Rising Clyde Episode 18: Scotland's Circular Economy Bill

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

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

Rising Clyde Show – the Scottish climate justice show.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Portugal Election – Far Right Surges

First results

Party	% 2024	% 2022	% 2019
PS (Socialist Party)	28.6 77	41.68 120 seats	36.4
AD (Democratic Alliance: ,PSD/CDS/PPM Centre Right)	29.49 79	27.8 77 seats	27.8
Chega (Enough:neo-fascist)	18.06 48	7.15 12 seats	1.3
Initiativa Liberal (pro business)	5.08 8	4.98 8 seats	1.3
Bloco Esquerda (radical left)	4.46 5	4.46 5 seats	9.5
CDU (PCP:Communist) +green front)	3.3 4	4.39 6 seats	6.3
CDS (right-wing)	n/a in AD	1.61	4.2
PAN (animal rights)	1.93 1	1.53 1 seat	3.3
Livre (Free, green pro-EC)	3.26 4	1.28 I seat	1.1

Chega *[Enough!]*, the far-right party led by ex-TV football pundit Andre Ventura, was the big winner of the night,

increasing its votes by over ten points but quadrupling its seats to 48. It now competes as the third major party, way ahead of the rest of the field. The biggest loser is the PS *[Socialist Party]* which led the last two governments; it lost 13% of its vote and 43 seats. On the other hand, due mostly to the rise of Chega, the mainstream right of centre alliance, the AD (Democratic Alliance), which had been the main parliamentary opposition, only edged up by barely two points, with just two more seats. Even this small advantage could be altered once the overseas votes are counted. The pro-business, neo-liberal IL (Liberal Initiative) held on to its 8 seats.

To the left of the PS Livre (Free) a pro-European Greenish party nearly tripled its vote and went from one to four seats. The radical left Bloco Esquerda held on to exactly its last score and keeps its 5 MPs. However the PCP (Communist) lost a percentage point and two seats.

Government

Soon after the first projections, when the AD advantage was bigger, the PS representative accepted that the AD should form the government and they would go into opposition. The margin is wafer-thin although the previous governing party has clearly lost the most support. It is likely that the President will ask the AD to try and form a government.

Luis Montenegro has ruled out a government coalition with Chega even though the numbers are there. He has said that “no means no”, and has dubbed Ventura’s views as “xenophobic, racist, populist and excessively demagogic.” Probably the neo-liberal IL would join an AD government but their seats do not take the AD past 116 required. A lot depends on the PS sticking to its early position, already signposted in the campaign, that it would allow a minority AD government to be established. In that eventuality PS abstentions would mean AD would not require Chega votes to form a government. Given the

final figures the PS could demand some political concessions or red lines from an AD government and perhaps anticipate new elections at some point. Certainly if the PS were not to be accommodating then the AD could change its position on an alliance with Chega.



Andre Ventura Photo: Esquerda net

The Right

Chega, with a fifth of the seats, now has a substantial political and material basis for further growth. Ventura has consistently says he wants to form a government with the AD. Unlike in Italy there was no pre-election coalition between his party and the AD. Ventura repeatedly declares he is not neo-fascist or far right. He originally was an activist in the PSD, the main party of the AD. His main campaign slogan was to "*Clean up Portugal*." He railed against the two party caste that has ruled Portugal for 50 years since the end of the dictatorship.

The Costa government fell because of corruption in his leadership group. It has been prevalent for many years. I remember going on a tennis holiday in the Algarve and discovered that the huge hotel and golf complex development there had involved bribes and kickbacks for politicians. So a campaign centred on kicking out the corrupt caste has proved

effective.

Ventura outlined a whole raft of new laws and actions to weed out corruption – seizing assets, defining a new crime of illicit enrichment. AD failed to capitalise on the PS government failure to deal with low wages, declining health services and soaring housing cross because it was seen as a co-manager of a corrupt system. The previous right-led government had carried out hard austerity policies. Chega appears to have taken votes from both the AD and the PS.

The other part of Ventura's clean-up is his racist offensive against immigrants and the Roma community. He proposes restricting immigration and creating a new crime of illegal residence. Over recent decades Portugal has gone from a country of net emigration to net immigration. Around 13% of the population come from migrant backgrounds. 70% of the population identify as White.

Chega also defends what it calls the traditional family and attacks women and LBGTQ+ rights.

If you combine this reality with the problems of inequality and austerity and the inadequate response of any governments to deal with these issues then you can see how Chega is able to blame migrants for the cost of living crisis or lack of housing. Chega's big advance has taken place under the second PS government which has not continued some of the progressive policies it enacted during his first government when the radical left parties, the Bloco and the PCP had enabled its formation on condition it carried out such a programme.

Today being excluded from government could provide the conditions for Chega to further grow. An AD government permitted to govern by the PS would provide further confirmation of its claim that the two party system is a stitch up against the people. If there were to be a more formal programmatic agreement that could create an even

greater opening. The AD might still want Chega votes to pass legislation if the PS opposes specific laws. Ventura has said he has contacts with PSD people and one tactic will be to step up pressure on their MPs to be more open to an agreement with Chega. We are seeing this scenario of far right parties pulling mainstream right parties to more extreme positions or working to create internal splits elsewhere in Europe.

Chega has important financial supporters. During the campaign the Civic Front exposed how it relied more on unnamed private backers than the official state funds for political parties. The Chega surge is part of the general rise of the far right or neo fascists in Europe and globally. This "creeping fascism" is pulling the mainstream right-of-centre parties to more extreme policies too. Already, leaders of Vox, the Spanish state neo-fascists and other far right leaders in Europe are sending in their congratulations to Ventura.

Bloco

The Bloco campaign focussed on putting forward radical measures on wages, health and housing as well as defending migrants, women and LGBTQ+ rights and calling on solidarity with Palestine. Unlike the PCP it has managed to maintain its electoral support and five seats. It also campaigned to stop the rise of Chega and a right wing government by proposing a new left wing agreement similar to the first Costa government. where it would give limited external support without taking ministerial posts. Clearly the failure to increase its support and the PS defeat meant this option is off the table. In this respect, the left as a whole has been pushed back in these elections.

In her first reaction to the results, Bloco leader Joana Mortágua, who was re-elected in Setúbal, said that they "confirm a shift to the right", as a result of a "negative assessment, which we share, of how a PS government with an

absolute majority delivered.” As for the Bloco’s result, by keeping the parliamentary group and increasing the vote compared to 2022, “it’s a sign that there’s confidence in the Bloco for whatever the political situation: whether it’s to form a majority or to be a determined and fierce opposition to the right.”

Livre (Free) a pro-European party with green credentials was the winner among the left-of-centre parties, tripling its vote and going from one to four MPs. Perhaps it is one reason why the Bloco did not succeed in significantly increasing its vote. It wins votes in the big urban areas and among similar demographics as the Bloco.

Austerity

Portugal remains one of the poorest and unequal countries in Europe, it is 24th in the Social Justice index in the EU. It has the world’s fourth highest number of citizens over 65 years, 21.8% of the population. Recent governments have not protected the living standards of senior citizens. Rental costs have soared for ordinary people. One factor is the uncontrolled promotion of tourism means an explosion of Airbnb lets in cities like Lisbon and Porto which increases rental values. The gains of a national health service set up after the revolution 50 years ago have been very much eroded.

Now that even the social liberal left are out of power, defending social gains and the living standards of working people will need increased mobilisations in the workplaces and communities. increased polarisation and instability could increase rather than decrease with these election results.

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Bloco promises to be “the most combative opposition to the right”

In her election night statement, Mariana Mortágua emphasized that despite the turn to the right in the electoral results, the Bloco managed to resist, maintaining its mandates and with more votes than in 2022.
The Left Bloc coordinator’s reaction to the results of the legislative elections came at a time when “the parliamentary situation is still not entirely clear”, given the close result between the PS and PSD that could be altered by the emigration votes.

Mariana Mortágua said that the shift to the right resulting from this Sunday’s elections “is a reflection of the failure of two years of disastrous politics by the PS’s absolute majority”.

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS RESULT IN A SHIFT TO THE RIGHT

But despite this shift, she emphasized that “the Bloc resisted and increased its votes by around 30,000. It stood firm in these elections, we kept all our seats”. And it is with this strength that “we will be part of any solution that removes the right from government,” she continued.

In this election, the Bloc re-elected two MPs in Lisbon (Mariana Mortágua and Fabian Figueiredo) and Porto (Marisa Matias and José Soeiro) and re-elected Joana Mortágua in

Setúbal.

“I want the people of the left to know that they will have in the Bloc the most combative opposition to the right,” said the Bloc coordinator, promising to contribute to “building an alternative to the left to defend our people”.

11 March 2024

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*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Esquerda Net**->https://www.esquerda.net/artigo/bloco-promete-fazer-oposicao-mais-combativa-direita/90138].*

Main photo: https://www.bloco.org/

We can never forget Palestine

The latest post on MedyaNew by Sarah Glynn, Scottish Kurdish rights activist, talking on the relevance of Gaza to the Kurdish struggle and video on Twitter/X.

Sarah Glynn, herself an anti-Zionist Jew, discusses the relevance of Gaza to the Kurdish struggle. She states that the Palestinians of Gaza are undergoing a genocide. Israel’s attack on Gaza will have a major international impact, as

well as a direct effect on the power balance in the Middle East, Glynn says. Both Palestinians and Kurds suffer oppression under occupation, and the oppressors attempt to undermine a historic solidarity between the oppressed, the columnist warns, while celebrating the success of the Kurdish Freedom Movement as a model of peaceful coexistence in the fractured multi-ethnic region.

Sarah Glynn

> *@sarahrglynn | Social scientist Sarah Glynn links the Palestinian cause and the Kurdish movement, in terms of occupation, oppression and resistance.#Palestine | #Occupation | #Genocide*
>
> *https://t.co/0eHRGxSApz pic.twitter.com/jTc3WnMbeN*
>
> *— MedyaNews (@1MedyaNews) March 11, 2024*

There is little that can be said about Palestine that has not already been said. There are no words left to describe the horror of the images daily streamed from Gaza, the brutality of the Israeli government that is inflicting this horror, and the depraved callousness of the international politicians who are enabling it. We are living through an epoch-changing moment, but I want to talk here about its specific relevance to the Kurds and the Kurdish struggle, and why no Kurd can ever forget Palestine. Some of these reasons are universal ones, others are specifically Kurdish.

The first reason is a simple one. The Palestinians of Gaza are undergoing a genocide, and nothing can ever justify that – not morally, and not legally either. This genocide is being committed brazenly in the full view of the whole world and with the complicity of international governments; only the biggest of mass mobilisations can stop it.

Second, the impact of what is happening in Palestine will be of huge global importance. It raises vital questions about the nature and feasibility of international law, and feeds into the changing balance of world power. The repeated exposure of Western, and especially American, hypocrisy will have international implications.

Third, more specifically, Israel's attack on Gaza is having a direct effect on the balance of forces in the Middle East. What is happening in Palestine impacts every part of Kurdistan. In North and East Syria, Kurds fighting ISIS have a tactical alliance with the United States (an uncomfortable position to be in) and both have come under fire from pro-Iranian militias under the banner of the Axis of Resistance. In Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is trying to present himself as the leading defender of the Palestinians (even while still trading with Israel and enabling the passage of over 40% of Israel's oil supplies that come from Azerbaijan). In Iraq, America's support for Israel is putting US forces under increasing pressure to leave the country. And in Iran, the regime is using Gaza to strengthen their position on the international stage, and to present themselves as on the right side of history. All this is in addition to the serious danger of the fighting spreading to other parts of the Middle East.

Fourth, both Palestinians and Kurds suffer oppression from occupying powers, and they have historically show solidarity with each other's struggles. Turkey and Israel share a similar colonial and ruthless approach to the main 'other' ethnic group over which they attempt to maintain control. Both deny

basic rights and freedoms, including the right of self-determination. Both are quick to brand any-and-all resistance as ‘terrorism’, and to use this to justify brutal suppression. Both have no qualms about extending their classification of terrorists to include a whole population, and subjecting that population to collective punishment, including the destruction of homes and displacement of long-established communities. Both carry out aggressive invasions under the pretence of defence. Statements put out by Presidents Erdoğan and Netanyahu are almost interchangeable, if you just swap “Kurds” with “Palestinians”.

Historically, there was strong mutual support between the PKK and leftist groups in the PLO. The Palestinians helped train the PKK guerrillas, and thirteen PKK guerrillas died fighting against the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. Connections have been kept up by the Kurdish Freedom Movement more generally. Leyla Khaled of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is a supporter of the pro-Kurdish leftist People’s Democratic Party (HDP, now the DEM Party), and draws parallels between the Palestinian and Kurdish struggles and between the oppressions that both peoples face. At the HDP’s 2018 congress, she condemned Turkey’s invasion of Afrîn, and the following year she visited hunger-striking MP, Leyla Güven, and supported the hunger strikers’ call for an end to the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan.

At the same time, and this is my fifth point, there is pressure to destroy Kurdish-Palestinian solidarity – a destruction that would only benefit the oppressors. While Erdoğan pretends to be a friend of the Palestinians, Zionists pretend to be friends of the Kurds.

Zionists also portray everything that is happening now as being a response to the 7 October attack by Hamas, rather than the reality which is that it is part of a 75-year history of Zionist settler colonialism, 56 years of Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, and sixteen years of Israel’s blockade

that turned Gaza into a vast concentration camp. Then – led by Netanyahu – they are insisting that Hamas is equivalent to ISIS – which they are not.

Hamas came to control Gaza because Israel refused to work honestly with the older secular Palestinian organisations, reneging on every agreement that the Palestinians conceded to. They undermined the PLO and destroyed their credibility, and at the same time, they encouraged the growth of Hamas as a way to implement their own policy of "divide and rule". (Abdullah Öcalan warned that Turkey was attempting to create similar destructive divisions among the Kurds through promotion of the far-right Kurdish Islamist group, HÜDA-PAR.)

Hamas is an Islamist organisation: they don't support the idea of the separation of religion and politics, but believe that all of life, including politics, should be informed by religion and in conformity with religious law. In addition, and this is a separate issue, they condone attacks on Israeli civilians as a method of struggle. However, no one can genuinely compare life in Gaza with life under ISIS. By contrast, legitimate comparisons can be and are made between life in Israel/Palestine and life under South African apartheid, or even life in 1930s Germany. And Netanyahu's Zionism builds its support through a brutal distortion of Judaism that is being used to justify the murder of Palestinian children.

As cannot be repeated too often, opposing genocide is a fundamental human duty, and does not imply support for Hamas. We should be seriously worried about the growth of politics dictated by religion – any religion – though the extent of Palestinian support for this is unknown and currently unknowable. And, irrespective of the contested details of what happened on 7 October, we must also condemn all attacks that target civilians, which cross a fundamental ethical red line. But we won't draw people away from Hamas by keeping silent on the cause of Palestinian freedom – and even Palestinian

survival – because we don't like Hamas' ideology and methods.

And lastly, and this time positively, with its emphasis on peaceful coexistence through bottom-up democracy, the Kurdish Freedom Movement can provide a model for a different way of understanding and organising society in this fractured multi-ethnic region. Outsiders cannot specify how others choose to organise their lives, but, as people look for a way out of this nightmare, they can be encouraged and emboldened by an example that has come out of Middle East society and has taken root where it might not have been thought possible.

Informed by Öcalan's philosophy, the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (of the region known as Rojava) promotes a bottom-up democracy where decisions are made as close to where people live as possible, where women's rights are actively supported and patriarchal relations discouraged, and where care is taken to involve all ethnic groups in organisation at all levels.

The administration recognises differences in culture and the importance of different cultures, and it enables people from those different cultures to work together. This week, in majority-Arab Raqqa – the city that ISIS made their capital – women are loudly and publicly celebrating international women's day. The focus on coexistence contrasts with the ethnic nationalism promoted by nation states, which Öcalan argues are an intrinsically oppressive form of organisation.

I am not a Kurd and cannot presume to speak for the Kurdish community. I speak only as a social scientist, and as a Jew who has long recognised Zionism as a colonial and racist project, and protested against it – as many Jews have done since Zionism was invented at the end of the nineteenth century. Rather than ending the scourge of antisemitism, Zionism has fuelled new oppressions, and now this unimaginable horror.

Experience and reading have taught me that struggles against oppression in different places are strengthened by mutual support, while absence of support strengthens the oppressors. And that every time one oppressive nation gets away with impunity it encourages other oppressors.

I have also noted that the Kurdistan Communities Union – the umbrella body that includes the PKK and all the groups that follow Öcalan's philosophy – has expressed solidarity with the Palestinian struggle while condemning the methods of Hamas, and that there have been clear statements from the DEM Party (formerly the HDP) calling for real support for the Palestinian people in place of Erdoğan's hypocrisy.

As they both point out, the Kurdish movement, inspired by Öcalan, has a unique contribution to make to any future resolution of Middle East Politics, through a model of different communities working together. The movement has attempted to put Öcalan's ideas into practice in North and East Syria, and sees this as an example for the whole of Syria, for the Middle East, and beyond. But it is an example that risks being lost and forgotten in the ongoing power struggles.

*Sarah Glynn is a writer and activist – check her website and follow her on Twitter.

Republished from MedyaNews and Twitter/X
https://medyanews.net/we-can-never-forget-palestine/

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

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

Join them outside SPT headquarters

Friday 15 March 2024, 9am

SPT Offices, 131 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5JF

Facebook event: Better Buses for Strathclyde People's Rally

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

BETTER BUSES FOR STRATHCLYDE RESOURCES

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

Republished from: https://www.getglasgowmoving.org/campaign/petition/

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

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

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

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

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

This growth is a result of the SSY's campaigning work in the course of 2023, on issues like drug deaths, public transport, republicanism, Palestine solidarity and Scottish independence.

This has brought the SSY beyond Stirling more and more, and has been winning it supporters and new members from across Scotland. I am one of them, and I am not alone in being attracted to the SSY by the fact that it is an autonomous youth organisation with a broad variety of ideas and perspectives, not beholden to any political party or sect, nor to the leaden decree of some wizened leading comrade who has been in control for roughly thirty years. What a fresh breeze in comparison to the usual sort of lefty youth wing!

This increasing national scope is what spurred the conference in January. The key theme of the day's political content was that of campaigning beyond parliamentary activity. We are soon headed for a general election of course, but with the outlook so grim and the left being as puny and irrelevant as it is, the prospects for a meaningful intervention are pretty much nil. So, it's crucial that a group like the SSY directs its limited resources in directions that will actually make a difference, and which will help to cohere a stronger and more vibrant socialist movement at a national level.

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



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

But this cannot be done in a dogmatic or opportunistic way, by entryism and ultimatums, by take-overs and smash-and-grab recruitment tactics. Instead, the SSY needs to be honest and helpful in its relations with other campaigns, rendering concrete, disinterested assistance to them, and, by being a genuine friend to the cause, demonstrating the utility of our socialist analysis, politics and practice. This will do a great deal more good than turning up with newspapers, wagging an all-knowing Marxist finger, and wishing other campaigns could just see that capitalism is the main problem already, simply because we say so.

This puts me in mind of the role that a good socialist group *should*, and indeed must, play as a co-ordinating centre for all the struggles, democratic and economic, domestic and global, in which the working class has an interest. A place

where the working class in all its variety of identity can find a political home, because the group stands tall as an authentic tribune of the people, capable of championing everything from the fight for increased wages to the civil rights of transgender people.

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

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

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

tackle many different social issues.

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

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

Look out for us in 2024!

Photos courtesy of the Scottish Socialist Youth.

For the right to self-determination of Palestinians, for the withdrawal of imperialist forces from the Middle East

The war in Gaza continues, with its procession of horrors, but

also with significant solidarity mobilizations and significant resistance in Palestine. In an interview published by International Viewpoint, Gilbert Achcar addresses this situation and the avenues for building resistance against Israel and its accomplices, the far right and imperialism.

Interview with Gilbert Achcar by Antoine Larrache, Inprecor.

What phase of the Israeli intervention are we in now?

Things are relatively clear in light of the military reports of the occupying forces. The most intensive bombing phase has been completed for the north and is being completed for the southern part. In the northern half and centre, the occupying forces have moved to the next phase, that of a so-called low-intensity war. In reality they are organizing a complete grid of the areas they have occupied in order to destroy the network of tunnels and search for fighters from Hamas and other organizations who are always in ambush and can emerge at any time, as long as the tunnels exist.

Israeli forces are increasingly under international pressure, particularly American, to move to this so-called low-intensity phase of combat. But this name is misleading because in reality low intensity is limited to bombing. The number of missiles and bombings by planes and drones will decrease since there is not much left to destroy in Gaza. They will move on to one-off interventions against groups of fighters who emerge here and there.

What followed on from 7 October was an absolutely devastating bombing campaign that took on genocidal proportions: the wholesale destruction of a vast urban area inevitably resulted in the extermination of an incredible number of civilians. More than one per centof Gaza’s population was killed. For France, this would correspond to the frightening figure of 680,000 deaths!

Added to this is the expulsion of 90 per cent of the

population from their places of residence. A good part of the Israeli right – which is an extreme right in a country where the Zionist left has been crushed – would like to expel them from the territory of Gaza to Egypt or elsewhere. Israel wants to ensure total military control of the territory, but that is an illusion: they will never succeed unless they kick everyone out. As long as there is a population in Gaza, there will be resistance to the occupation.

The drop in intensity of bombings on Gaza also allows Israel to raise its tone against Lebanon and Hezbollah. Zionist leaders are banking on the fact that part of Lebanon can be detached from Hezbollah for sectarian and political reasons. The threats are increasing day by day, with strong pressure for Hezbollah to withdraw to the north, to a distance from the border that Israel would deem acceptable. Otherwise, Israel threatens to inflict the fate of Gaza on part of Lebanon, in other words to raze the regions where Hezbollah is in a position of strength in the southern suburbs of the capital, in the south of the country, and also in the east, in the Bekaa.

What is the state of military resistance in Palestine?

In Gaza, resistance can continue in devastated areas as long as there are tunnels. A sort of underground city was built for the fighters. It’s like a metro network, but the Gazan population cannot take refuge there, unlike what we saw in Europe during the Second World War or as we see today in Kiev, Ukraine. The tunnels dug by Hamas are for the exclusive use of fighters.

Rockets continue to be launched from Gaza into Israeli towns, with Hamas and other groups trying to show that they are still active. Eradicating Hamas and all forms of resistance in Gaza is an impossible goal.

This is what leads the Israeli far right to say that we must

empty the territory of its population, annex it, create Greater Israel from the Jordan to the sea and empty all this territory of Palestinians. The Israeli far right, including Likud, aspires to this. Netanyahu displays a more ambiguous official position due to his position as prime minister, but he keeps winking at this extremist perspective.
In the West Bank, the difference with Gaza is that the Palestinian Authority – which is in charge of the Palestinian populated areas in the West Bank – is exactly in the position of Vichy in relation to the German occupation. Mahmoud Abbas is the Petain of the Palestinians. There are organizations in the West Bank advocating armed struggle, such as Hamas and others, but what has attracted the most attention over the past year is the emergence of new groups of young people who are not affiliated – neither with Fatah, nor with Hamas, nor with any of the traditional organizations. In some refugee camps or towns, such as Jenin and Nablus, they have formed armed groups and carried out occasional operations against the occupying troops, which has led to massive reprisals.

Since 7 October, the occupying troops have been engaged in a mop-up campaign in the West Bank, a remake of the "Battle of Algiers", with the added use of aviation for the first time since 2001. Added to this is the action of Zionist settlers who harass and kill. As we speak, there have been around 300 deaths in the West Bank. This is not comparable to the absolutely terrible massacre perpetrated in Gaza, but the Israeli far right wants to repeat it in the West Bank at the first opportunity. That said, contrary to what Hamas hoped, there was no widespread conflagration with an uprising of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and inside the State of Israel in response to the Islamic movement's call. The reason is that the population of the West Bank is very aware of the disproportionate balance of military power. Unlike the Hamas soldiers in Gaza, where there has been no direct occupation force since 2005, the population of the West Bank comes into contact with the occupation forces on a daily basis

and is directly confronted with the far right and the settlers. It knows that they are just waiting for an opportunity to repeat what was done in 1948, that is to say, to terrorize people and force them to flee from the territory. This explains why the West Bank has only moderately demonstrated its solidarity with Gaza.

What is the state of mobilizations in Israel?

The 7 October attack was a very strong shock, as was 11 September 2001 in the United States. Then there was its repeated use in the media. This shock continues to be exploited, with an endless series of testimonies in order to maintain a vengeful mobilization of the population. It was this type of campaign in the United States that allowed the Bush team to launch into the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. For now in Israel, this is also working, and the vast majority of Jewish-Israeli opinion supports the war.

A small anti-war minority denounces the genocide. We must salute its courage, because it faces complete rejection by its social environment. But what is striking is the virtual absence of mobilization by the Palestinian citizens of Israel, unlike in 2021, when there was a strong mobilization in solidarity with the start of the Intifada in the West Bank. This led to violent reactions from the Zionist far right in the country. In view of the hatred which has seized the Jewish-Israeli population after 7 October, if Palestinian citizens had tried to reproduce such a mobilization, the consequences would have been terrible.

This population suffers a very intimidating climate, with bullying, repression and censorship, which falls on them, worsening their status as second-class citizens. They are now pariahs in the eyes of much of Israeli society.

Why do you think there is not more action in Arab countries?

I belong to a generation that experienced the defeat of 1967

and its aftermath, then the 1970s which experienced very strong mobilizations. This time there were some big demonstrations in Arab countries, but no more than in Indonesia or Pakistan for example. In Jordan and Morocco, there were big demonstrations, but these countries did not even end their diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.

The relative weakness of the mobilizations can only be explained by the weight of the accumulated defeats. The Palestinian cause was weakened, in particular due to the divisions and the action of the Vichy-style Palestinian Authority, which allowed a certain number of Arab states to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

But there are also the defeats of the two revolutionary shock waves that the region has experienced so far, in 2011 and 2019. When we observe the region today, the conclusion is sad: there is almost nothing left of the conquests of these two waves.

The last two countries where there were still gains from the popular movement are Tunisia and Sudan. Tunisia went from the dictatorship of Ben Ali to that of Kaïs Saïed, with perhaps an aspect of “farce” coming after the tragedy. In Sudan, the resistance committees had some success until last year, when the two factions of the old regime began a ruthless civil war in April. The international media does not talk much about it, especially in the West, despite the tens of thousands of deaths and the millions of displaced people, the sexual violence and everything else: the darker people’s skin colour, the less they talk about it. It is an immense tragedy, for which the resistance committees were not prepared. They do not have armed wings that would allow them to play a role in a situation of this type.

We can concretely see the impact of the defeats since the “Arab Spring”: Syria, Yemen, Libya, and now Sudan, are in situations of civil war; in Egypt, Sissi established a

dictatorship more brutal than that of Mubarak which the population had got rid of in 2011, and in Algeria the military restored order by seizing the opportunity offered by Covid, then it was Tunisia's turn…

All of this does not create a climate conducive to broad mobilizations which, in Cairo or other capitals, would attack Israel's diplomatic representations and force governments to break their ties with the Zionist state.

Is it relevant to conclude that if the Zionist extreme right's project is realized, Israel's influence will increase in the region?

The Israeli far right knows that the governments of the region pay very little attention to the Palestinian question, that a large part of them have already established official relations with Israel, and that they get along well between reactionary governments. Israel therefore does not feel the need to make concessions on this front. They know that the Saudi government is hypocritical, that it is on the path to establishing relations with them as the Emirates did. There is security and military cooperation between them against their common enemy, Iran.

The Israeli fare right attracted into its fold, with the effect of October 7, a part of what was considered as centre-right. Today it is banking on the fact that the American administration, which made the mistake of providing unconditional support to Israel for its enterprise against Gaza, has put itself in a position from which it can no longer retreat. Indeed, the United States has entered an electoral period, the Democrats are therefore in competition with the Republicans, and Trump will not fail to seize on the slightest disagreement that could arise between Israel and Washington to attack the Biden administration. The latter is in a weak position, it has put itself in a position from which it is no longer able to exert strong pressure on Israel's genocidal

enterprise. There is a lot of hypocrisy in Blinken's speeches urging Israel to show greater "humanitarian" concern: he is taking people for idiots, in the full knowledge that the genocidal destruction and massacres in Gaza were only possible thanks to American support.

This war is the first joint Israeli-American war, the first war where the United States has been fully, from the beginning, a party to the operation, its stated goals, its weaponry and its financing.
In addition, the Israeli far right and Netanyahu are banking on a return of Trump to the American presidency, which would greatly facilitate their realization of a greater Israel.

This is why they constantly announce that the war will continue throughout the year 2024. This is inseparable from the fact that this year 2024 is an election year in the United States. They will exploit this opportunity to continue their military momentum. The threat is therefore very serious for Lebanon and the West Bank, the two potential targets of a future large-scale Zionist military campaign. The ongoing "low-intensity" "counter-insurgency" war in the West Bank may intensify and, in Lebanon, the limited exchange of bombings on both sides of the border risks turning into a large-scale operation .

In light of the experience of historical mobilizations on war, whether Vietnam, Iraq or the first Intifada, what are the most effective slogans to counter the Israeli offensive? Many people are wondering how to act, since we seem to be facing an indestructible enemy.

The 7 October effect was exploited to the fullest by relying on what I called, after 11 September, "narcissistic compassion", this compassion which is only exercised towards those who resemble you. In France, the parallel was immediately drawn between the rave party of October 7 and the Bataclan, so that people would identify with Israelis and put

Hamas in the same category as the Islamic State.

Despite this, we have seen in Western countries a rise in the mobilization in solidarity with Gaza, which is however largely that of communities of immigrant origin from the Arab region or regions in sympathy with the Palestinian cause. Despite the absolute disproportion in the presentation of events in the media – for which a Palestinian death is much less important than an Israeli death – people realize the scale of the genocide underway. But, with the October 7 effect, the indignation is of a lesser magnitude than it should be in the face of a genocidal war of this type, which is taking place before the eyes of the whole world.

However, indignation is gaining ground and has begun to reverse the wave of October 7 in which voices of solidarity with Palestine were stifled by a campaign labeling the slightest expression of this solidarity as anti-Semitism, Nazism, etc.. We must now build for the long term, building on indignation at the genocide. What is happening in Gaza shows the reality of the State of Israel, governed by the far right for many years, an increasingly radical far right which took action by seizing the opportunity, using 7 October as the administration of George W. Bush had seized the opportunity of using 11 September to carry out actions that its members had been planning for a long time.

In terms of type of action, the BDS campaign is proven and effective. It must be continued and amplified. On the political level, we must emphasize the complicity of Western governments – to varying degrees. We can understand the historical reasons for the attitude of the German ruling class, but the lessons they learned from the catastrophe of Nazism are very bad if they lead them to support a state which, although claiming to be Jewish, behaves more and more like the Nazis.
In France, Macron must have felt he had gone too far when he offered to participate in Israel’s war on Gaza, and France has

now distinguished itself from other European governments by supporting the call for a ceasefire. The procedure initiated by South Africa before the International Court of Justice on the question of genocide is also a point of support for pressure on governments.

We must also oppose arms deliveries to Israel, particularly in the United States, and highlight the hypocrisy and "double standards" of Western governments on the issue of Ukraine and that of Palestine. Their humanitarian and legal discourse on Ukraine collapsed like a pack of cards, especially when viewed from the Global South. Certainly, few people had any illusions, but now the double talk is quite blatant. This includes the qualification of genocide: it was quickly used for Ukraine even though what Russia has done there so far is of much less destructive and murderous intensity than what Israel has done in Gaza in three months.

A range of political themes makes it possible today to rebuild a truly consistent internationalist and anti-imperialist consciousness. The twinning of Ukraine and Gaza allows us to show that we are against any invasion, whether Russian, Israeli or American, and that as internationalists we are consistent in defending universal values such as peace, the rights of peoples, self-determination, etc.

Today there is room for numerous political education battles, confronted with the media, the reigning hypocrisy, and all the supporters of Israel or Moscow. This war of narratives is facilitated by the evidence of far-right sympathy for Netanyahu and Putin. This also helps to show how anti-Semitism and Zionism complement each other. We must reverse the accusation equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism by showing that, although it is true that certain anti-Semitic speeches disguise themselves as anti-Zionism, this is far from establishing permanent equality between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. However, it is necessary to emphasize the convergence between anti-Semitism and Zionism: the anti-

Semitic extreme right of Europe and the United States, which wishes to get rid of the Jews, supports Zionism because it also advocates the fact that Jews must go to Israel rather than live in Europe or North America.

Regarding the slogans for solidarity with Gaza, today we must articulate the various questions that we have raised and which are first of all of a defensive nature: that is to say the need to stop the massacre, which is the top priority, therefore the call for an immediate ceasefire. But this is not enough, because stopping the fighting in the face of armed occupation of the entire territory obviously poses a problem. We must therefore also demand the immediate, and above all unconditional, withdrawal of the occupying troops. We must also demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all territories occupied since 1967.

It is a slogan which conforms to an optic that the vast majority of people can understand since international law considers these territories as occupied and therefore requires the end of their occupation and of any colonization put in place by the occupier. Likewise, international law recognizes to Palestinian refugees a right of return or compensation.

From there on, it is up to the Palestinians to decide what they want: the debate within the solidarity movement on one state or two states is often inappropriate in my opinion, because it is not in Paris, in London or New York that must be decided what is needed for the Palestinians . The solidarity movement must fight for the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people in all its components. It is up to the Palestinians to decide what they want. For the moment, there is a Palestinian consensus on the demands for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, for the dismantling of settlements in the West Bank, for the destruction of the separation wall, for the right of return of refugees and for real equality for the Palestinian citizens of Israel. These are all democratic demands, which are

understandable to everyone, and must be at the centre of the solidarity campaign with the Palestinian people.

Beyond that, in the realm of utopia, there is food for thought and debate, of course, but that is not what mass campaigns are built on, particularly in the emergency of a genocide. in progress.

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Gilbert Achcar will be the keynote speaker at: **Building Internationalism from Below in a Multi-Polar World**. A day conference organised by the Republican Socialist Platform on 11am to 4pm, Saturday 23rd March 2024, Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP



Gilbert Achcar grew up in Lebanon. He is currently Professor of Development Studies and International Relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. A regular and historical contributor to the press of the Fourth

*International, his books include The Clash of Barbarisms. The Making of the New World Disorder (2006), The Arabs and the Shoah. The Arab-Israeli War of Narrations (2012), The People Wants. A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising (2022). His most recent book – The New Cold War. United States, Russia and China, from Kosovo to Ukraine was published in 2023. He is a member of Anti*Capitalist Resistance in England & Cymru-Wales.*

Main Photo: Protesters for a ceasefire in Gaza fill Glasgow's Buchanan Street while the statue of former Scottish Labour leader Donald Dewar looks on (Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot)

Ukrainians Haven't Been Forgotten

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



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

Taking place under the title 'Ukraine's fight is our fight', the four-hour-long event in Edinburgh's Augustine United Church – which was live-streamed in its entirety – boasted an impressive range of speakers, many of whom were Ukrainian socialists, trade unionists and environmentalists. This made the event a refreshing departure from many other left-wing forums in Scotland and the rest of these islands in which the war has tended to be discussed with very little, if any, input from or reference to the views of Ukrainians.

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

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

This event, by far the most substantial and successful event organised by USCS in its short existence, served two purposes:

firstly, to aid socialists in Scotland in better understanding the current situation in Ukraine and the impact of the war on Ukrainian workers, the economy and the environment; and secondly, to focus minds on how we can organise the most effective and practical solidarity from Scotland to Ukraine.

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



Radical perspectives

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

Solidarity greetings were subsequently heard from Labour MSP Katy Clark, SNP MP Tommy Sheppard, Green MSP Ross Greer and PCS assistant general secretary John Moloney – a reflection of

the broad nature of USCS, whose members consciously decided not to have a narrow focus on the trade union movement but to instead build support for Ukraine across Scotland's trade unions, political parties and social movements.

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

Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF), alarmed by this unsustainable reliance on other countries, has encouraged the previously libertarian Zelenskyy government to pursue progressive taxation (an irony observed by LSE's Luke Cooper in a recent article which Fedirko mentioned and endorsed).

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



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

Environmental crisis

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

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

The destruction of the Kakhovka dam last June, leading to devastating flooding in the Kherson region, is perhaps the best known environmental disaster arising from the war in Ukraine. Zamuruieva pointed out, however, that the construction of the dam in the 1950s was also an environmental disaster, motivated in large part by the need for fresh water

in Crimea during the deportation of the Tatars – a Russian colonial crime. She also highlighted other environmental disasters; in one case which received remarkably little publicity, more than four million chickens died at Europe's largest poultry farm after the occupation made it impossible to feed them.

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

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

A divided left

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

Though at times veering too close to a speculative exercise along the lines of 'what would Connolly say if he were here today?', Kostick correctly pointed out that Connolly was prepared to accept arms from a rival imperialist power, i.e. the German Empire, in order to wage a struggle for national liberation against the British Empire. Condemning Ukrainians for soliciting and accepting arms from NATO countries may be a

legitimate political position, he said, but those advocating for it can't claim they've derived their analysis from Connolly.

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

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

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

Allan Armstrong, a member of the Republican Socialist Platform who has incidentally written extensively about Connolly and his politics, said a withdrawal of western support for Ukraine would inevitably lead to something

resembling the Munich Agreement. Ukrainian independence is vastly preferable to the alternative seen in Donetsk, Luhansk or Chechnya, he said – fascism of a far more aggressive kind than is seen in the core of Russia.



Pictured: Ukrainian students and refugees carry a flag through Dundee city centre to mark the first anniversary of the Russian invasion in February 2023.

Building the movement

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

The second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, landing on Saturday 24th February, will overlap with Palestine

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

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

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

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

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

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

Other photos: Connor Beaton for Heckle.scot

Agriculture is killing the planet

Alan Thornett writes on his Ecosocialist Discussion blog https://www.ecosocialistdiscussion.com/ .

This is a revised version of chapter 16 of my book Facing the Apocalypse—Arguments for Ecosocialism, published in 2019, which might be useful today in the current debates on the role of agriculture.

In 2007 and 2008, dramatic increases in world food prices created economic instability and social unrest, in the poorest regions of the world. Those 'normally' subjected to famine and starvation were joined by seventy-five million more.

It was this that triggered the Tunisian revolution in January 2011, which led to the Arab Spring.

A young Tunisian vegetable seller, the lone breadwinner of a family of seven, set himself on fire in front of a government building after police confiscated his unauthorised cartload of vegetables. It was followed by protests over food prices as well as corruption, social inequalities, unemployment and political repression.

In the Global South today, over 800 million people are malnourished and 40 million die every year from hunger or diseases caused by hunger. Another 2 billion people have no regular access to clean drinking water, and 25 million die

every year as a result. Sixty-six million primary children go to school hungry across the developing world—23 millions of them in Africa.

The plight of these countries is compounded by the domination of the WTO the IMF and the World Bank. These are the neoliberal gatekeepers that have saddled them with massive debt and forced them to produce monoculture crops for the multi-national companies whilst their own farmers are bankrupt by subsidised competition from the Global North.

This destroys the economic and social conditions of these countries and distorts the markets in which they operate, and leaves them powerless to comate the gathering climate catastrophe.

Meanwhile, desertification, salinification and floods are making large areas of the planet unsuitable for growing food. Climate chaos is creating extreme weather events, in which loss of life and destruction of dwellings and infrastructure have inflicted death, disease and further poverty on millions.

The big question

The salient question, therefore, is not just whether enough food can be produced, and distributed, to feed the existing human population of 7 billion (now 8bn-AT), or indeed the 9 or 10 billion people projected by mid-century without destroying the biosphere of the planet in the process. In other words without a massive extension of industrialised/intensified agriculture and by the ever-increasing use of artificial fertilisers, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and mono-cropping techniques?

Already, 60 per cent of current global biodiversity loss—i.e. the sixth great extinction of species that we are witnessing—is directly due to food production including the catastrophic destruction taking place the Amazonian rain forest, the most environmentally rich and diverse habitat on

the planet.

At the same time agriculture is a massive contributor to GHG emissions, including methane from livestock, nitrous oxide from the soil, CO_2 from machinery. Perhaps the most remarkable statistic concerning food production is that the GHG emissions generated by meat production for human consumption are at 17 percent is almost equal to the 20 per cent generated by the entire world-wide transportation system combined: cars, trucks, trains, ships and aircraft! Yes, cars, trucks, trains, ships and aircraft!

Industrialised/intensive farming

Today, 70 billion land animals (*i.e.* excluding fish) are slaughtered every year for human consumption. This has doubled in the last 50 years, and is set to double again by 2050.

Two-thirds of these are reared by industrialised/intensive methods—or Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)—as they are known in the trade. This requires vast quantities of corn, maize, and soy that could be eaten directly, and far more effectively, by the human population itself. There are now more than 50,000 facilities classified as CAFOs in the US, with another quarter of a million industrial-scale facilities just below that threshold.

In his 2017 book *Dead Zone-where the wild things were,* Philip Lymbery— who is also author of *FARMAGEDDON-the true cost of cheap meat,* published in 2014—points to a study by the University of Minnesota found that for every 100 grams of grain fed to animals only a fraction convert into human food: i.e. 43 un the case of milk, 35 with eggs, 40 with chicken, 10 with pork, and just 5 in the case of beef. My contemporaneous review of *Dead Zone* can be found here.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation 2006 Report *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and*

Options, concluded that global meat production will more than double to 465 million tonnes by 2050; and that milk production will grow from 580 million tonnes to 1,043 million tonnes in the same period. The environmental impact of livestock production will have to be cut in half, it says, just it concluded just to keep the damage at the present level.

Beef consumption

The average American consumes 120 kg of meat a year, and the average Britain 80 kg. Whilst these levels are stable at the moment, meat consumption in the developing countries is rising rapidly. The global livestock sector currently produces 285 million tonnes of meat altogether—or about 36 kg (80 lb) per person, if divided evenly.

This involves the use of huge quantities of mineral fertiliser and pesticides as well as antibiotics to control the infections that result from confining them in too small a space and of hormones to fatten them faster.

The methane produced by cattle is also huge, putting the equivalent of 2.8 billion tonnes of CO_2 into the atmosphere. Globally cattle produce 150 billion gallons of methane every day from their digestive processes—and methane is 86 times more potent as a GHG than CO_2.

In their 2016 film *Cowspiracy* Kip Anderson and Keegan Kuhn concluded that livestock along with their feed, their waste, and their flatulence account for up to 32 billion tonnes of CO_2 per year, or 51 per cent of all worldwide CO_2 equivalents. Livestock also generate 53 per cent of all emissions of nitrous oxide (mostly from manure) which is a greenhouse gas with 298 times the warming potential of CO_2.

Soy beans and palm oil

Between 1960 and 2009, *global soy production* increased by

nearly ten-fold, and it has doubled again since then. The USA used to be the major producer of produce of soy, but there has since been explosive growth in Latin America, particularly in Brazil. Today, China, at 55 million tonnes, is by far the biggest importer of soybeans and is expected to increase its imports by 5 per cent a year. Soy bean imports to Asia are also expected to grow from approximately 75 million tonnes in 2009 to 130 million tonnes in 2019.

The global palm oil trade is worth $40 billion a year, accounting for over 30 per cent of the world's vegetable oil production. Malaysia and Indonesia are now the two biggest palm oil producing countries and are rapidly replacing their abundant rainforests with oil palm plantations. They account for 84 per cent of the worlds palm oil production. In South America palm oil production has recently increased in Colombia, Ecuador and Guatemala. The second largest global vegetable oil, soya, takes up 120 million hectares, producing 48 million tonnes of soya oil.

Chickenisation

If red meat is the most damaging to the planet, that does not mean that mass produced chicken is a benign product. Lymbery calls this chickenisation, and points out that around 60 billion chickens a year are currently produced for meat. It comes, he says, at a terrible cost to the birds as well as massive pollution of the environment.

He points out that:

Poultry meat and eggs are a major source of infection from another serious food-poisoning bug: salmonella. Keeping chickens in large flocks or in cages can dramatically boost the risk: studies have shown that caged hens are up to ten times more at risk of salmonella than birds kept free-range… Farmers routinely attempt to safeguard their birds against such bugs by dosing them with antibiotics… Indeed, half of all

the antibiotics produced in the world are fed to chickens, cows, pigs and other farmed animals.

There are serious implications in this for human health in terms of antibiotic immunity.

Oceanic Dead zones

Philip Lymbery—as the tile of his book suggests—also points in some detail to the development of oceanic dead zones, or hypoxia as they are scientifically known, in what is possibly the most terrifying upshot of meat production. They are caused by agricultural run-off which often reach the sea via the river systems. They are not new but they are now multiplying rapidly.

He focuses on a dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico that forms every year from February to October, and is the second biggest in the world. Dead zones are generated by a lack of oxygen, creating a lifeless bottom layer of water which most creatures are unable to tolerate. Bottom-dwelling animals with no escape – crustaceans for example – are wiped out.

Lymbery points out that the number of dead zones around the world doubles every decade. There are now more than 400 dead zones covering some 95,000 square miles. Most are found in temperate waters off the coast of the USA and Europe. Some are also brewing in the waters off China, Japan, Brazil, Australia and New Zealand. The biggest in the world is in the Baltic. The Gulf of Mexico dead zone stretches from the shores of Louisiana to the upper Texan coast, covering an area the size of Wales.

The responsibility for dead zones, Lymbery says, is clear. It is the fertilizer used to produces the vast grain crops of the American Mid-West—an area of intensive corn and soya production where large amounts of nitrogen are applied to the soil every year to produce grain mainly for meat production. Whilst 160 million tons of nitrogen is produced every year for

agricultural purposes, only a fraction of that which is spread on the fields ends up being absorbed by the crops: the rest ends up as run-off.

The run-off that feeds the Gulf of Mexico dead zone originates in the American Mid-West and arrives via the Mississippi River. The Mississippi drains from land in more than 30 states, making it by far the biggest drainage system in North America. Nitrogen applied to the vast cornfields of the Mid-West to increase the crop yield makes its way through the tributaries upstream into the Mississippi itself, and on into the Gulf of Mexico to fuel the dead zone. The more nitrogen is applied to the crops, the bigger the resulting dead zone.

Fresh water consumption

Another massive impact that agriculture on the planet has been it relentless consumption of fresh water.

Fred Pearce, in *When the Rivers Run Dry* points out, for example, contends that it takes between 2,000 and 5,000 litres of water to grow one kilo of rice. That is more water than most households use in a week. It takes 1,000 litres to grow a kilo of wheat and 500 for a kilo of potatoes. And when it comes to feeding grain to livestock to produce meat and milk, the numbers become even more startling.

It takes 24,000 litres to grow the feed to produce a kilo of beef, and between 2,000 and 4,000 litres for a cow to produce a litre of milk. It takes 5,000 litres to produce a kilo of cheese and 3,000 litres to produce a kilo of sugar. It takes around 2,000 litres to produce a kilo jar of coffee, around 250 litres to produce a glass of wine or a pint of beer, and a staggering 2,000 litres to produce a glass of brandy.

He argued that:

The water footprint of Western countries on the rest of the world deserves to become a serious issue. Whenever you buy a

T-shirt made of Pakistani cotton, eat Thai rice, or drink coffee from Central America, you are influencing the hydrology of those region—taking a share of the River Indus, the Mekong or the Costa Rican rains. You may also be helping the rivers run dry.

He introduces the concept of 'virtual water'—the water used in the production or manufacture of a product. Those countries exporting such products, he argues, are in fact exporting 'virtual water'. The USA, he says, is rapidly depleting crucial underground water reserves in order to export a staggering 100 cubic kilometres of virtual water in beef production alone. Other major exporters of virtual water include Canada (grain), Australia (cotton), Argentina (beef) and Thailand (rice).

The agricultural transition

During the twentieth century, agriculture underwent what is known as the agricultural transition—ushering in not just fertilisers and pesticides but mechanisation—bringing about the greatest change since agriculture was first developed by human beings some 13,000 years ago.

Today fewer and fewer people are farmers, agriculture employs 1.3 billion men and women: 40 per cent of the working population. Peasants are still the majority of working people in Africa and Asia.

Over the past two decades, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, peasants have faced 'conservative modernisation' policies, posing deep challenges to peasant societies in the attempt to adapt them to capitalist globalisation. Land grabs are now global phenomenon, undertaken by local, national and transnational elites as well as investors and speculators, with the complicity of government and or local authorities.

Land grabbing goes hand in hand with increasing control by big business over agriculture and food, through greater control

over land, water, seeds and other natural resources. In this race for profit, the private sector has strengthened its control over food production systems, monopolising resources and gaining a dominant position in the decision-making processes.

The countries of the global South are often under the pressure of debt payments that have increased sharply in recent years.

Crucial tipping-points

Philip Lymbery argues that although the planet is remarkably resilient, we are now reaching a tipping point in its ability to take any more punishment; and that agriculture is playing a major role in this, feeding a global population that is now over 7 billion (now 8 billion AT), but swallowing up nearly a half of the planet's useable land and two-thirds of its fresh water, and inflicting damage on the soil that is vital for the food we eat. As the human population rises, Lymbery argues, 'so the quest intensifies for more land to cultivate'. Right now, we are in no danger of running out of food (distribution problems not withstanding), but the environmental damage attached to the way we are choosing to produce it may be irreversible.

An area of cereal cropland the size of France and Italy combined will be needed by 2050 to keep pace with the demand for food. Up to a fifth of the world's remaining forests, he argues, will be gone in the next three decades – much of it to grow crops for feeding animals for the meat trade:

Great swathes of extra cropland look set to join the chemical-soaked arable monocultures of East Anglia in England. The seas of swaying corn in the Midwest of America and soya in Brazil are set fair to extend still further. There'll be more fields of maize like the ones I saw in rural Asia… The encroachment of agriculture into the remaining wildlands, together with the onward march of industrial farming, will almost certainly

cause irreversible damage to biodiversity, forests soil and water.

He is cautious about giving an opinion on the rising human population of the planet, but he is clearly concerned. ‘To me’, he says, ‘the link is obvious. An extra billion people come with 10 billion extra farm animals, together with what that means in terms of land water and soil.’

Throughout human history, he goes on:

for better or for worse, *Homo sapiens* have outdone all comers, from the magnificent mammals like the bison that roamed the American plains in vast numbers, to birds like the passenger pigeons that once flocked in great grey rivers through the sky, and to species of fellow humans like the Neanderthals. Whatever has stood in our way, and more often just in our reach, we have erased it. Now we have met our match. The great irony is that our most fearsome competitor for food – livestock – has been put there by us.

The conclusion to all this is clear. Although food continues to be produced (globally) by small and medium sized producers, industrialised agriculture is the predominant producer and is now irreplaceable without major changes both in food production and consumption, particularly in regard to the increasing demand for meat.

Food sovereignty

The problem is clear. Big business dominates our global food system. A small handful of large corporations control much of the production, processing, distribution, marketing and retailing of food. This concentration of power enables big businesses to wipe out competition and dictate tough terms to their suppliers. It forces both farmers and consumers into poverty. Under this system, around a billion people are hungry and around 2 billion are obese or overweight.

Peasant and farmer movement across the world are therefore fighting for ‘food sovereignty’—a term coined in 1996 by *La Via Campesina*.

Food sovereignty, they argue, allows communities to maintain control over the way food is produced, traded and consumed. It seeks to create a food system that is designed to help people and the environment, rather than make profits for multinational corporations.

The food sovereignty movement is a global alliance of farmers, growers, consumers and activists. It is counterposed to the demands of governments around the world for ‘food security’ a concept that instead aims to ensure that the global demand for food is met by free market methods and ever more industrialised faming systems.

La Via Campesina is one of the biggest social movements in the world, bringing together more than 200 million small and medium-scale farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous peoples, migrants and agricultural workers from 70 countries. The Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST), with 1.5 million members, is one of the biggest components of *Via Campesina*. It campaigns for access to land by the poor and for land redistribution. It has led land occupations by the rural poor, forcing the Brazilian government to resettle hundreds of thousands of families.

Small farmers lack access to natural resources—in particular land, water and seeds—since most of the best land is in the hands of the big transnational companies, which impose a model of agricultural production designed for export rather than for local consumption. They impose a commercialised, intensive agriculture, that puts economic interests before the needs of people.

Food sovereignty, on the other hand, puts the local agricultural producers at the centre of the system, supporting

the right of the people to produce their own food independent of the conditions established by the market. It is about prioritising local and national markets, and reinforcing agriculture by promoting food production, distribution and consumption on the basis of social, economic and environmental sustainability.

The industrial/intensive agriculture model threatens the existence of traditional farming and fishing and small-scale food production. Women have a central role to play: in the Global South they produce 80 per cent of food. At the same time women and children world-wide are the most affected by hunger and famine. In many parts of the Global South, the law denies women the right to own land, and even where they can legally own it, they are denied that right. As a result of this, many individual and groups of women are joining the farmers' movements to seek protection.

In Latin America those struggling for the rights of indigenous communities and the right to the land often face murderous repression, as in Brazil and Honduras. In Asia, in Africa—for example, in Mali—on all continents, peasant movements lead the mobilisations against land monopolisation.

Peasant women and men, landless people and indigenous peoples, and especially women and youths and precarious farm workers, are dispossessed of their means of subsistence by practices which also destroy the environment. Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities are excluded from their lands, often by force, making their lives more precarious and in certain cases examples of modern slavery. Although the concept of food sovereignty relates most strongly to the countries of the impoverished Global South, it also exists in the Global North. In fact the first European forum on food sovereignty was held in Krems in Austria in 2011.

La Via Campesina's seven principles of food sovereignty are as follows:

Food as a basic human right. Everyone must have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient quantity and quality to sustain a healthy life with full human dignity. Each nation should declare that access to food is a constitutional right and guarantee the development of the primary sector to ensure the concrete realisation of this fundamental right.

Agrarian reform. A genuine agrarian reform is necessary which gives landless and farming people – especially women – ownership and control of the land they work and returns territories to indigenous peoples. The right to land must be free of discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race, social class or ideology; the land belongs to those who work it.

Protecting natural resources. Food Sovereignty entails the sustainable care and use of natural resources, especially land, water, and seeds and livestock breeds. The people who work the land must have the right to practice sustainable management of natural resources, and to conserve biodiversity free of restrictive intellectual property rights. This can only be done from a sound economic basis with security of tenure, healthy soils and reduced use of agrochemicals.

Reorganising the trade in food. Food is first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade. National agricultural policies must prioritize production for domestic consumption and food self-sufficiency. Food imports must not displace local production nor depress prices.

Ending the globalisation of hunger. Food sovereignty is undermined by multilateral institutions and by speculative capital. The growing control of multinational corporations over agricultural policies has been facilitated by the economic policies of multilateral organisations such as the WTO, World Bank and IMF. Regulation and taxation of speculative capital, and a strictly enforced Code of Conduct

for TNCs, is therefore needed.

Social peace. Everyone has the right to be free from violence. Food must not be used as a weapon. Increasing levels of poverty and marginalisation in the countryside, along with the growing oppression of ethnic minorities and indigenous populations, aggravate situations of injustice and hopelessness. The ongoing displacement, forced urbanisation, repression and increasing incidence of racism against smallholder farmers, cannot be tolerated.

Democratic control. Smallholder farmers must have direct input into formulating agricultural policy at all levels. The UN and its related organisations will have to become more open and democratic for this to become a reality. These principles form the basis of good governance, accountability and equal participation in economic, political and social life, free from all forms of discrimination. Rural women, in particular, must be granted direct and active decision making on food and rural issues.

This article was first published in my book Facing the Apocalypse—arguments for ecosocialism published on December 2019.

George Monbiot

As additional reading on this would strongly recommend George Monbiot published an excellent book last year (2023) entitled: Regenesis—*feeding the World Without Devouring the Planet*, which picks up some of the themes that I have raised in the above article.

Agriculture, he tells us is: “the most destructive human activity ever to have blighted the Earth”. That “We are farming the planet to death”, and that “agriculture is the greatest single cause of both climate change and species extinction. “This, he says, is the ‘grand dilemma’ we face.” It is a dilemma he confronts fearlessly, and with little

regard to who's toes, or indeed vested interests, he might be trampling on. His alternative vision is the resurgence of nature – and he makes a very strong case for it.

My review of his book can be found here.

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Launching a Major International Front Against the Extreme Right

Eric Toussaint of the the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debts (CADTM) is interviewed at February's World Social Forum in Nepal on future plans for an international movement against the extreme right.

Éric Toussaint interviewed by Sergio Ferrari on he World Social Forum in Kathmandu, Nepal, 15-19 February 2024.

At the end of another edition of the World Social Forum (WSF) held in Kathmandu, Nepal, from February 15 to 19, it's time to take stock. "It was a very positive event for the region. But we need to move forward and promote concrete initiatives in a complex international context marked by the far-right

offensive," says Belgian historian and economist Eric Toussaint. Founder and spokesman for the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debts (CADTM), Toussaint took part in the WSF, where his organisation promoted seven events that were well attended.

***Sergio Ferrari**: What is your assessment of this latest edition of the World Social Forum?*

Positive, but…

Éric Toussaint (ÉT): It was very positive, mainly due to the participation of very diverse popular sectors and some of those most oppressed. I'm referring in particular to the Dalits, the untouchable caste, the native and indigenous peoples, historically marginalised but highly organised, the trade union forces and many feminists from the working classes. The majority came from Nepal and India. The organisers counted more than 18,000 registrations (from over 90 countries), and at the opening march on Thursday, February 15, between 12 and 15,000 people took part. No fewer than 10,000 people attended the conferences, workshops and cultural activities each day. It was an excellent decision to come to Nepal. This is an incomparably better result than the WSF in Mexico in May 2022.

However, the WSF as such has not achieved the same level of participation as in the first decade of its existence since it was first held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001. There were very few participants from Europe, Latin America, Africa or North America. In short, there was a good level of regional participation but a weak presence from other continents. This shows how difficult it is for the WSF to take global initiatives that have a real impact.

There is no mobilizing international dynamic

***Sergio Ferrari**: Do you think the last major pre-pandemic gathering for the 2019 WSF in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, was a*

success?

ET: Not exactly. If we think about this edition in Salvador de Bahia, although it was well attended, it was essentially reduced to the north-east region with participation from a few other regions of Brazil. Unfortunately, the presence of other continents was weak in Salvador de Bahia.

Today we see a contradictory reality. On the one hand, the World Social Forum is no longer a real force of attraction and impetus. On the other hand, it is the only global space that still exists. That's why it's still important for international networks like the CADTM to take part.

I am convinced that if the WSF had real strength, such as we had in February 2003 when we called for major mobilisations for peace and against the war in Iraq, its power today would be significant, both in confronting the genocide in Palestine and in helping to build a broad check on the growth of the far right that can be seen in many parts of the world.

When I say this, I am referring, among others, to Narendra Modi in India, a violent nationalist, anti-Islam and anti-Muslim; to Ferdinand Marcos Junior in the Philippines, heir not only to the family dictatorship but also to the repressive Rodrigo Duterte; and to the reactionary regression of the regime in Tunisia, increasingly similar to the former dictatorship of Ben Ali before the Arab Spring. In Europe, there are extremist, warmongering governments like Vladimir Putin's in Russia, Giorgia Meloni's in Italy, Viktor Orban's in Hungary and Ukraine's neo-liberal, pro-NATO right-wing government. I'm also thinking of the real threats posed by Chega, a new far-right party in Portugal that is aiming to win 20% of the vote, whereas it was absent from the electorate between 1975 and just three years ago; the possibility of a victory for Marine Le Pen in France in the next presidential elections; VOX in Spain; the electoral victory of the far-right party in the Netherlands; the advance of the AFD in

Germany…

In Latin America, presidents such as Nayib Bukele in El Salvador or Javier Milei in Argentina have a more radical economic and social program than Pinochet himself in the Chilean dictatorship. All this in the global context of a possible electoral victory for Donald Trump in the forthcoming US presidential elections. Not to mention the fascist government of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel, promoting a racist, genocidal and colonialist project.

In search of better proposals

***Sergio Ferrari**: If the World Social Forum doesn't have the strength to be a force for impetus and union in a global reality that you describe as dramatic, the question is obvious: what do you think progressive sectors should do?*

ET: I think that the formula of a WSF with only social movements and NGOs but without progressive political parties (as defined in the 2001 Charter of Principles) does not allow for an adequate fight against the extreme right. Faced with the rise of far-right and fascist projects, we need to look for a different kind of international convergence. With this in view, the CADTM, along with other social actors, has contacted the PSOL (Socialism and Freedom Party) and the PT (Workers' Party) in Porto Alegre, the birthplace of the World Social Forum since 2001, to propose the creation of an organising committee that would convene an international meeting in May to discuss the way forward, with a view to a major gathering in a year's time. With a broad vision to integrate social movements of all kinds—feminists, climate justice activists, progressive believers—with a view to reflecting on the best way to resist the far right. Major forces such as Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST) could play an active part in this. If they have achieved success in Brazil by breaking free from Jair Bolsonaro with a broad policy of political and social alliances, it is essential to

draw concrete political lessons from this. The World Social Forum could continue, but we are convinced that a new framework of forces capable of remobilizing is needed.

***Sergio Ferrari**: There are initiatives like the International Peoples' Alliance that are already thinking along these lines…*

ET: Of course, it should be involved and play a role. But we need a new, broader United Front initiative. We think that this first meeting could be convened in May 2024 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and it would be conceivable, for example, to have a strong presence from Argentina, radical left forces with the left of Peronism, trade union organisations such as the Central de Trabajadores de Argentina and even the CGT (Confederación General de Trabajadores) and very diverse social and feminist movements. This would be a first step towards a major conference in 2025 in Sao Paulo, for example, if the left-wing alliance (PT, PSOL, etc.) wins the municipal elections in 2024.

The construction of this new international initiative would be broad and diverse, incorporating various revolutionary currents, from the 4th International to social democracy via the Progressive International, across the whole range of left-wing sensibilities. As well as progressive organisations and personalities in the United States (e.g., Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and the UAW auto union, which won a major victory in 2023). And left-wing parties and movements in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Arab region. We also need to broaden participation to include committed figures from the cultural world who are making their own contribution. It is necessary to convince as many forces as possible, including those who have to overcome historical differences and divisions and who understand and accept the great priority challenge of the moment, namely the fight against the extreme right. We know that such an appeal will be neither simple nor easy to put into practice; it requires great generosity and strong political will. The complexity of the historic moment

and the dangers facing humanity and the planet mean that we must try to make it happen.

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Photo: Protest at WSF in Nepal, CADTM.
Originally published at: https://www.counterpunch.org/2024/02/20/launching-a-major-international-front-against-the-extreme-right/

Two years of war : Statement of Fourth International on Ukraine

This statement was adopted by the International Committee of the Fourth International on 25 February 2024.

a) In the context of the anniversary of 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, we express our global internationalist and systematic support for Ukraine's right to self-determination and right to resist occupation and oppression, as we express it for all peoples whoever be the colonial oppressor.

b) We affirm our political independence from the neoliberal Zelensky government. That is why we aim to develop direct internationalist links from below with the left, feminist, LGBTQ+, social and environmental struggles and currents within the popular resistance to build a free, democratic therefore pluralist, independent nation.

c) Therefore we continue to give our support to the demands expressed by left political and trade-unionist Ukrainian

currents:

· An immediate end to shelling, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine;

· to increase the resources consolidating the public services and social protection so much needed in the context of war and for the future independent Ukraine, and resist the ongoing attempts by the neoliberal government of Ukraine to use the war as an excuse for dismantling public services and destroying social protection

· The need to abolish all forms of “aid” conditional on privatizations;

· The support for material and financial aid which does not increase the Ukrainian foreign debt, in line with our support for the demand of cancellation of the existing debt;

· A general orientation to use funds devoted to help Ukraine resistance and reconstruction in order to contribute to building a social and democratic European project, which means the reduction of inequalities and therefore opposition to the logics of fiscal and social dumping and “competition”;

· The increase of Ukrainian wages – individual and social income – as an outlet for Ukraine industrial and agricultural production is to be radically opposed to the ongoing dominant policy (which is trying to increase Ukrainian “competitivity” in exports by reducing taxes and wages)

d) Our support to Ukrainian armed and non-armed resistance against the Russian invasion also means our solidarity with all citizens of the Russian Federation who refuse that war and are repressed because of their democratic stance.

e) We oppose the logic of ‘Great Russian power’ and domination over neighbouring countries. The victory of the free and democratic Ukrainian people is organically favourable to the

emergence of a pluralist, peaceful and democratic Russian Federation and union of the peoples of Europe.

The Russian aggression and threats against its neighbours creates more support for NATO in those countries. The defeat of Russian aggression would therefore facilitate the struggle against NATO. We oppose the use of the Russian invasion of Ukraine as an excuse to increase military budgets. We have always been, and continue to be against any logic of counter-posed military blocs or zones of influence. We struggle for the dissolving of military blocs that are in the service of imperialism such as NATO and the Russian-led CSTO alliance. In our struggle against imperialism and for the self-determination of all peoples we fight for the defeat of Putin's project.

We reaffirm such a programme for the second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine helping to combine our full support to Ukrainian resistance to the war and to neoliberal policies with promoting new European and international progressive projects integrating eco-socialist anticapitalist dimensions.

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