

# **Ecosocialist Film Night: PickAxe – Tuesday 27 June, 6.30pm, Glasgow**

To book tickets, click >>> [HERE](#)

Join us for a showing of PickAxe, a 1999 documentary about the victorious struggle of American eco-activists to stop the logging of a protected, old growth forest at Warner Creek in Oregon.

When Warner Creek suffered an arson attack which led to a wildfire in 1991, the forest service sold off the protected woods to the highest bidder to be salvage-logged. In order to stop that, activists occupied the logging road into Warner Creek with a fortified camp, tore up the tarmac with pickaxes, and settled in for a months-long battle against the park service, the timber companies, and the police.

A fascinating document of resistance by and for activists, PickAxe has much to teach a new generation of climate activists who are becoming ever more interested in direct action and protest militancy.

After the showing, there will be time for a discussion of the film and its message: What can we learn from the Warner Creek blockade? Can we take any of the politics and tactics from there and apply them to Scotland? What were the shortcomings of the Warner Creek activists?

Sales of tickets go towards fundraising for the costs of sending a delegation of Scottish activists to this years Socialist Youth Camp being put on by the 4th International over in France! Lend a hand to the comrades, watch a good film

and have a good chat about eco-activism!

TIME: 6:30PM to 9PM

PLACE: Red Rosa's event space, 195 London Rd, Glasgow, G40 1PA

TICKETS: You can either pay on the door or purchase a ticket online [here](#).

£5 entry

Or if you wanna be a real gem: £8 solidarity price

(And for all stalwarts who would give yet more to the cause, the fundraising tin will be there too!)

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## **“Prigozhin’s March”: What Was It All About?**

*The Posle Editorial Collective assess Wagner’s mutiny and its consequences:*

The events of June 23-24 are already being described as the most serious domestic political challenge to Putin’s regime. In a matter of hours, Wagner units managed with little resistance to take control of Rostov-on-Don and Voronezh, major cities in southern Russia. They even got a few hundred kilometers outside of Moscow. By announcing the start of a military rebellion, Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin openly challenged the necessity for a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, demanded the removal of Russia’s military leadership, and claimed his goal was the restoration of “justice.” And while the conflict was resolved with little blood it seems to have forever undermined Putin’s promise of stability and regime’s unity.

There’s no doubt Prigozhin is a war criminal and an

opportunist pursuing his personal interests. In the months leading up to the mutiny, Prigozhin made numerous statements bashing the Russian military leadership trying to take control of Wagner units staffed by both former Russian prisoners and retired army officers. Yevgeny Prigozhin, who owes his career to Putin's patronage and has extensive connections in the state security apparatus, has turned out to be the most aware of the regime's weaknesses and the vulnerability of Putin's "chain of command." Generals Surovikin and Alekseev, who have played key roles in the so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine, publicly called on Prigozhin to "come to his senses" and "resolve the matter peacefully." Most of the army stood in silent neutrality toward the rebels. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, whom Prigozhin demanded to meet, never commented on what was happening and disappeared. Note that the leaflets distributed by Wagner not only called for their resignation, but also for an immediate court martial for Shoigu and Gerasimov on accusations of the brutal treatment of soldiers, poor supplies to the army, and concealing the truth about the course of the war.

On the morning of June 24, Vladimir Putin delivered an urgent five-minute address to the nation. He called Wagner's rebellion a "stab in the back" of the Russian army but did not mention any specific actions to crush it down. Putin highlighted the moral and political dimensions of the mutiny and called it a betrayal deserving of the harshest response. He blamed the mutineers for putting Russia on the brink of civil war and military defeat. Yet, the Russian president did not mention any names, revealing his poor preparedness and uncertainty about the situation. Several thousand-armed columns of the Wagner fighters crossed a vast distance in less than a day and voluntarily stopped 200 kilometers short of Moscow. At the same time, President Putin, presumably, rushed out of the capital, recording his addresses from his remote country residence in Valdai. Regional governors and pro-

Kremlin politicians swore allegiance to the president and the constitutional order on social media only a few hours after the mutiny's outbreak.

Predictably, some forces, factions, and citizens did not follow the president's call to resist the traitors and expressed their support for the rebels. These include neo-Nazis on both sides of the front: the Russian Volunteer Corps fighting alongside the Ukrainian armed forces and the Rusich sabotage group, which has been engaged in armed conflict with Ukraine since 2014 as a Russian proxy. Prigozhin responded unambiguously to Putin's message. He stated that the president was "wrong" about Wagner's betrayal, called himself and his fighters "patriots of the motherland," accused Moscow officials of corruption, and refused to back down. Seeking to expand his support, Prigozhin voiced two hallmark claims of the anti-Putin opposition: Russian regions should oppose Moscow for expropriating the country's resources and the Russian leadership is made up of crooks and corrupt officials and should be exposed and brought to justice.

Despite Prigozhin relying solely on the armed units, the program he announced was supposed to lend popular legitimacy to the coup d'état. People in Rostov-on-Don cheered Wagner's fighters as heroes, demonstrating that Prigozhin's slogans could gain mass support. The attempted Wagner mutiny also revealed the unwillingness of the security services to actively intervene in the situation.

Prigozhin's "march of justice" ended as unexpectedly as it began. The Belarusian dictator Lukashenko brokered an agreement between Wagner and the Kremlin. According to its terms, Prigozhin was to withdraw his units and the mutineers were to be spared punishment for their alleged "feats of arms." The agreements with Lukashenko also seem to include secret provisions granting Wagner certain autonomy and defining the framework for further relations with the military leadership. The deal was guaranteed by the "word of the

President of Russia,” as Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov later stated. In other words, the public is kept in the dark as to the terms and content of these unofficial agreements. Although all Russian military units and ordinary citizens were called upon to participate in the mutiny and to resist the rebels, the crisis was resolved by a conspiracy between two war criminals with the Belorussian autocrat playing the role of both a broker and an umpire.

While the consequences of these events are difficult to predict, it’s already clear that they have forever changed Putin’s political system. If this attempted military insurgency was so successful, why can’t this example inspire future attempts to build on its success? Contradictions within Russia’s elites have spilled over from the media into the reality of Russian cities and the armed forces. The whole world has witnessed that they were (temporarily) resolved outside any legal framework with the compromise guaranteed by Putin’s “word.” In Russia, the rule of law has given way to mafia codes. Words backed up by violence are stronger than the prosecutor’s office or even the president’s declarations of imminent punishment. The war unleashed by Putin’s regime is becoming an ever more apparent threat to its stability and will inevitably result in its eventual collapse. What form will this breakdown take? And could Russia’s intimidated and disempowered masses come to the fore? These questions remain open.

26 June 2023

Republished from [Posle](#).

*Posle [после – After’ in Russian Language] is a website in Russian and English created in May 2022 to reflect on questions raised by the war in Ukraine for Ukraine and Russia.*

# ПОСЛЕ

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# Shipwreck in Greece: Why were half those onboard Pakistanis?

At least 298 passengers who drowned in the infamous shipwreck off the Greek coast on June 14 were from Pakistan, *writes Farooq Sulehria for Green Left (Australia)*. Twenty-five came from the same village in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir. According to some reports, more than 400 people onboard the ship were Pakistani.

Initially, when the news broke, the mainstream media in Pakistan ignored it. The tragedy only got attention when the Pakistani origins of the dead were reported. Suddenly, it was headline news. The Federal government also took “notice” of the tragedy. However, neither the mainstream media, nor government spokespersons have answered the simple question: why were so many Pakistani citizens onboard the ship that sank to the bottom of Mediterranean?

In general, the government has blamed the rackets involved in human trafficking. A few arrests have been reported. Irritatingly boring, but expected, statements have been issued by the ministers and bureaucrats to condemn human trafficking. The mainstream media, meantime, have been busy blaming the victims. The “chattering classes” ensconced in palatial villas, echoing the heartless media discourse, are also holding the “risk-taking” youth responsible for mindlessly boarding the ship and paying exorbitant sums of money to the mafias.

The fact of the matter is that poverty and an utter lack of

hope drives young people to hand over their parents' life savings to human traffickers and hop on overcrowded boats leaving the Libyan coast in the dead of night. It is not that the government or the media and chattering classes lack the knowledge about obscene poverty all around or the absence of hope in the country's darkening future.

By blaming the victims or pointing fingers at the people-smugglers, the apocryphal "1%" in control of the government and media absolve themselves. A few savvy ones, acquainted with postcolonial theories imbibed during their student days on Western campuses, also mention "Fortress Europe" in their tweets.

Fortress Europe, no doubt, is the prime suspect in the shipwreck under discussion (more in a while). However, Fortress Europe operates in Pakistan, like other countries on the periphery, in connivance with the native 1%. This 1% is equally responsible for the 300 or so coffins to be dispatched from the Mediterranean to Islamabad. Following is the indictment of Pakistan's 1% who connived with Fortress Europe in the shipwreck conspiracy.

## **Pakistan's One percent:**

Pakistan's richest 1% own 16.8% of the wealth.

The richest 10% own 25.5%.

The poorest 40%'s share of wealth is also 25.5%.

This inequality is structured, systematised. One mechanism of this systemic inequality is the elite capture of the country's resources.

The benefits and privileges enjoyed by different vested interest elite groups (constituting the idiomatic 1%), amount to Rs2.66 trillion (US\$17 billion) annually. The taxation system is the largest source of benefits. Almost 50% of the

\$17-billion in benefits the elite enjoys, occurs through the tax system (benefitting the landed class, traders and high-income individuals).

The landed elite, for instance, is granted a tax break of Rs195 billion (\$1.5 billion) annually (US\$1 was equal to Rs150 at the time of the study quoted here).

Rs468 billion (more than US\$2 billion) in tax revenue is lost owing to tax exemptions granted to the corporate sector. Similarly, large traders and high-net-worth persons are awarded tax concessions worth Rs612 billion (\$2 billion) respectively. Rs1275 billion tax concessions are granted on an annual basis. Another method benefitting the 1% (the primary beneficiary being exporters) is price mechanisms, accounting for 26%. Likewise, privileged access to land, infrastructure and capital (the military being the primary beneficiary) accounts for 24% of the Rs17 billion collective class privilege.

Ironically, the corresponding cost of social protection programs is roughly Rs600 billion (US\$2 billion). Roughly 10% – if health is excluded – of the population is covered by a social protection net. “If just 24% of the privileges of the powerful were diverted to the poor, this would double the benefits available to poor Pakistanis,” claimed a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study.

But how many poor are there? At least 32% in a country of 220 million people are poor. Based on the UNDP’s Human Development Index, in 2021–22, Pakistan ranked 161<sup>st</sup> out of 192 countries. According to the UNDP’s multidimensional poverty index, 38.3% – based on a 2017–18 survey – face multidimensional poverty, 21.5% face severe multidimensional poverty, while 12.9% of the population is vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. The intensity of deprivation is 51.7%.



# Inequality as panacea

In the 1960s, a policy of “functional inequality” (à la Simon Kuznets) was introduced. In other words, a strategy of unequal growth, accentuating inequality, was deployed in order to enable the capitalist class to accumulate more capital so that the rich had a higher level of savings.

These savings, it was assumed, would be invested into industry, resulting in higher economic growth. As far as inequalities were concerned, Simon Kuznets’ theory was deployed to project an optimistic future: market mechanisms would in time overcome the inequality during the initial stages of unequal growth. This policy has “persisted to this day”, claimed Pakistan’s noted economist Akmal Hussain in his recently published tome.

The result of these policies in the 1960s has recurred almost every 10 years: exports based on primary goods and low-value-added agricultural-based manufactures do not keep pace with the import requirements of a rapidly growing manufacturing sector. This, in turn, leads to the following two consequences. Firstly, a balance of payments crisis occurs since growth after an initial spurt slows down. Secondly, to overcome economic slowdown, foreign aid was/is deployed. This is one critical way Fortress Europe enters Pakistan to trap the country into forever-ballooning debt.

## Enter ‘Fortress Europe’

Negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were underway at the time of writing these lines. Perhaps, when 300 Pakistanis were handing over Rs2.3 million (US\$7000) each to the human traffickers for their fateful journey, the IMF-Pakistan negotiations were also underway. Pakistan has been begging for months for a \$1-billion tranche. To secure \$1 billion, Pakistan paid \$12 billion during the first half of

the 2021–22 financial year (FY).

Pakistan's total external debt and liabilities have reached \$127 billion (41% of gross domestic profit). Meanwhile, its sovereign bonds have lost more than 60% of their value, exports have declined to 7%, remittances have dropped to 11% and foreign direct investment has dropped to 59%. Amid this situation, its external debt repayment obligations are \$73 billion over 3 years (FY 2023–25). Presently, foreign exchange reserves have been reduced to \$4–5 billion. Pakistan pays more than \$1 billion a month in debt repayments and interest on public debt.

While the capital in the name of “debt retirement” is welcomed in Fortress Europe, Pakistan's labour is left to drown in the Mediterranean.

22 June 2023

*Originally published in Green Left (Australia) Issue 1384*  
<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/shipwreck-greece-why-were-half-those-onboard-pakistanis>

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# Starmer's Labour is not a force for Good

*Owen Wright, former Labour candidate for the Scottish Parliament, writes for Heckle [online journal of the Republican Socialist Platform, Scotland]*

Sir Keir Starmer's Labour party is not a party worth fighting for. Any Labour victory under his leadership risks entrenching many aspects of Conservative rule which he purports to oppose, and should be treated

with fear and concern by all those left of the political centre. Labour now has no understanding of the UK's deep underlying problems and this is reflected in the Starmer leadership's deceptive political practices and increasing propensity to indulge in far-right rhetoric and dog-whistles.



*Pictured: A leaflet promoting Owen Wright's candidacy in Dundee City East.*

Though I am not originally from the UK, I consider myself to come from something like a 'Labour household'. I moved from France to Scotland to study in Dundee after finishing secondary school and, after a very brief stint in the Scottish Greens, joined Labour in autumn 2017, drawn by its platform and policies which appealed to my values of progressivism, international and social conscience.

Having gained campaigning experience through my students' association – at a time when the Brexit saga, the 2019

election and later the beginning of the Covid pandemic was unfolding – I decided to put myself forward as a Labour candidate and subsequently ran in my home constituency of Dundee East in the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections.

I'm still incredibly proud and grateful to my former Dundee CLP comrades for that opportunity. After the election, I continued to hold positions in my CLP, attended Labour's UK conference twice and acted as an agent for a successful candidate in the 2022 local elections.

Nonetheless, in November 2022, I decided to leave the Labour party. A number of things led to the 'breaking of the camel's back', which, in no particular order, I now want to set out for the record.

## Transphobia

Having lived and worked with transgender people, the Labour party's failure to defend one of the most marginalised groups in British society today sickens me. Recently, Labour [said it "welcomed"](#) proposals from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to strip trans people of some of their current rights under the 2010 Equality Act. This was just days after the party tried to distance itself from trans issues generally, citing the toxicity of the "debate" and its unattractiveness to the general public, which alone is cowardly – but even worse, in the same intervention, Starmer gave legitimacy to one of the spurious position that the rights of women and trans women are inherently in conflict.

This argument is regularly peddled by the most ardent of transphobes, from those in far-right circles to those appropriating the language of feminism, in order to drive a moral panic regarding trans women being in women's spaces. This panic is based on the notion that trans women are just men pretending to be trans to take advantage of women. Similar arguments have been spread regarding trans children's identity

and presentation in schools, as well as LGBT+ education. Several Labour MPs have made those kinds of transphobic arguments, sometimes managing to pull the Labour leadership to their side.



*Pictured: A placard from a trans rights demonstration in Dundee in*

2023.

There is reason enough to believe that Starmer is a transphobe himself. He is on record [trampling on Gillick competency](#), effectively arguing that trans children should not be allowed to access treatment for gender dysphoria without their guardian's permission; children with transphobic parents or guardians should be trapped in suffering. He has advocated for schools to out trans children to their parents, again endangering those children unfortunate enough to have parents who do not accept them. These positions make little sense unless Starmer himself harbours an irrational fear of trans people or trans-ness. Labour's position under his leadership is nothing short of cowardice and stupidity at best, or open bigotry at worst.

# The ghost of UKIP

Speaking of open bigotry, let's cast our minds back a few years to the days of the coalition government and the rise of Nigel Farage's UKIP, which was ultimately responsible for Brexit.

Like other fascists, UKIP liked to play a game of hide-and-seek – saying a highly controversial, often racialised statement about migrants, refugees or foreigners, and then hiding behind the language of 'legitimate concerns' and the thin veil of plausible deniability. The Brexit disaster is what we got from letting this fester. This was because politicians were incapable of steering the conversation away from migration and towards other issues underpinning the same 'concerns'.

I make no apology for saying that I do not think migration is a fully controllable variable in politics. Migration is a natural human phenomenon, often in response to developments in people's environments, those ranging from war, famine and drought, disease, etc. Even an economic downturn in a region of the world today can be a perfectly natural cause for someone to migrate. Migration is a fact of human life; to try and stop or control it on any kind of permanent basis seems to me a fruitless task. I'm surprised the UK's political class hasn't given up on "fortress Britain" after meeting failure after failure over decades.

The likes of Farage and the far-right elements of the Conservative Party seem to me to be playing nothing but a massive con to drive up their popularity. Their goal was never to control migration but to whip up an angry population in the throes of deep, painful austerity to back them and their main political projects: Brexit, then followed by a steep and purposeful decline in our living standards. Labour's shameful surrender to that anti-migrant politics in 2015 only



legitimised UKIP and likely cost Labour the election. The 2019 election firmly cemented the victory for the Conservative-Brexit camp.

During the height of the Covid pandemic, when migration was not in the spotlight of national politics, national sentiment on migration softened; polls began to show people in Britain seeing immigration as a boon, particularly as labour shortages took the media spotlight. In this time, Labour made absolutely no attempt to solidify those views, which could have blunted the resurgence last year of Conservative scapegoating tactics around migration and refugees. Instead, the Labour party is now again embracing UKIP language of 'concerns' with migration. In a BBC interview about NHS staff shortages, Starmer – referring not only to the NHS but the whole country – said “there are too many migrant workers”.

Describing migrant workers as too numerous implies they are a problem, rather than people who benefit our society and should be welcome here. In the context of the NHS, where there are over 55,000 frontline nursing vacancies UK-wide, and over 130,000 overall vacancies in NHS England trusts, Starmer's simultaneous pledge to train 50,000 nurses and doctors while saying there are “too many” migrant workers in all sectors is also plainly incoherent.

The ghost of UKIP sits well in the Labour party and, with Starmer at the helm, it will haunt and poison our politics for the decade to come. The fact is Starmer's Labour is again ceding arguments to the far-right, based on 'concerns' elaborated to the far-right's benefit, not that of working people. As an immigrant who advocates for the rights of migrants, refugees and their right to a decent life like the rest of the country, I can't stay in or support a Labour party which blindly adopts such far-right rhetoric.



*Pictured: Keir Starmer's 10 pledges in the 2020 Labour leadership contest.*

- My promise to you is that I will maintain our radical values and work tirelessly to get Labour in to power – so that we can advance the interests of the people our Party was created to serve.  
**Based on the moral case for socialism, here is where I stand.**
- 1. Economic justice** Increase income tax for the top 5% of earners, reverse the Tories' cuts in corporation tax and clamp down on tax avoidance, particularly of large corporations. No stepping back from our core principles.
  - 2. Social justice** Abolish Universal Credit and end the Tories' cruel sanctions regime. Set a national goal for wellbeing to make health as important as GDP; invest in services that help shift to a preventative approach. Stand up for universal services and defend our NHS. Support the abolition of tuition fees and invest in lifelong learning.
  - 3. Climate justice** Put the Green New Deal at the heart of everything we do. There is no issue more important to our future than the climate emergency. A Clean Air Act to tackle pollution locally. Demand international action on climate rights.
  - 4. Promote peace and human rights** No more illegal wars. Introduce a Prevention of Military Intervention Act and put human rights at the heart of foreign policy. Review all UK arms sales and make us a force for international peace and justice.
  - 5. Common ownership** Public services should be in public hands, not making profits for shareholders. Support common ownership of rail, mail, energy and water; end outsourcing out NHS, local government and justice system.
  - 6. Defend migrants' rights** Full voting rights for EU nationals. Defend free movement as we leave the EU. An immigration system based on compassion and dignity. End indefinite detention and call for the closure of centres such as Yarl's Wood.
  - 7. Strengthen workers' rights and trade unions** Work shoulder to shoulder with trade unions to stand up for working people, tackle insecure work and low pay. Repeal the Trade Union Act. Oppose Tory attacks on the right to take industrial action and the weakening of workplace rights.
  - 8. Radical devolution of power, wealth and opportunity** Push power, wealth and opportunity away from Whitehall. A federal system to devolve powers – including through regional investment banks and control over regional industrial strategy. Abolish the House of Lords – replace it with an elected chamber or regions and nations.
  - 9. Equality** Pull down obstacles that limit opportunities and talent. We are the party of the Equal Pay Act, Sure Start, BAME representation and the abolition of Section 28 – we must build on that for a new decade.
  - 10. Effective opposition to the Tories** Forensic, effective opposition to the Tories in Parliament – linked up to our mass membership and a professional election operation. Never lost sight of the votes 'lent' to the Tories in 2019. Unite our party, promote pluralism and improve our culture. Robust action to eradicate the scourge of antisemitism. Maintain our collective link with the unions.

Promoted by Jenny Chapman on behalf of Keir Starmer, both at Acre House, 11-15 William Road, London, NW1 3ER

## Starmer is a persistent liar

Without reviewing them line-by-line, as many others have already done, we should be clear that Starmer has broken nearly all measurable pledges made during his campaign to become leader of the opposition.

Starmer sought to present himself to Labour members as 'Corbynism but acceptable' – giving the impression that he would take most of the radical, transformative policies of the previous leadership but sell them to the electorate more effectively than Jeremy Corbyn could. He has since trashed this impression and shown that it was something he invented for convenience during the campaign.

Both Starmer and his supporters argue that many of these radical policies are no longer feasible as the economic



situation has changed due to the Covid crisis, but the timeline for this excuse doesn't add up. By the end of the leadership contest in April 2020, the economic consequences of Covid were becoming clear domestically and internationally. Was Starmer economically clueless, bandying those promises without knowing if he'd be able to keep them, or did he lie to members? Neither possibility produces confidence.

This habit of lying about policy extends beyond the leadership contest. GB Energy, for example, has been presented by Starmer as a publicly-owned company built to compete with the private sector to bring prices down. On further examination, this seems duplicitous; it will not actually compete with the private sector but instead collaborate with it. According to Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, Labour will throw £8 billion into green energy projects, but private sector investment will be required on top of that to make it viable.

The investments made by GB Energy will not be majority public-owned; the private sector will *still* have a controlling stake on the most vital material portions of green energy generation. As a result, GB Energy will do nothing to bring down energy prices – those who keep them high today, for profit, will still be in overall control of our energy sector infrastructure and generation.

Labour's pledges on climate change suffer broadly from this sort of lying by omission as well. Starmer and Reeves' [pledge to borrow £224 billion](#) to invest in tackling climate change is subject to borrowing guidelines which closely match the Conservatives' own borrowing guidelines. If the economy underperforms or if inflation remains high, the actual figure borrowed and invested will be reduced. This does not inspire confidence or trust in Labour's ability to tackle the greatest problem humankind has ever faced. There is also a total lack of an international dimension to Labour's climate plans, which is crucial to reducing emissions worldwide. *(Edit: As this article was being reviewed for publication, Labour – without*

*even being in office – proved the above by [reducing the amount](#) they are pledging to borrow for the first two to three years in office, for the very reasons suggested above.)*

On the NHS crisis, Starmer's Labour suggests the private healthcare sector has a pool of doctors, nurses and specialists ready to go. This is a fantasy; that pool of recruits doesn't exist for the private sector for the same reason it doesn't for the NHS. That is no accident, it would seem, as Starmer and his shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, have taken donations from wealthy private healthcare executives. This explains Starmer's sudden change of heart on his earlier principle that healthcare and profit should not mix.

All in all, it's very easy to simply observe reasons to not trust Sir Keir Starmer. He has lied about his person, his intentions, and continues to present policies in a duplicitous fashion. How is this man any better in terms of fostering trust in politics than someone like Boris Johnson, who did very much of the same? How could I, as a Labour member, be honest about my party's policies to people at the doorstep when not even the party leader seems to ever be? The answer, to me, is that I could not.

*Pictured  
: Owen  
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*anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine*

## **The Labour left, Ukraine and Soviet-tinted nostalgia glasses**

Another reason I left the Labour party was the 'Labour left' itself, which has proven itself thoroughly incapable of introspection or self-criticism, making blunder after blunder as a result.

The greatest example of this is its reaction to the Russian war on Ukraine, which has left me dumbfounded. While Putin, a near-dictator, made a blood-and-soil speech about Ukraine and its supposed non-existence on the eve of his invasion of the country, the Labour left still could not recognise that as fascism. Instead, many elements of the Labour party's left flank backed the Russian line that NATO is as responsible for this war as Russia. As much as I am not in favour of NATO overall, any such claims can only be qualified as bogus and attempted justification for the invasion.

While initially I thought this was a legitimate response to

genuine concern about escalation of the conflict – as I too spent weeks in anxiety about the possible launch and detonation of nuclear weapons – it became impossible, in the face of escalating Russian war crimes and genocidal acts, to view the repetition of Kremlin talking points as defensible. This became a factor in my eventual decision to leave the party.

With the exception of John McDonnell, who now supports arms for Ukraine and backs the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), the Labour left has yet to learn from these mistakes. To be relevant in the 21st century, the Labour left must clearly move itself away from Cold War-era geopolitical analysis.

Beyond this, however, the left of the Labour party has also yet to realise that the battle within the party has already been lost. The Starmer leadership is doing all it can to avoid having new left-wing MPs in its next, probably quite sizeable, parliamentary cohort. Moves to restore the electoral college for leadership elections may eventually ensure a left-wing upstart like Corbyn can't take part in a Labour leadership election again, let alone win. The right of the Labour party is on a crusade to eliminate or at least fully suppress the left of the party.

Recently, Labour has [actively prevented](#) the incumbent mayor for North of Tyne, left-winger Jamie Driscoll, from running for North East mayor without clear justification. The notion that the Labour leadership are seeking to purge the left of their party from political positions is exemplified here. The ways the left of the Labour party can resist such a move are in practice, non-existent.

Momentum's argument that left-wingers can stay, fight and win internally falls flat when recognising that the real systemic power of the Labour party doesn't lie with its membership but with the upper ranks of its parliamentary party. The size or prevalence of the left-wing membership doesn't matter, as it

can be – and regularly is – completely ignored by the parliamentary cohort and leadership.

The left in Britain needs to undergo a process of intense introspection and re-establishment outside of the Labour party or it could well cease to exist as a political force entirely. That Momentum and others on the left of the Labour party do not acknowledge this necessity shows how naïve they have become about their systemic position, leaving them perpetually aimless and incapable of achieving their overarching political goals, many of which I share.

## Conclusion

It took agonising weeks of thought to lead me to the conclusion that the Labour party is no longer the force for good that I thought it was. The only people for whom it is now reliable are those who already have wealth and social and material power. Most of us – no matter the size of our payslip, whether we rely on foodbanks or not, or whether we consider ourselves ‘Labour at heart’ – are not these people. There is no shame in calling Labour out for their abandonment of us.

I hope that this state of affairs one day changes again. Hope is not something often repaid in our politics, however, so the only thing left for me, as well as no doubt many others, was action, and that action was to leave the Labour party. I recommend others who care about the truth and honesty in progressive politics do the same; it may be the only way to show our discontent. And perhaps, something new can be born out of it, with time.

*Owen Wright is a former Labour member who ran as the party's candidate in Dundee City East in the 2021 Holyrood elections.*

Article and pictures republished from **Heckle**:  
<https://heckle.scot/2023/06/starmers-labour-is-not-a-force-for>

[-good/](#)



Online magazine of Republican Socialist Platform (Scotland)



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## Hope is shipwrecked: Erdogan's regime wins again

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

# The reactionary bloc wins the majority in parliament

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

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

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

## **A defeat for the opposition**

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

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

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

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

## **Nationalist turn of the opposition**



## after the first round

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

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

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

He argued that, in the context of a victory for Erdogan, 10 million new migrants would arrive in the country, that the cities would be under the control of refugees and the mafia, that young girls would no longer be able to walk around on their own, that violence against women was going to increase (because of the refugees) and that finally Erdogan was going to make concessions in the face of "terrorism" (therefore of the Kurdish movement). He was thus trying to ride the

(massive, among Turks and Kurds) anti-migrant wave by declaring that he was going to send them all back to their own country, but also to reverse Erdogan's main argument during his campaign, that the opposition supposedly supported the "terrorism" of the PKK.

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

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

## **HDP, TIP and the "Work and Freedom"**

# Alliance

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

The TIP did not present itself in the cities where the HDP had a large majority (Turkish Kurdistan) and in some where it risked losing deputies to the HDP and the CHP; it submitted slates in 52 out of 81 cities. The fact that the TIP wanted to run within the alliance but with independent slates in some cities is a question that has generated a lot of debate. For the HDP, the TIP should have included its candidates in the lists of the YSP; its opinion was that having two competing lists within the same alliance would divide the votes and lose potential elected representatives.

The TIP had another proposal. The party had been observing an influx of members for several months. It had quadrupled its membership since mid-January, going from 10,000 to 40,000 members in four months, in particular because of its mobilization in solidarity with the city of Hatay (Antioch), seriously affected by the earthquake. This participation, but above all the sympathy that was expressed towards the party and its elected representatives, who for five years had led a very combative policy, came from political and social sectors that were largely different from those who had previously voted for the HDP. An important part came from the left of the CHP, but also from an electorate which previously voted for the right but which (especially through the elected

representatives of the TIP) discovered a combative left, which does not mince its words vis-a-vis the ruling circles and gives a prominent place to workers' rights. It was clear that the TIP could not channel all of these votes to the HDP-YSP lists. So its proposal was that the alliance candidates present themselves in certain cities under the TIP lists (even if it meant putting HDP candidates at the top of the list) and thus having a plurality of candidacy tactics according to the demographic, ethnic and social specificities of the localities. This would have increased the results of the alliance at the national level, but also the number of elected representatives. In the end, the two parties failed to agree on this tactic, mismanaged the controversy (which had negative repercussions on the networks) and the TIP ended up presenting itself with its own lists in fifty cities. Among the TIP lists there were also candidates from two Trotskyist currents, the Workers' Democracy Party (IDP) and the International Workers' Solidarity Association (UID-DER).

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

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

In this nightmarish panorama a meagre (but significant) consolation is the result that the TIP obtained. For the first time since 1965, a socialist party defending the cause of the working class has managed to enter parliament with its own votes (and not by being elected under the list of another party). The TIP obtained 1.7 per cent with a million votes, only presenting itself in two-thirds of the territory, therefore probably above 2 per cent in total. It thus gained four deputies, three of whom were already in the previous parliament. The fourth, Can Atalay, who was elected as deputy for Hatay, is a renowned lawyer involved in all the struggles of the country and who has at present been in detention for a year and has been sentenced to 18 years in prison for having been one of the main spokespersons for the Gezi revolt in 2013. Can’s case is being appealed; legally he should be able to be freed to take his place in parliament, but the regime refuses for the moment to release him.

## **Rebuilding class consciousness**

If the conditions for carrying out the campaigns were completely unequal (control of the media by Erdogan, etc.) and many cases of fraud were observed, we must recognize that the regime triumphed despite everything. Neither the economic crisis nor the earthquakes of February, and even less the attacks on democracy have led the conservative and popular

electorate to break with the regime. On the contrary, the discontent of the working classes was expressed within the reactionary bloc, but towards currents even more radical than the AKP.

The results of these elections show once again that to defeat the Erdogan regime the defence of democratic and secular values is not enough. If Erdogan's camp brings together different social classes, so does the opposing bloc. Once again we see that the right wing of the opposition, far from being a solution, further strengthens the regime and the dominant bourgeois, nationalist and Islamist ideology. It is necessary to build another polarization, in order to break the reactionary hegemony, but also that of the opposition bloc. A polarization that would allow the dissociation between the interests of the working class, the oppressed and those of the bosses, whether secular or Islamist. The fight against authoritarianism must be invested with a social, class content. And this goes through the reconstruction of the "subjective factor", of class consciousness, of the capacity for self-organization of the exploited, of women against patriarchal domination, of the unification of local and migrant workers, Turkish, Kurdish, Syrians and Afghans. This is the main challenge facing the radical left, from the HDP to the TIP and other currents of the revolutionary left. Certainly the situation is not easy. We recognize our defeat, but we refuse to bend and give up the fight. Being aware of the fact that freedom and equality will only be the work of the workers themselves, as we like to repeat here, we pour ourselves a tea and get back to work...

1 June 2023

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Originally published by International Viewpoint  
<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8116>