf of Scottish CND 25 February 2022
https://www.banthebomb.org/statement-on-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine/



Colin Fox Statement on Russia and Ukraine

In response to the conflict in Ukraine, SSP National Co-Spokesperson Colin Fox has said:

“The Scottish Socialist Party felt it necessary to record our opposition to the developments that have taken place overnight in Ukraine.

“The country has been invaded.

“It’s necessary for us to put on record that we think that behaviour is reprehensible. It is utterly unacceptable for Russia to invade a sovereign country against the wishes of its people.

“It is an affront to the idea that nations like Ukraine are entitled to determine their own future.

“We call for the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. We call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the fighting on all sides.

“We believe that the people of the region are entitled to peace, and we believe that a negotiated way forward has to provide for the security of everybody in the region.

“We do not support the behaviour of the Russian state. We support the rights of Ukrainian people to self-determination, as indeed we do for those in Scotland and elsewhere.

“We want to see international treaties to guarantee the right to live in peace and prosperity for everybody.

“That is the view that the Scottish Socialist Party puts forward today.”

The Scottish Socialist Party affirms its support for the

right to self-determination for all nations, including Ukraine.

The Scottish Socialist Party reiterates that an independent Scotland should be free from the presence of Nuclear weapons, and that it should not be a member of NATO.

24 February 2022

Ukraine Solidarity Campaign

Кампанія Солідарності з Україною

The Ukraine Solidarity Campaign https://ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org/ seeks to organise solidarity and provide information in support of the Ukrainian labour movement

Affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign

If you would like more information about affiliating to USC contact us at: ***Ukraine Solidarity Campaign*** *write to: USC c/o PO Box 2378, London, E5 9QU Email: ukrsocsolidarity@aol.com*

Affiliation rates for Ukraine Solidarity Campaign

National Trade Union £150

Regional Committee £40

Trades Council £25

Trade Union Branch £20

Political organisation/community organisation

National £25

Local £10



Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières

Solidarity Europe (ESSF) articles on Ukraine

http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?rubrique1785

Women Defend Rojava (Event on 10 March 2022)

Over the past decade, the women fighters of the Kurdish-led forces in Northeast Syria have inspired our admiration and our hope for a better world, *says the Women Defend Rojava UK campaign*. Against all odds, these courageous women took up arms and defeated the Islamic State caliphate, while simultaneously fighting for a radical re-imagining of women's

liberation rooted in the Middle East and the Kurdistan Freedom Movement.

To mark International Women's Day, we are joined by the Commander of the YPJ Women's Defence Forces, Arzi Hesen, to discuss the challenges and victories of the women's movement in Northeast Syria and how revolutionary understandings of self defence have shaped one of the most inspirational and successful social movements of our times.

A Woman's Place is Rojava

The frontline of feminist anti-fascism in Northeast Syria in Conversation with YPJ Commander Arzi Hesen

Thursday 10 March, 6pm UK Time/18.00 UTC

Register for the event here: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYkcOmurjopHNFaO2DkhzoIutuXCFnh0XhX

Battle lines begin to be drawn in Scottish councils

Over 50 trade union and community activists braved the storms to attend a protest outside the headquarters of Glasgow City Council, the Glasgow City Chambers in George Square, on 17 February *writes Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot*.

The protest was against the budget setting meeting of Glasgow City Council and demanded 'no cuts' in council services and support for council workers pay demands in the face of a huge 'cost of living' crisis.

Among those attending and addressing the protests were representatives of Glasgow City council worker unions involved in pay disputes – Unite, Unison, GMB – alongside those involved in 'Glasgow Against Closures' community groups formed to fight the threatened cuts to the Council's library, museums and leisure centres and other facilities.

The protest was also attended by representatives of the Universities and Colleges Union at nearby Strathclyde University, currently involved in a strike against university employers over pensions, pay, working conditions and casualisation.

The protest was both part of an ongoing campaign against current cuts and closure plans of the SNP-led Council and the first shots in a battle around council funding in the run-up to the major Scottish Council Elections on Thursday 5 May.

Scottish government has underfunded councils

The Scottish Government has underfunded Councils for a decade as priority has been given to those public services under the direct control of the Government. While it is true that under the current devolution settlement the Scottish Government has been allocated a cash-restricted budget and unlike the UK government is limited under devolution in its ability to raise taxes on the rich or increase borrowing to defend public services, the cuts imposed on Scottish council budgets by the SNP-led government are seriously damaging to Scotland's working class and most deprived communities. Following the last council elections in 2017, for the first time ever no one party has a majority of control of any of Scotland's 32 councils with every council having a hotch-potch of minority control or coalition governance. This makes it an easy target for cuts from a Scottish government that does not adequately challenge the UK government's spending reductions.

Glasgow City Council faces a specific budget crisis due not only to the challenges of being Scotland's largest city, one of the poorest localities in the UK, and the continuing impact of the Covid pandemic but also due to the ongoing costs of the settlement of the successful equal pay court action brought by unions against the previous Labour council. The SNP-led minority council took office in 2017, as Labour were unceremoniously booted out of office by voters after around 40 years of control. While the new SNP leadership promised to deal with the spiralling costs of the equal pay settlement, they have failed to either introduce an adequate new pay structures or defend council services from cuts. This has resulted in a strike ballot for those on the affected grades by three of the council's unions – Unite, Unison, GMB – over the issue of a new pay structure. The ballot closes on 1 March and results will be expected shortly, but under the draconian UK government anti-union laws achieving the 50% turnout in a postal ballot in all three unions is a major challenge.

Glasgow community facilities face Council cuts

The SNP-led Glasgow City Council has also been strongly condemned for trying to save money by the closure of community facilities run by the Council's subsidiary "Glasgow Life", including local libraries and the iconic Glasgow Green and Peoples' Palace. The Council's budget approved at the meeting on 17 February includes as yet unclear cuts in services while "Glasgow Life" continues to try to transfer facilities to so-called community trusts, that are basically privatisation of public services. The budget for the council year from 1 April 2022 was passed by the City Council and includes cuts and a council tax rise of 3 percent. The Scottish Green Party councillors voted for the SNP budget. While Labour councillors claim to be against cuts, Labour's legacy of 40

years running the City including underpaying women workers resulting in the biggest equal pay court victory in UK history hardly inspires confidence. Their argument that the SNP also voted for discriminatory pay structures introduced by the ruling Labour group is somewhat of an irrelevant diversion from their own leading role in discrimination against women and the mismanagement of the City's finances. The ongoing battle to defend council facilities against budget cuts is being led by local groups who have united into the "Glasgow Against Closures" network. The battle against cuts and closures will continue.

Scottish Council Pay dispute continues

During 2021 bin workers in the GMB voted for industrial action over their national pay demands and local management of the service striking for a week during the COP26 conference in Glasgow. This resulted in some additional funding from the SNP Scottish Government, concerned at the global image of Glasgow being portrayed. In an important development those descending on Glasgow from the global climate justice movement, particularly Fridays for the Future activist Greta Thunberg, declared their solidarity with the bin workers and supported GMB picket lines. GMB members also marched on the Fridays for the Future demonstration in Glasgow during COP26 in an important display of solidarity for the struggles between climate justice and social justice. The underlying issues surrounding the bin worker strikes, however, have yet to be resolved.

While the national council workers' pay claim for 2021 was eventually settled very late in the year, the pay claim from 1 April 2022 is still ongoing – council worker unions across Scotland are demanding a £3,000 per year pay rise and a minimum wage of £12 per hour to cope with the Tory cost of

living crisis where inflation is now heading for around 7% and gas/electricity costs are heading through the roof. School teachers – members of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) union – have rejected the 2021-22 pay offer and demanded an improved offer; teachers are also drawing up demands for a 10% pay rise from 1 April 2022. While not employed by local councils, teachers in Scotland's 26 Further Education Colleges are also balloting on strike action and the ongoing disputes over pay and pensions in Scotland's 19 university institutions are still going on, with University and College Union (UCU) members engaging in strike action across Scotland. The opportunities for a united front by Scottish unions on public sector pay exist.

Crucial Council elections on 5 May

All this forms the backdrop for the Council elections on 5 May. While there will be national issues including the Tory UK government's cost of living crisis and the battle for Scottish Independence, the elections will also highlight local issues over council finances and cuts. Despite being opposed to the main system for local financing, the Council Tax introduced by the Tories after mass opposition drove the Poll Tax into oblivion in 1991, the SNP have failed in their commitment to abolish the Council Tax and reform council financing despite 15 years of SNP Scottish Governments. Local council services have been increasingly centralised and controlled from Holyrood rather than locally while public finance to Councils has been cut in real terms. The SNP's proposals for the much vaunted National Care Service is underfinanced and highly centralised. Action passed in legislation in 2019 to enable Scottish councils set up municipally-owned bus services has yet to see the light of day. While free bus travel has now been introduced for those 21 and under, the majority of the population face spiralling public transport costs including 3% fares rises and major service cuts on the ScotRail train network, due to be taken

over shortly by the Scottish Government from the failing private operator Abellio. The case for free public transport across Scotland is now urgent as a response to both the climate and cost of living crises.

However there seems little chance of the major changes needed from the continuation of SNP-led governance at local and national level. Labour is 'under new management' from the Starmer-supporting Anas Sarwar, but in local politics seems largely to be just rhetorically opposing the SNP without any serious alternative or change from its austerity-driven past. Scottish Labour was during the 1990s the dominant party of Scottish local councils with over half the 1,200 councillors and control of two thirds of the 32 councils. Due to its opposition to Scottish self-determination, it now faces an ongoing and existential crisis among its membership and voters as it continues to languish in third place on around 20% having lost control of all its last remaining councils including Glasgow in 2017. The coalition administration of Labour in 2017 as junior partner with the despised Tories to run Aberdeen City Council was denounced by the Scottish Labour leadership at the time and the nine councillors 'suspended'; but no further action was taken and the councillors have all been readmitted to the Party recently by its new leadership. The Daily Record has recently reported that the most senior Labour councillor in Scotland has declared her separation from the Party and will stand as an Independent.

The Scottish Greens have a foothold in both government and some local councils, but are not providing an alternative to the SNP. Those opposing the cuts and wanting to see serious change, including decent pay for council workers, need to look elsewhere – though there is little signs of any kind of major electoral alternative being posed across Scotland. The Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) are expected to stand in eight of the 300+ wards across Scotland – including four wards in Glasgow and in Edinburgh, North Ayrshire and Renfrewshire –

but that is half what they stood in 2017 and a long way short of the concerted national campaign needed. SSP candidates will be committed to opposing all cuts, supporting the council workers pay demands, abolishing the council tax, free public transport and other aspects of a genuine Red-Green opposition to the Tories at Westminster and the SNP at Holyrood.

It remains to be seen whether a serious electoral opposition can emerge during these elections but the battles in support of unions and community campaigns must go on.

26 February 2022



Scottish Socialist Party is standing in four Glasgow wards in the local elections, calling for defiance of cuts and support for action



Glasgow City Unison members are among those being balloted for industrial action over equal pay



Unite members join forces with UCU strikers in Glasgow



Striking UCU workers at Strathclyde University address Glasgow Council protests

All pictures: Mike Picken

Portugal: Behind the elections and the future for militancy

On 30 January elections Portuguese legislative elections took place for the parliament. The ruling Socialist Party (PS) won a convincing majority of seats while the main radical party the Left Bloc, known in Portuguese as "Bloco", suffered a severe setback. Bloco is a radical broad left and ecosocialist party that includes the supporters of the Fourth International in Portugal with whom ecosocialist.scot is linked. Below we publish an original article specially written by an activist in Bloco for ecosocialist.scot reflecting on the result and the challenges it poses for radical militancy.

What happened by the end of January was to be expected. The Socialist Party (PS) created an artificial crisis that put Bloco in check. However, the artificialness of the crisis did not make it any less real in the way it was perceived, especially when facing a right wing that brings back the ghosts of the most recent past – Troika – and of the most distant past – fascism. The strategy of eroding the government that had been the Bloco's strategy was not enough to open space for an alternative narrative to the PS's "stability", nor to disarm the right wing. Fear shifted Bloco and CDU (the coalition of Communist and Green parties) votes to the PS. We should not antagonize it, let's understand it.

The absolute majority of the PS has two effects: on the one hand, it allows PS to assert itself as the battlefront to the increasingly extreme right; on the other hand, the centrality of Parliament to which we have become used to will be overshadowed, making it difficult for Bloco to capitalize on the media presence that Parliament has guaranteed it. With these two effects, the PS has initiated the process of cannibalizing the left, in an attempt to occupy all of its space. This cannibalization entails future threats. In an electoral scenario of a few weeks, the quick response and the call for stability were an easy tool in the hands of the PS. However, in the long run, the strategy of a PS with absolute majority will not tackle the rise of the right. It may even aggravate it by failing to match the policy pursued with the demands, or needs, of the country.

In response to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Fernando Rosas wrote, in the newspaper Público, that the left had to oppose the Troika's labour laws, "the maintenance of the severe needs that put the SNS (Portuguese NHS) at risk due to the privatisation attempt, or the low salaries and pensions", just some of the specific problems that move us. From now on, it is important to rethink our form of action facing a difficult task: to overcome the politics of fear, without underestimating it, and to sow hope for a future, trying to be the engines of re-establishing democratic responsiveness. But we will not do this easily. Despite the parliamentarisation of politics, due to the shift of the institutional political axis to Parliament during the Geringonça [1], we have committed ourselves to fighting on the street which is an important political and strategic conviction, part of our DNA – let us remember the historic 2019 Feminist Strike. Nevertheless, the institutional design that came out of the January elections makes the organization of the social movement even more crucial, and without militancy, there is no organization.

What kind of militancy do we need?

We are talking about what some political scientists call the “militant with a purpose”, and not just a member or someone that socially navigates the spaces of militancy. This militant may be driven by a strong ideological commitment, or by specific goals, driven by specific fights. These are not mutually exclusive. The latter can lead to the former, the former can give meaning to the latter, integrating it into a set of demands capable of rewriting the meaning of words that we have used but that, in many cases, have been emptied of meaning: “public”, “solidarity”, “democracy”, “justice”, “freedom”, “equality”. (Look at the Portuguese liberal party’s “freedom”).

Nearly 50 years after the Revolution [of 1974], it has been proven that the survival of the meaning that gave words their meaning is not eternal, but it is possible to give that meaning back to them by organising specific fights, articulating them, arranging them under those same endangered meanings. Let’s look at [the outcomes of the recent elections in] Chile: Boric would not have won if, in 2019, a popular movement had not been generated contesting the increase in the price of public transport that made clear the Chilean government’s disregard for the outskirts of the big cities, serving as a starting point for other claims; if this movement had not been joined by a strong feminist movement around the right to abortion; if all these fights had not culminated in the need for a new Constitution, the (re)launching pad for the Chilean left.

Let us keep this in mind: a bus ticket helped prove the need for a new political and social pact.

The 2022 [Portuguese] legislative elections call for a serious reorganisation process that must necessarily include rethinking militancy, establishing a serious relationship with

the social movement, and becoming independent of the media and social networks.

Only deep roots prevent the tree from falling with the wind.

Article written by Mafalda Escada, translated by Patrícia Felício, and published with grateful thanks from ecosocialist.scot.

Note: [1] The *geringonça*, or 'contraption', was the name given to the political situation that emerged from the 2015 legislative elections, in which no party had a majority.

See also:

Socialist" Party wins but defeat for left in Portuguese elections, by Dave Kellaway
https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7507

On the Portuguese elections and the Left Bloc result
https://www.esquerda.net/en/artigo/portuguese-elections-and-left-bloc-result/79284

Brief outcome of the Portuguese 30th of January general elections
https://www.esquerda.net/en/artigo/brief-outcome-portuguese-30th-january-general-elections/79285

Left Bloc website articles in English
https://www.esquerda.net/english

From land grabbing to the housing crisis: Nid yw Cymru ar werth ("Wales is Not for Sale!")

Real Wild Estates Company and the French mega-corporation L'Oreal Groupe, recently met to discuss plans to buy up land to rewild, *writes Alex Heffon on the Welsh socialist blog of Undod*. They are explicitly looking to profit from forms of landlordism such as the private housing market and holiday lets while benefiting from public subsidies for activities such as tree planting.

They also aim to profit from new carbon markets, whereby carbon sequestered in the form of trees, pastures and peatland, will be exchanged for carbon credits, so that heavy emitting companies may "offset" their carbon emissions. This is how countries like the UK will reach "net zero" despite the practice being called dangerous by a group of climate scientists. A form of greenwashing that will do nothing to halt catastrophic climate change – but will enable the status quo to continue a little longer.

The UK is aiming to make itself the global financial capital of "green growth", which in practice means the continuation of neocolonialism (the practice of continuing to economically exploit former colonies) whilst the Global North continues to evade its responsibility for causing climate change. As Tom Goldtooth, leader of the Indigenous Environmental Network put it at COP26 it's a "new form of colonialism".

"Natural capital" is the ideology that underpins this fantasy that says you can financially value so-called "natural assets". This is supposed to facilitate "payments for

ecosystem services" (PES) whereby you pay for good practice and financially punish bad practice. Over time their aim is to improve the financial valuation of nature, which is supposed to indicate an improving state of ecosystems. It is argued that pricing ecosystems will lead to more rational and efficient management of natural resources and halt their destruction.

It's easy to see why this appeals to the Tories. But the complexity of ecosystems, along with the myriad ecological demands of human and non-human life, makes a mockery of this simplistic concept that privileges profit above all else.

For example, you might pay a landowner in Wales to sequester carbon in the form of tree-planting (itself more complex than is oft-realised), and in the process offset food production to the other side of the world, contributing to deforestation and Indigenous land dispossession elsewhere. In theory, so long as that destruction and death is made up for financially elsewhere, then it's possible to attribute a net benefit. This is clearly absurd.

A form of "biodiversity offsetting" that allows financial markets and corporations ever more control in managing the planet's ecology in a process dubbed land grabbing or "green grabbing". This flawed model of natural capital however, is the very logic that underlies the upcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme in Wales. As Calvin Jones warned, "rural Wales is in trouble."

Further commodification and financialisation of ecosystems is no answer to ecological breakdown and climate chaos which is already driven by capital accumulation in the first place. This is why hedge-funds are looking to "invest" in land. It's an easy way to profit from asset appreciation, rentier income and looming carbon exchange payments and subsidies.

‘Carbon Rush’ in Wales

Mark Redfern, of Voice.Wales, has uncovered how Foresight Group, an investment fund, has specifically set up Foresight Forestry Company PLC with the sole aim of profiting from this new carbon rush. They are looking to float on the London Stock Exchange for an initial offering of £200 million and are behind some of the recent land buyouts across Powys. There’s clearly money to be made for a small handful, but of what value will that be to rural Welsh communities and Wales as a whole?

There’s nothing to stop these companies from establishing conifer plantations that are of little ecological value, and the carbon credits they’ll accumulate will likely be used to offset fossil fuel emissions. So local communities, the wider ecology and the climate all lose, whilst private investment funds win. And what’s to stop them “asset stripping” these newly acquired ecosystems once they’ve served their purpose of capital accumulation and carbon offsetting?

Land in Wales is relatively cheaper than other parts of the UK, making it ripe for such profiteering. This is land that would’ve once been part of a small farm, but as farming becomes increasingly less viable, due to the capitalist food economy that pits farmers across the globe against each other in a race to the bottom, it becomes ever more difficult for small farms to survive. Land is either bought up by bigger farms, consolidating land, in order to compete in commodity production, or is now increasingly bought up by investment funds looking to extract financial value, all greenwashed in the vocabulary of ecosystem services. These groups, like Real Wild Estates Group, will espouse the lingo of community regeneration but in reality they will bring little of the sort.

Empower local people in ecological restoration

There is a need for ecological restoration across Wales, that few deny, but it must be led by, and for, Welsh communities. Land needs further democratisation, not further concentration that benefits capitalists and elites fortunate to be born into family dynasties that extend back to the Normans. These new public school-educated white knights, cloaked in Barbour, tweed and Le Chameau wellingtons, will not rescue our communities, even if the idea of being "rescued" itself wasn't misplaced and condescending enough.

True ecological restoration requires decommodification of food, land and labour. It requires us to direct human effort towards what urgently needs doing in the face of ecological and climate breakdown. The desire and knowledge is already there, but it's exceptionally hard to direct that energy to the tasks required when most people have to work hard enough as it is to maintain a living.

Project Skyline, in the Valleys, is one such attempt to reimagine land use in post-industrial regions, in a manner that re-empowers local people in the project of ecological restoration. Surely this is better than another Amazon warehouse or a faceless, pin-striped suit in London managing Welsh affairs yet again. Instead of being sold off to the highest bidder, in an independent Wales, land could be bought up by our own central bank and used to expand the county farm estate. Community land trusts, funded by low-cost, long-term loans provide another option, as does the new concept of "Public-Common Partnerships". But Wales can't do this without increased fiscal powers and it can't do this if it stays in thrall to capital. As Laurie Macfarlane points out, Scotland is also seeing a new round of land grabbing in the form of the "green lairds" – but Scotland does at least have the option of community land buyouts, unlike Wales. As it stands,

the Welsh Government will be actively subsidising these hedge-funds, through Glastir payments, to the tune of millions of pounds of taxpayer money. Money that instead could be used to expand the county farm estate –instead of running it down and selling it off.

All across Wales communities are under attack from the profit-driven, capitalist housing and land market. From decades of gentrification that is driving up rent and living costs for Cardiff's working class, to rural homes being bought as second houses or holiday lets, to the land being acquired by hedge-funds. It's something that unites everyone, except those that profit. All of this works to drive up the cost of living, drives people away from their home towns, villages and neighbourhoods, and turns Wales into the extensive leisure grounds of the wealthy.

We can see the detrimental effects this has on the Welsh language with the tragic closure of Ysgol Abersoch. As an act of triage to prevent further damage Welsh Government needs to, for example; enact rent controls, prevent buying of homes for holiday lets and second homes and regulate AirBnB, as Mabli Siriol called for at the recent Nid Yw Cymru Ar Werth rally in Caerdydd. They must also prevent so-called investors buying land and instead instigate land reform, as Robat Idris proposed last year. The new Plaid-Labour agreement hints that some of these demands might be met, though time will tell.

How long for Welsh Government action?

How long must we wait for Welsh Government to take action? In her article for Undod Angharad Tomos succinctly highlights that this damage is decades old. In some coastal parts of Pembrokeshire, 40% of houses are holiday homes, and in Abersoch, Gwynedd, it's 46%. Welsh Government recently

published a report looking into new policies to solve the second homes crisis but most importantly we need actions now before it's too late. Perhaps one stumbling block to Welsh Government taking effective action is the fact that 28% of MS' are landlords themselves? The wellbeing of future generations depends on it, and they require us to channel the spirit of Rebecca. Inspiration can be taken from the continued resistance shown by the Save the Northern Meadows campaign.

As Cian Ireland put it in his speech earlier this year, for the Nid Yw Cymru Ar Werth rally at Tryweryn:

> *"Instead of facing drowning by water, we face being drowned by a flood of wealthy buyers who can outcompete local people on the private market, which prioritises wealth before the needs of our people. This is an attack from the capitalist housing market on our communities."*

This article was originally published on the blog of Undod, the Welsh socialist organisation and is reproduced here with the kind permission of Undod. The original can be found here in English: https://undod.cymru/en/2022/02/04/cipio-tir-argyfwng-tai/ and here in the Welsh Language: O gipio tir i'r argyfwng tai: Nid yw Cymru ar werth – undod

'Undod' (Welsh for union or struggle) is a democratic, socialist republican, green and anti-hierarchical organisation set up to ensure radical independence for Wales Readers in Scotland and elsewhere can support Undod and sign up for mailings on

its website – https://undod.cymru/. All material is bi-lingual.



Glasgow Rallies against Cost of Living Crisis: ‘Don’t Piss on My Back and Tell Me It’s Raining!’

Several hundred protesters – trade unionists, community activists and environmental campaigners – defied the wind and the rain to demonstrate in central Glasgow on Saturday 12th

February. Their message, echoed in towns and cities throughout Britain, including other Scottish actions in Dundee and Edinburgh, was simple: despite the best efforts of the government, the corporations and the banks, working people won't pay for the crisis.

The event, called at only a few days notice, by the People's Assembly Against Austerity and supported by the Scottish Trades Union Congress, was addressed by a large number of speakers but the mood of the crowd was perhaps best summed up in the words of the first: *"Don't piss on my back and tell me it's raining!"*.

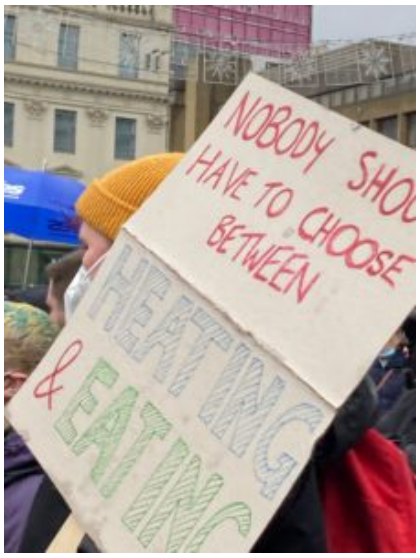
For years wages and benefits have stagnated whilst, more recently, working people have borne the brunt of the COVID outbreak. Now that prices are spiralling, and subjected to the most openly corrupt government in living memory, the same people who were hailed as heroes during the pandemic are now being told – by the governor of the Bank of England no less – that they must endure cuts in living standards for the sake of the 'economy'.

Numerous speakers highlighted the need for an alternative, to tax the rich and the big energy companies, and to take these and other utilities into public ownership. More importantly perhaps, was the acknowledgment that faced with a ruthless offensive by the ruling class, a united and militant fight back is required and that Saturday's events are just the beginning.

Speakers included: Roz Foyer General Secretary of the Scottish Trade Union Congress; trade unionists from Unison, Unite, RMT and PCS; parliamentarians included Mercedes Villalba Scottish Labour MSP from the Holyrood Parliament and Tommy Sheppard SNP MP at the Westminster Parliament. The intrepid ecosocialist.scot video camera and photography team braved the rain managing to catch a number of the speeches for our new YouTube channel and the pictures below.



The rain did not dampen spirits Pic I Gault



Glasgow plain speaking Pic I Gault



Roz Foyer, STUC General Secretary welcomes protestors Pic M Picken



The pro independence movement supported the protest. Pic M Picken



The SNP Trade Union Group supported the protest Pic M Picken



Fridays for the Future Speaker talked about saving the planet. Pic M Picken



Unions were leading the protest. Pic M Picken

ExclusiveYou Tube Videos of the Protest:

ecosocialist. scot YouTube channel

Speeches from

- Roz Foyer (STUC)
- Shami Chakrabati (Labour)
- Mercedes Villalba MSP (Scottish Labour)
- Unison Glasgow City Council,
- Gordon Martin (RMT Scotland)

Spanish State: assessment of the failed repeal of the labour law

The political consequences and aftermath of the new labour law reform deal recently signed by the Spanish state government (a coalition of the Spanish social democratic party (PSOE) and the left wing Unidos Podemos) and the employers, with the consent of the two major trade unions (UGT and CCOO) are examined below in an article from January 2022, written by Brais Fernández from Anticapitalistas Madrid. [Anticapitalistas is the confederal section in the Spanish state of the Fourth International and a sister organisation of ecosocialist.scot.]

The article examines which points of the labour law have been touched and why these measure are unsatisfactory for working people, and demonstrates that the previously ruling conservative People's Party's (PP) former labour law policy has not been repealed by the new government, but that the changes are insufficient (in 2012 Spanish unions organised a general strike against the PP labour laws). This political development illustrates some of the difficulties for those on the radical left who join in a coalition with social democratic parties, the main minister responsible being a member of the Communist Party.

Finally, the article looks at the analysis of the most relevant Spanish state political actors and what to expect from the alternative left. Since the article was written Pablo Iglesias, the former leader of Podemos, has been advising the employers' organisations to support the changes.

The picture above shows Galician trade unions marching to reject the deal.

As this is a complex issue and our readers may not be familiar with Spanish state politics, ecosocialist.scot has provided an extended glossary of its own below the article



Spanish workers march against labour laws in 2012

Picture: Spanish state general strike against labour law in 2012

Political assessment of the failed repeal of labour law in the Spanish State

Introduction

After months of discussion at discreet negotiating tables, the government, led in this case by [Communist Party minister] Yolanda Díaz, CCOO and UGT trade unions and the CEOE (Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales – the Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations) announced an agreement to readapt the labour reform.
Far from the programmatic pact signed by the government, this agreement abandons the “repeal” approach and assumes as its basis the 2012 reform of the Popular Party. The governmental left has tried to sell (once again) the agreement as historic;

sectors of the right, such as the newspaper ABC, the famous and mediocre liberal economist Juan Ramón Rallo, the president of the CEOE and Luis Garicano have come out in defence of the agreement, considering that, despite the irritation caused by the fact that it is led by the left, it does not touch (despite certain limitations on temping) the basic pillars of the labour model implemented by the bipartisan party.

What is being changed and what is left untouched

In terms of changes in labour legislation, it is difficult to sell this as a success, although the illusionist machinery of progressivism tries to do so with its mixture of blackmailing and passive-aggressive argumentation against the critical left, seasoned with an increasingly sham and gloomy verbal illusionism. The lower cost of redundancies are untouched, the flexibility of objective dismissals is maintained, the lack of administrative control in collective dismissals, the processing salaries are not recovered? It remains to be seen whether the priority application of sectoral agreements will be applied to existing agreements, although it only affects wages, not working conditions. The only thing that can be sold as an improvement of rights has to do with the extension of the agreements, a concession to the trade union apparatus that makes it possible to avoid further formal setbacks after years in which the bargaining power of these actors had strongly regressed. Employers are satisfied: they retain the possibility of free and cheap dismissal and, on the other hand, the full capacity to organize work as they want, because they are able to modify conditions at will.

In other words, we are not dealing with a repeal of the PP labour reform or a new labour reform: we are dealing with a small correction of the framework of labour precariousness and pro-corporate flexibility that was historically imposed by the

PP, PSOE and the CEOE, protected by the trade union apparatuses.

At the heart of the consensus, modernization

For some time now, the leaders of PSOE and Unidos Podemos (UP) have been insisting on the idea of a new modernization. Perhaps the text that most clearly expresses this thesis, unfortunately little discussed on the left, is an article by Alberto Garzón and Enrique Santiago [1], which went unnoticed and which tried to provide a theoretical basis for what Pablo Iglesias had been saying for some time through his media statements.

This article dealt with the commitment of the progressive left to the modernization of the Spanish state. Modernization is the equivalent in economic policy terms of the term regeneration in politics. It is about updating the forms and sectors that are the backbone of Spanish capitalism. In the article, the classic rhetoric of green capitalism is combined with ridiculous illusions in the capacity of progressivism to direct investment and capitalist development. Absurd illusions, not only because of the nature of capitalism, but also because UP is a subaltern part of a weak government that is not going to undertake any reform that would modify the relationship between state and capital, and that could generate a disruptive counter-trend against neoliberalism.

The most interesting thing about the article, beyond these old and extravagant assertions about the “progressive development of the productive forces” and the capacity of the left to guide this process, is the political background, which has become a dogma of faith in the new UP led by Yolanda Díaz. The two leaders of the IU and the PCE recognized an ally in certain sectors of the bosses. The article clearly took up the old axiom shared by right-wing Eurocommunism and social

democracy converted to socio-liberalism (whose most advanced synthesis is the Italian Democratic Party): modernization is "something that the government can only solve if part of the business class, the most dynamic and lively, is part of the solution". In other words, the adversary is not the business class, because the short-term objective is no longer to weaken its social power, but to strengthen it. Instead he only enemy is the political right wing, which with its outbursts fails to fulfil its state responsibilities and becomes an obstacle to modernization.

This progressive modernization faces certain objective limits (the role of the Spanish state in the global market, the multiple crises experienced by capitalism at the global level and the Spanish specificities that derive from it), but let us be clear. The aim of modernization is not to modernize the Spanish productive structure: it is to reactivate the Spanish growth cycle, because in reality, our modernizers (liberal or Eurocommunist) only believe that the economy can be activated through the reactivation of capitalist profits.

The famous consensus, the fetish word of our new-found Transition, reappears on the basis of these objectives. The famous consensus, a pseudo-Gramscian caricature justified on the basis of agreement with who should be your irreconcilable enemy and built on the exclusion of broad sectors that should be allies: precarious workers, migrants, workers in small and medium enterprises – little is said about how this labour reform fails to include them within the umbrella of union bargaining – and a long etcetera of the vast majority of working men and women. But let us be fair. If the thesis is that we must prioritize the alliance and links with employers, the non-labour reform promoted by Yolanda Díaz fulfils its role to perfection. It is no more and no less than a translation in labour terms of the famous modernization, as it adapts the regulatory structure of labour to the political and economic needs of capitalism. That is to say, this new labour

agreement complements the other two great axes on which progressivism sustains the modernizing project, reintegrating the trade union leaderships in its management: the distribution of European funds (money that goes to big business as a way of compensating for its crisis of profitability through public subsidy, an orthodox neoliberal practice) and wage containment to prevent inflation from being paid for by corporate profits, the first example of which we saw with the tanks in Cádiz.

In short, I do not think that we are facing a move towards anything other than this modernizing project that we have enunciated. This discussion is important because it locates us on the political and economic map on which progressivism is moving and prefigures a certain political position. It is a question of assuming a position of active opposition to modernization and to the different political milestones that make it possible, as well as building an alternative to it, but also, and this is important, defining the political scenarios that this project (still weak and subject to the volatility of crises) can generate.

Political readings

Politically, this is a defeat for the forces that for years have mobilized against this model of bipartisanship (including, of course, the militancy of the left-wing forces that signed the agreement), even though it is a political triumph for the modernizing integration of the left. I know it is fashionable to sell the idea that it is a partial advance, but from a political point of view it is false to sell it that way. The government agreement is breached, as the labour reform is not repealed. All the parties in the government bloc agreed on that point, achieved through years of struggle, because, let’s not forget, this is a demand that has been kept alive by mobilization. After years of insisting that things were changed through the BOE, it turns out that when the left

has a parliamentary majority to pass certain laws, it does not happen. Moreover, an unelected actor like the CEOE is introduced to determine the whole negotiation process. This negotiation has been a good indication of how the logic of the political regime inherited from the Transition works. When the right governs, the social consensus is broken and only businessmen rule. When the left governs, the social consensus is reorganized so that they also continue to rule. The hypothesis that UP in the executive would guarantee government agreements has already been shelved without much hesitation by the leaders of the left: now it is only a question of selling as progress what is a surrender a necessary and non-contingent counterpart of a profound strategic shift.

In this sense, it seems to me that from the left (I use this term for lack of a better and equally broad one), we must discuss some questions.

I believe that this is not simply a problem of narrative or of how the government has sold what is evidently the acceptance of the current political order with some modifications. The problem is political and strategic. It is as naïve to believe that an anti-capitalist transformation is possible within this regime as it is to think that there is no margin for struggle and partial gains. Partial gains can be wedges, temporary and always subject to the need to be defended, which the subaltern classes manage to introduce and which aim to improve the conditions of life and struggle within and against the system itself. To renounce them is to renounce politics as well, and worse, to assume for example the idea that an impoverished working class will be more radical, when the opposite is the case. It is the strength and strengthening of our class, in a broad sense and without corporate residues, that will allow us to be in a better position to take on transformative challenges. In reality, it is about betting on introducing those wedges not to get out of the crisis, but to live and fight in it, displacing it through political and economic

struggle towards capital, while the working class grows stronger. It is there, at that point, that agreements of struggle between the left can be found.

I make this clear because I think it is wrong to assume that this precise course of events was inevitable. It is the result of strategic decisions and the direction taken by the governmental left, which they are now trying to compensate for with cackling about unity and new leaderships. A strategy that seeks to improve the famous balance of power must be based on social and political conflict, and not on modernizing consensus, and requires two objectives: using all spaces to extend the conflict (and that includes using positions in the state and in parliament in that context, blocking whatever needs to be blocked to achieve these partial conquests) and a broad and organized will to mobilize. There has been no appetite for this in the governmental left; there has been no capacity on the left outside the government or in the social movements. A bitter lesson, but one that deserves to be discussed without compromise, avoiding in my opinion falling into that fetish ("the social or the political") mentioned by Daniel Bensaid: we need to fight in the streets and in the workplaces, a stronger fighting trade unionism, capable of dragging along sectors today imbricated in the organisations of the modernizing consensus, but also their own political instruments and projects, so as not to depend on a logic of pressure that allows the apparatuses of the left to end up integrated into the state and assuming pro-capitalist management. To put it clearly: calls for struggle are not enough, we need political organisation to confront this new stage. Putting pressure on and delegating politics to the left is also an ideological mechanism that only generates disappointments and defeats.

In the short term, preventing this rift from closing

Everyone knows that this does not end either the problems or the debate on the world of work. Propaganda has very short legs. Both Basque and Galician trade unionism, as well as alternative trade unionism in the rest of the Spanish state, have already shown their opposition to this compromise. A political position correlated with this is also needed: we will see what happens with parties such as Bildu or ERC, as it would be good if they stood firm in their announced rejection of the reform and did not turn around at the first opportunity. [2] It has been decided to maintain the same labour law as in the previous stage, in order to deepen the "modernizing progressive" consensus. We do not yet know the political effects of this, although it is possible that when the propaganda high wears off, disaffection towards the governmental left will continue to grow, without, to be honest, other alternative forces being able to channel this disaffection towards the left in the short term. Let us draw the strength to fight in the short term, but let us also prepare ourselves for a new stage, which, despite the consensus from above, promises to be turbulent. Because modernization is nothing more and nothing less than a reorganization of the ruling class in its struggle against the working and subordinate classes.

30 December 2021

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FOOTNOTES

[1] https://www.eldiario.es/opinion/tribuna-abierta/modernizacion-espana-enemigos_129_6295329.html Garzón is a prominent member of Izquierda Unida (IU – United Left), Santiago is the General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party.

[2] Bildu is a Basque political party, ERC a Catalan one. *[NB Both parties abstained on the formation of the PSOE/UP government, see below. ERC, Republican Left of Catalonia, is closely aligned with the SNP in Scotland.]*

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Glossary by ecosocialist.scot (see also footnote [2])

ABC – one of the three largest circulation newspapers in the Spanish state.

BOE – Boletín Oficial del Estado, the official publication/website of the Government of Spain (Gobierno de España). Since January 2021 this government has been a coalition of left-of-centre parties, PSOE and UP, with the external support of other left/nationalist parties in the Parliament

UGT – Unión General de Trabajadores (General Union of Workers) a major Spanish state union federation historically aligned with the PSOE

CCOO – Workers' Commissions (Comisiones Obreras) the largest Spanish state union organisation, originally linked to the PCE

PSOE – Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers Party), the Spanish social democratic party which has led the government since January 2020

UP – Unidas/Unidos Podemos ("United We Can") an electoral alliance of left wing parties: **Podemos** ("We Can") and United Left/**IU** (Izquierda Unida) itself an alliance led by the Communist Party of Spain (**PCE**); UP is the junior partner in the January 2021 coalition led by the PSOE and holds Deputy Prime Minister and ministerial positions, including Yolanda Diaz, the minister responsible for labour law who is a member of PCE. The leader of Podemos and original Deputy Prime Minister in the Jan 2020 government, **Pablo Iglesias**, retired from politics in 2021 following the heavy defeat of UP in local elections in Madrid that he resigned from government to lead the campaign for.

CEOE – Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations (Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales), the main employers' organisation in the Spanish state

PP – People's Party (Partido Popular) the main conservative party in the Spanish state and the governing party at the time of the current labour law in 2012. It lost a vote of confidence in 2018 and was replaced by a minority PSOE government, subsequently replaced by the PSOE/UP coalition in January 2020. Historically the PP was the main right wing party emerging from the Franco dictatorship and included elements of Francoism in its base but it now faces a challenge to its right from the more explicitly pro-fascist **VOX** party ("Voice").

AC – Anticapitalists (Anticapitalistas) the confederal section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state and one of the founding organisations of Podemos. It left Podemos following the formation of the government coalition with PSOE in January 2020.

Eurocommunism – an ideological trend that emerged in the PCE in Spanish state and other European Communist Parties during the 1970s, that while representing progress away from unconditional support of the Soviet Union also marked a move

to the right and political convergence with European social democratic politics.

Galicia, Basque country (Galiza, Euskadi) – two of the three national territories (officially: Autonomous Communities) within the Spanish state, the third being Catalonia (Catalunya); there are movements for independence from the Spanish state in all three of these countries which also have their own languages and history, with certain similarities with the positions of Wales and Scotland within the UK state. Some of the pro-independence or nationalist parties within these territories supported the formation of the PSOE/UP coalition government in January 2020, some abstained, while some, such as the left wing CUP (Popular Unity Candidacies) in Catalonia, opposed it on the grounds that the government maintains opposition to self determination for these territories.

Introduction and Glossary by Lorena Sorentes and Mike Picken, for ecosocialist.scot

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Against NATO and Russian military escalation in Eastern Europe

Statement of the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

We must mobilize against the looming military (and nuclear) threats, in the context of political instability, economic disorder and inter-imperialist collision; in defence of the rights of the Ukrainian people.

A serious and dangerous situation with a worldwide geopolitical dimension

For the past month or so, we have been witnessing a military escalation around Ukraine that constitutes a serious threat to Europe and the world, and which takes us back to the most serious crises at the height of the Cold War, such as the Korean War (1950-53), the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 or the deployment of the Euro-Missiles (and the Soviet SS20) in the early 1980s, when Ronald Reagan contemplated the possibility of resorting to tactical nuclear armaments on the European theatre.

The danger of the ongoing verbal and military spiral and the risk of sliding into armed conflict, whether low-intensity or far-reaching, localized or generalized, conventional or also including some form of nuclear threat, is greater than in the episodes already mentioned. While the Ukrainian people are the first to be affected, the threats concern all the actors involved in the verbal and bellicose spiral of the current crisis, in particular all the peoples of Europe.

We are therefore faced with a double challenge:
• to respond to the fears expressed in Ukraine regarding the Russian troops on its borders, allegedly aimed at preventing Ukraine’s integration into NATO;
• to take the measure of the real dangers produced by the escalation of warmongering declarations and behaviour whose stakes go beyond the Ukrainian question.

Our overall position on NATO is twofold: in the aftermath of the Second World War the Fourth International opposed NATO at its inception and, a fortiori, demanded that this military alliance should be disbanded in 1991 along with the Warsaw Pact. We also condemn Russia’s imperialist rhetoric and

behaviour, which has led a growing section of the Ukrainian population to turn to NATO. The withdrawal of foreign forces (Atlantic and Russian) and the military neutrality of Ukraine are the only protection of its independence. But it is up to the Ukrainian people – and not to blackmail and negotiations between great powers – to decide on their membership or not of NATO.

The main factors that contribute to the danger of an unstable geo-political situation are

• Major energy issues (especially associated with the problems of the transition to renewable energy) with Russian power able to exploit the different energy situations (and dependencies) of the EU and the US – in the context of enormous economic volatility and the very real risk of a new financial crash; problems of scarcity and inflation, energy difficulties and major problems of the transition to renewable energy.

• A series of armed conflicts in the former Soviet Union, from Ukraine since 2014 to Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, via Chechnya and a long process of rebuilding Russian military power and making up for the setbacks and humiliations suffered since the end of the Cold War – and a relative consolidation of Russia's grip on Belarus and Kazakhstan encouraging Putin's great power posturing;

• And, more specifically, the crisis of the political system and the internal instability of the United States – barely a year after the coup-style assault on Capitol Hill promoted with impunity by a Trump who sees himself returning to the White House very quickly – the European Union and, above all, Russia itself, after two years of widespread pandemic and revolts against authoritarianism, corruption and repression.

• The stalling of the "Normandy Format" (France, Germany, Russia, Ukraine) of conflict management in Ukraine after Russia's occupation of Crimea since 2014.

Both Putin and Biden need to present a strong and aggressive image on the one hand to regain domestic credibility and

legitimacy and on the other to discipline what they consider to be their respective areas of influence: Putin to recover from the biggest wave of anti-authoritarian protests since Perestroika, which Russia has been experiencing for several months, and the revolts against corruption, inequalities and post-Stalin paternalism in what he believes to be Russia's area of influence (Belarus, Kazakhstan, etc…); Biden, who is on the verge of midterm congressional elections, after a humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan and weighed down by a disappointing domestic policy that has brought him a level of unpopularity comparable to that of Trump in the last months of his presidency. Putin's position inside Russia also depends directly on his foreign policy stance. His fourth presidential term ends in 2024, after which he will have to retain power (in the face of his declining popularity) or hand it over to his "successor". This process of "transit of power" in a situation of complete degradation of all political institutions depends only on Putin's own decision and his ability to rally the bureaucratic and financial elites around him in front of internal and external threats.

First threat of nuclear war in sixty years

The arrogance of their respective statements is proportional to their political weakness: "I hope Putin is aware that he is not far from a nuclear war". "Putin wants to test the West and he will pay a price for it that will make him regret what he has done", said Biden during a press conference on 20 January. But bellicose declarations of this type, even if they are the result of gesticulations and a game of lying poker, are never harmless and without the risk of uncontrolled spiralling.

The determining factor behind the massive concentration of its troops on Ukraine's northern and eastern borders is Russia's fear of a hypothetical Ukrainian entry into NATO, which would

allow the deployment of hostile nuclear weapons next to its country.

30 years after the end of the USSR and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact: between NATO enlargement and the reconstruction of Russian imperialism

When Mikhail Gorbachev decided to dismantle the Warsaw Pact 30 years ago, NATO leaders agreed to dissolve the Atlantic pact and pledged that the future reunified Germany would be a neutral country, as Austria had been since the end of World War II. As we know, not only did the reunified Germany join the Atlantic Alliance, but the Alliance has since expanded eastward, integrating most of the countries that for 45 years had belonged to the Soviet Bloc: in 1999 Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In 2004 Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia followed. Albania and Croatia in 2009, and in 2020 it was the turn of North Macedonia.

The maintenance and expansion of NATO, far from pacifying the continent's relations, is actually straining them – and can only encourage a grand Russian expansionist logic to the detriment of the countries situated between the EU and the Moscow-dominated Eurasian Union.

Russia's military mobilization along the Ukrainian border explains why Biden has announced that he is willing to negotiate that strategic weapons will not be deployed in Ukraine and that Ukraine's NATO membership is not on the agenda. However, we cannot forget that, according to the FBI's own reports, since the overthrow of the Yanukovich government in Ukraine, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the secession in the Donbass, Ukraine has become a training ground for the international fascist movement, which has recruited anti-Russian fighters to be integrated into Ukrainian militias in much the same way as Islamic fundamentalism used the war in Afghanistan first (with the

formation of Al Qaeda at the time by the CIA and Pakistani military intelligence), then the war in Bosnia and, more recently, in Iraq and Syria (the origin of Daesh terrorism). But the so called “People’s Republic of Donetz” is also recruiting fascist and ultranationalist Slav forces.

Logically, despite the Russian escalation and the mobilization of NATO troops and US armaments stationed in the Baltic republics, there is fortunately room for negotiation, but it will be difficult to reach a flexible solution when both sides have made the situation very tense and are starting from positions of political weakness and internal institutional instability.

From military follies to economic follies: on the “sanctions” threatened by Biden

Despite Biden’s and NATO’s aggressiveness, European powers are divided over what to do. While some countries such as France and Germany are very reluctant to engage in military deterrence, the subservient attitude of the “progressive” Spanish government is particularly pathetic. Logically, Germany is a key country in this scenario, as its economic vulnerability and energy dependence on Russia is enormous. Biden threatens never-before-seen sanctions, such as expelling Russia from the global SWIFT payments system or cutting the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, to which Putin responds by saying that this would mean the “complete severance of relations” with the US. If Russia, which has been deliberately raising the price of its gas exports to Europe as a geopolitical pressure measure for months, were to decide either to further escalate the price or to cut off supplies directly, we are talking about a drastic reduction in industrial activity and the supply of electricity and heating to much of Central Europe with its consequent socio-economic impact, which would

undoubtedly be dramatic. On the other hand, if Russia were to be expelled from the SWIFT system, the $56 billion in Western financial assets and 310 billion euros placed in Russian companies would most likely be severely jeopardized by an immediate targeting of the Russian response (in fact, even some Western officials also state that this is not realistic). There is no doubt that an energy, financial and trade war of this calibre would be lethal for a global economy dragging with it two years of pandemic and all the accumulated destabilizing effects of forty years of long wave of recession, financialization and neoliberal deregulation and, last but not least, it would favour further geo-economic and geopolitical rapprochement between Russia and China, the biggest nightmare imaginable for Washington strategists.

Uncertainties of the situation

US and British authorities are ordering their citizens to leave Ukraine, citing the danger of a Russian invasion of the country. These actions help to create a war psychosis and further strain the situation. However, Germany has vetoed the delivery of former GDR (East Germany) arms to Ukraine that some Baltic republics were seeking. British military flights carrying arms to Ukraine these days avoid flying over German territory. Paradoxically, the few sensible comments on the current situation come not from politicians or journalists, but from some military personnel: “The media are adding fuel to the fire of a conflict, I have the impression that nobody realizes what a war really means,” says General Harald Kujat, a former Bundeswehr inspector general. “It can’t be that we only talk about war instead of how to prevent war”.

The Russian political situation and

Putin’s intentions

Russia, with a military budget equivalent to 3% of world military spending (let us not forget that we are talking about the world’s second largest conventional army, land forces on a par with those of the US and a nuclear arsenal almost equivalent to that of the US), is playing a very dangerous destabilizing game in a context of strategic division and internal crisis in NATO, which could provoke a very aggressive reaction from that military alliance. Contrary to the claims of the Cold War nostalgic left-wing campists who confuse Putin’s neo-Tsarist, oligarchic and nationalist policies – which have contributed to crushing genuine rebellions and popular revolutions in Syria, Belarus and Kazakhstan and to muzzle, repress and intimidate the democratic opposition and popular forces in the Russian Federation – with the revolutionary, proletarian and internationalist policies of Lenin, Russia’s foreign policy is undoubtedly reactionary.

Nowadays Russian society suffers massive poverty and inequality (even higher than the US). In fact, the “new architecture of the world” that Russia advocates is the old-style imperialism of the early 20th century, where the world is divided into “spheres of interests” of big powers and small countries are denied any right to control their own destiny. Russia’s main claim to America from this perspective is that it has built a “one sovereign” world (in Putin’s famous phrase) and is unwilling to share it with the rest of the global players.

However, for most of the Western media Putin and the “fearsome” Lavrov are the only villains in the film. But the truth is that, in the words of someone as unsuspicious of Bolshevik radicalism as Oskar Lafontaine, “there are many gangs of murderers in the world, but if we count the deaths they cause, Washington’s criminal gang is the worst”. What the Russian people needs is détente, a chance to develop a

democratic and popular opposition capable of fracturing the fragile alliance between post-Stalinist bureaucracy and mafia oligarchy that forms the basis of the authoritarian regime embodied by Putin, of defusing the nationalist hysteria that binds this reactionary bloc together, and of relaunching the demands of youth, women and the toiling classes in an internationalist key.

What can we expect?

That Russia is going to “invade Ukraine”, occupying the whole country, is completely out of the question. In the streets of Budapest, traces of the Soviet occupation of 1956 can still be seen today. What happened then in Hungary would be child’s play compared to what would happen in Ukraine today.

What is much more likely is that Putin will install “tactical” nuclear missiles in Belarus, Kaliningrad and other nearby territories. Nor can the possibility of an annexation of the Donbass be excluded. The current rising oil and gas prices, and the expectation that they will continue to rise, could allow the Kremlin to cover the economic costs of such operations. And, although less likely and much riskier – and certainly much bloodier – a Russian military operation to seize the area south of Donbass (Mariupol) in order to organize a security belt in a south-westerly direction and connect two rebel areas with the Crimean peninsula cannot be ruled out either.

The tasks of revolutionary, pacifist and democratic forces in Europe and the world

The current developments are serious and extremely dangerous for peace in Europe. As we know, in situations of maximum tension no actor has absolute control over events and any

accident can trigger uncontrollable situations. An international mobilization is urgently needed to lay the foundations for a global anti-militarist and anti-nuclear offensive. Tensions in the Asia-Pacific area are also linked to the ongoing escalation in Ukraine and imperialist temptations in times of economic, social and institutional crisis of the great powers are particularly dangerous. For all these reasons, we call on political, social, associative, national, regional and international organizations to seek major international mobilization occasions to link up again with the internationalist and solidarity impulse of the left.

Let’s organize the mobilization for de-escalation, peace, the dissolution of the blocs and the self-determination of the peoples!

Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

30 January 2022

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See also: **Ukraine: for peace and de-escalation – Statement of the Russian Socialist Movement** **30 January 2022** [The Russian Socialist Movement (RSD) is an organization of the radical left in which members of the Fourth International in Russia are active.]

