

# For an Ecosocialist Degrowth

Degrowth and ecosocialism are two of the most important movements—and proposals—on the radical side of the ecological spectrum. Sure, not everyone in the degrowth community identifies as a socialist, and not everyone who is an ecosocialist is convinced by the desirability of degrowth. But one can see an increasing tendency of mutual respect and convergence. Let us try to map the large areas of agreement between us, and list some of the main arguments for an ecosocialist degrowth:

1. Capitalism cannot exist without growth. It needs a permanent expansion of production and consumption, accumulation of capital, maximization of profit. This process of unlimited growth, based on the exploitation of fossil fuels since the eighteenth century, is leading to ecological catastrophe, climate change, and threatens the extinction of life on the planet. The twenty-six UN Climate Change Conferences of the last thirty years manifest the total unwillingness of the ruling elites to stop the course toward the abyss.

2. Any true alternative to this perverse and destructive dynamic needs to be radical—that is, must deal with the roots of the problem: the capitalist system, its exploitative and extractivist dynamic, and its blind and obsessive pursuit of growth. Ecosocialist degrowth is one such alternative, in direct confrontation with capitalism and growth. Ecosocialist degrowth requires the social appropriation of the main means of (re)production and a democratic, participatory, ecological planning. The main decisions on the priorities of production and consumption will be decided by people themselves, in order to satisfy real social needs while respecting the ecological limits of the planet. This means that people, at various scales, exercise direct power in democratically determining what is to be produced, how, and how much; how to remunerate

different kinds of productive and reproductive activities that sustain us and the planet. Ensuring equitable well-being for all does not require economic growth but rather radically changing how we organize the economy and distribute social wealth.

3. A significant degrowth in production and consumption is ecologically indispensable. The first and urgent measure is phasing out fossil fuels, as well as the ostentatious and wasteful consumption of the 1 percent rich elite. From an ecosocialist perspective, degrowth has to be understood in dialectical terms: many forms of production (such as coal-fired facilities) and services (such as advertisement) should not only be reduced but suppressed; some, such as private cars or cattle raising, should be substantially reduced; but others would need development, such as agro-ecological farming, renewable energy, health and educational services, and so on. For sectors like health and education, this development should be, first and foremost, qualitative. Even the most useful activities have to respect the limits of the planet; there can be no such thing as an “unlimited” production of any good.

4. Productivist “socialism,” as practiced by the USSR, is a dead end. The same applies to “green” capitalism as advocated by corporations or mainstream “Green parties.” Ecosocialist degrowth is an attempt to overcome the limitations of past socialist and “green” experiments.

5. It is well known that the Global North is historically responsible for most of the carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere. The rich countries must therefore take the larger part in the process of degrowth. At the same time, we do not believe that the Global South should try to copy the productivist and destructive model of “development” of the North, but look instead for a different approach, emphasizing the real needs of the populations in terms of food, housing, and basic services, instead of extracting more and more raw materials (and fossil fuels) for the capitalist world market,

or producing more and more cars for the privileged minorities.

6. Ecosocialist degrowth also involves transformation, through a process of democratic deliberation, of existing consumption models—for instance, an end to planned obsolescence and nonrepairable goods; of transport patterns, for instance, by greatly reducing the hauling of goods by ships and trucks (thanks to the relocalization of production), as well as airplane traffic. In short, it is much more than a change of property forms, it is a civilizational transformation, a new “way of life” based on values of solidarity, democracy, equal liberty, and respect for Earth. Ecosocialist degrowth signals a new civilization that breaks with productivism and consumerism, in favor of shorter working time, thus more free time devoted to social, political, recreational, artistic, ludic, and erotic activities.

7. Ecosocialist degrowth can only win through a confrontation with the fossil oligarchy and the ruling classes who control political and economic power. Who is the subject of this struggle? We cannot overcome the system without the active participation of the urban and rural working class, who make up the majority of the population and are already bearing the brunt of capitalism’s social and ecological ills. But we also have to expand the definition of the working class to include those who undertake social and ecological reproduction, the forces who are now at the forefront of social-ecological mobilizations: youth, women, Indigenous peoples, and peasants. A new social and ecological consciousness will emerge through the process of self-organization and active resistance of the exploited and oppressed.

8. Ecosocialist degrowth forms part of the broader family of other radical, antisystemic ecological movements: ecofeminism, social ecology, Sumak Kawsay (the Indigenous “Good Life”), environmentalism of the poor, Blockadia, Green New Deal (in its more critical versions), among many others. We do not seek any primacy—we just think that ecosocialism and degrowth have

a shared and potent diagnostic and prognostic frame to offer alongside these movements. Dialogue and common action are urgent tasks in the present dramatic conjuncture.

1 April 2022

Signatories: Michael Löwy, Director of Research Emeritus, CNRS, Paris, author of *Qu'est-ce que l'Ecosocialisme?* (Paris, Le Temps des Cérises, 2020); Bengi Akbulut, Concordia University, Montreal; Sabrina Fernandes, Doctor of Sociology, ecosocialist organizer, post-doctoral fellow at the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung and producer of *Tese Onze*. Giorgos Kallis, professor at ICTA-Barcelona, and author of *The Case for Degrowth* (Polity Press, 2020).

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## Bodies United

[red clydesider](#) reports on the ongoing struggle for bodily autonomy and specifically the fight for safe zones around abortion services and health clinics in Scotland.

The latest attack on reproductive rights in the United States of America has stirred a fury that has leapt beyond the borders of the troubled republic. This is no surprise. Whatever happens, over there have repercussions that are felt all across the globe, and these latest events show how easily cherished democratic and civil liberties can be rolled back by determined reactionaries and fundamentalists. As such, they stand as a stark warning to the rest of the world. Whatever has been gained by struggle, can only be protected and

sheltered by struggle. This fact cannot be ignored.

Here in Scotland, anger at the assault on Roe vs Wade has mingled with a home-grown cause, the fight for buffer zones around healthcare sites offering abortion services that would insulate them from anti-abortion protests. Since 2017, the British Pregnancy Advisory Service and Back Off Scotland have recorded a series of repeated protests at seven different hospitals and clinics across Scotland. Just this year, there was a candlelight vigil of around one hundred people outside the Maternity Wing of Glasgow's Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, and in recent months smaller pickets by preachers have been plaguing clinics like Sandyford, with those using the clinic being harassed and condemned as they approach the building.

To address this, the Green MSP Gillian Mackay has proposed a bill for the Scottish Parliament to establish legally protected safe access zones of a perimeter of 150m for abortion clinics and healthcare settings, in order to protect the persons and the privacy of those going to these clinics for abortions. Within the buffer zones, the bill aims to prohibit behaviour such as impeding or blocking somebody's path or an entrance to abortion services, intimidating or harassing people, and photographing or filming a person within the zone. There is currently [a consultation](#) for the bill taking place online.

As the consultation progresses and the bill moves through parliament, however, there is still a continuing menace being faced by clients of clinics all across Scotland, as at Sandyford, where the previously mentioned religious protesters have tended to make so much noise that the staff within cannot actually give consultations, check-ups and treatment to patients, healthcare that also includes rape counselling and sexual health services for the LGBTQ+ community. Action must therefore be taken in the meantime to give clinics support, protection and solidarity against harassment. As the feminist

movement agitates for political change at the level of rights and legislation, there must also be a spirited defence of treatment at the ground level.

Beth Douglas is a woman that has been involved with great energy in exactly these struggles, and it's for that reason that I sat down to talk with her about the fight for buffer zones.

To begin with, I asked Beth about who she is, and what she does. In the broadest terms, she describes herself as an activist, with a particular focus on equality campaigning and bodily autonomy. In addition to her work on the abortion rights issue, she fights for trans health care and for the destigmatisation and decriminalisation of sex work. In more narrow party terms, or, as Beth put it, "If you want to push me into a box", she is a member of the Scottish Green Party and a co-convener of its LGBTQ+ wing, the Rainbow Greens.

Not just this, but she has long been active in protest against how Pride marches are often co-opted by corporate money and used as an image-laundering opportunity for big business and the state, particularly arms traders and the military. Indeed, those of you who followed or participated in Glasgow's radical scene in the 2010s may remember her as one of the "Pride Five", who were unjustly arrested at Glasgow Pride 2017 for protesting against capitalist influence on the event and the participation of a Police Scotland bloc in the march. Perhaps a few of you may even have been there at the courtroom solidarity demonstrations.

And, as you may have gathered from her advocacy for trans health care, Beth is a transgender woman. How does this facet of her identity shape her conception of feminism? What perspectives does she, a trans woman, bring to this movement? And in what ways do the struggle for trans rights link up with the struggle for abortion rights? I was particularly interested to find out, so I got right into the questions

about her work and her views.

As for many of us, American events have been a painful sight for Beth to witness. But it isn't simply a well-meaning sympathy that spurs her into action around abortion rights. What primarily drives her is her own experience of the ways in which society constricts bodies to fit rigid gender and sexual norms.

"As a trans person," Beth says, "I am very used to being told by the state what I can and cannot do with my body," so she is eager to fight against any attempt by the state to tell others what they are allowed to do with theirs.

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Additionally, she recognises that these political issues are not neatly separated from each other: "We are about to see millions of people lose their right to reproductive healthcare across America, and it is horrific to see people being robbed of their bodily autonomy. And even though I will never need to have an abortion, it still has a knock-on effect and matters to me."

The strengthening of patriarchal state control over bodies, the denial of free choice for people to make decisions about themselves, only gives the state a stronger position from which to police other aspects of gender and sexuality, to keep anyone who dissents from a strict patriarchal idea of "proper" gender and sexual roles in line by force. Therefore, Beth concludes that "if you weaken bodily autonomy on abortion you weaken it for trans people too and vice versa".

It is a stance that calls to mind that slogan of the workers' movement, "an injury to one is an injury to all," or the

admirable sentiment of old Bakunin, that the freedom of others, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation. These are fine socialist principles from which to go forward, and they animate Beth's political practice.

To return to actions of solidarity: It is with a grimace that Beth concedes that "unfortunately, American politics are global politics." Indeed, one can scarcely avoid being shaken by even the slightest stumbles of an imperial giant.

Feeling those tremors, Beth really wanted to do something to show solidarity with her American sisters. So, she and another trans woman, Heather, got together a demonstration at the United States Consulate after the Edinburgh May Day march on May 7th. With a couple of days' notice, the demo brought together about eighty people, and the speakers included activists from Backoff Scotland, the Green MSP Gillian MacKay and a member of the Scottish Trans Alliance.

People from the crowd also took the mic, and some of them were Americans who spoke about how they felt sad and desperate for their loved ones over there, and how they felt scared to go back to their home country because of the way things are going.

Not only this, but speakers from the crowd also talked about how they themselves had been confronted by bigoted protesters on their way into healthcare settings when going in for not just abortions, but for STI checks, menopause checks, and HIV check-ups and rape counselling.

Testimony like this served to underline the contributions of Gillian MacKay and Backoff Scotland, who raised the demand for Buffer Zones in their speeches. It wouldn't even be a week before yet more service users were being harassed outside clinics, as would happen to someone close to Beth just days after the consulate demonstration.



Beth's friend was on their way to the Sandyford clinic to receive rape counselling, and right outside the building were two religious preachers, who yelled at them to "stop killing babies!" as they entered. The two preachers had their own sound system, and they were so loud that Sandyford couldn't offer care on one whole side of their building for that day.

Hearing of this from her friend, Beth was furious and immediately went over to Sandyford to film the preachers and expose what they were doing on social media. This footage would quickly find its way to the national press, and with the word getting out on Twitter, more counter-protesters came down to join Beth and help drown out the preachers. She remembered hearing "a whole cocktail of bigotry coming out of these men's mouths", including rants about Islam, and at one point when some gay men came out of Sandyford and were told by the preachers that "they had chosen a life of sin."

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Eventually, faced with opposition from the crowd, the preachers packed up and left. "In the end," says Beth, "it wasn't the police who moved these bigots, but the people who showed up and argued with them. The whole time the police didn't take action". That kind of inaction, Beth argued, shows why buffer zones are hugely important: "The patients who use Sandyford, whatever they are using the clinic for, are just trying to get healthcare, and if we allow people to stand outside and harass them then we are denying their right to healthcare."

It wasn't long before Beth was back at the United States Consulate agitating on this theme again. After the first consulate demo, there was an American woman named Lindsay

Jaacks who wanted to organise another protest at the consulate in a week's time. She asked Beth and Heather for help, so Beth got the Scottish Activist Legal Project (SCALP) involved to do legal observing. Thinking of how the Irish police have consistently hassled and targeted abortion protesters over there, Beth was keen to involve SCALP going forward.

Demo two had a similar number of people, but a different crowd. Following on from Edinburgh May Day, demo one was mostly younger people, but at the second demo, there were some new faces. Now, while the first protest was taking place, gender-critical activists were not present, instead holding a lunch meetup over on Glasgow Green, a tradition inaugurated by the ultra-rich Blairite J. K. Rowling and aped by her middle-class adherents.

When Beth expressed surprise and disappointment on Twitter that, in a situation when women's rights are being rolled back, gender-criticalists are more focused on hobnobbing and complaining about the Gender Recognition Act than showing up to demonstrations, she was met with odd accusations her criticisms amounted to "daring to tell women they couldn't have lunch."

In any case, it seems the consciences of some gender-criticalists were stung into action by this, and they turned up to the second demo at the consulate. This is something Beth welcomed: "It doesn't matter if they hate me or not, the important thing is we work together to protect the very concept of bodily autonomy- You can't attack the bodily autonomy of one group and expect it to remain for yourself."

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Unfortunately though, when Beth spoke on the microphone, to

talk about how the American religious right has been using its money and resources to stoke division in the feminist movement, and about how when bodily autonomy is weakened for one group it is for all groups, she was heckled by the gender-criticalists in the crowd.

The heckles were predictable, simplistic and parochial. To Beth's linking of struggles, she heard shouts that the issue "was just women's' bodies" and women's' bodies alone. When Beth spoke about showing solidarity with our trans brothers and non-binary siblings, who also need the right to abortion, the gender criticalists shouted "they're women!"

The first set of heckles can easily be dispensed with by pointing out that, given, as we have seen, that the range of treatments impacted by anti-abortion protests goes beyond abortion to HIV check-ups, rape counselling, LGBTQ+ health services and so on, it is clear that the Buffer Zone struggle is overall a fight against a generalised assault on reproductive/sexual healthcare which expresses itself primarily as an abortion rights issue.

The gender-criticalists who shout about the issue just being women's' bodies have not paid close enough attention to what is happening at Sandyford and elsewhere. Additionally, they wilfully ignore that the abortion struggle is an issue closely tied to all other struggles against rigid patriarchal gender and sexual norms and that it represents one front in the fight to resist a largescale reaction by the patriarchy against any challenge to its power.

Is it a coincidence that the same Republican Party zealots leading the charge against abortion in the United States are also the same bigots stoking a panic about LGBTQ+ people? That these are the same Jim Crow capitalists that ruthlessly oppose the Black Lives Matter movement, striking workers and tenants unions? Of course not!

As for the second set of heckles, Beth is frustrated about how the gender criticalists are obsessing over whether trans men are actually women, and so making the struggle about identity rather than rights- In doing so, she argues, “you are changing the argument from ‘Everyone deserves abortion’ to ‘Are trans men actually women’”. She considers it a distraction from the real core of the issue, one that is utterly pointless given the high stakes and the urgency of the situation.

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In summary, the heckling behaviour of the gender-criticalists toward Beth provides a clear example of unsystematic, narrow, single-issue thinking that fails to connect movements into a robust united front, and which foolishly rejects solidarity from other oppressed groups.

Thankfully, a better example of political unity was close at hand. Another important event Beth wanted to highlight was the Trans Pride march in Paisley on the 20th of May. Members of the Scottish Greens, along with members of other parties, brought along a banner reading “Trans and Queer People Support Buffer Zones” and took it on the march.

“It was very heart-warming to see how many people marched behind that banner,” Beth recalled, speaking of the warm response they got from attendees of Trans Pride. For her, the march served as a clear marker that the trans community is ready to support abortion rights and back the demands of the feminist movement for the protection and the advancement of those rights.

“This is how solidarity is supposed to work.” Beth feels that for some lefties, “Solidarity has become the new ‘thoughts and

prayers,' a slogan you can say as a token gesture of support without actually doing anything. "True solidarity," Beth argues, "is waving your flag for one group but campaigning for another, whether that's trans people fighting for the bodily autonomy of all people, or lesbians and gays supporting the miners' strike", a clear nod to the legendary Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) group of the 1980's.

So, where next for the struggle from here?

Since my interview with Beth, she certainly has been busy, organising further demonstrations against the continued targeting of the Sandyford Clinic by fundamentalist preachers. While buffer zones are being sought through parliament, it is essential that the movement is able to organise for the protection of abortion clinics wherever and whenever.

Along with concrete defence of clinics goes the agitation for political change. Beth called on everyone reading this article to fill out the consultation as soon as possible: "We need as many people filling it in as we can!" The link can be found below, and I emphatically urge all of you reading this to complete it, and help show the Scottish Parliament how crucial Buffer Zones are.

With the Summer Pride season coming up, Beth was keen to spread the call for buffer zones all over Scotland. "We're going to keep using that buffer zone banner. It's important it goes to as many prides as possible." She aims to bring the buffer zone struggle wherever it can be brought, to demos, marches and events of all sorts. "We really need to get around and defend the idea of bodily autonomy wherever it is threatened regardless of who or where. If you can deny that to someone you can deny anything to them."

I ended by asking Beth how people can show support for the cause and how they can keep up to date with her. Her first port of call was the Safe Access (Abortion Services) Scotland

Bill Consultation, which can be found [here](#) The Consultation runs until the 6th August 2022. Once again, Beth was eager to point people in its direction. “It is important that as many people fill in the buffer zone consultation as possible,” Beth said, and she implores all of you to take part in it as soon as you can. As well as that, she directs everyone reading this to follow and support the work of [Back Off Scotland](#).

If you want to keep up with Beth’s own work, check out Beth’s [Twitter](#), her recent article for [Ungagged](#) and the [Twitter](#) of the Rainbow Greens.

## The Overturn of Roe vs Wade: The Struggle for Reproductive Justice in the US

Thursday 30 June 2022 on Zoom, 19:30 BST

### Speakers:

**Zora Monico** *Michigan Coalition for Reproductive Liberation*

**Kerry Abel** *Chair, Abortion Rights (UK)*

**Beth Douglas** *Trans campaigner focusing on bodily autonomy*

please register in advance at: <https://bit.ly/usabortionrights>



**ANTI★CAPITALIST RESISTANCE**

And finally, if you want to hear from the woman herself, make sure to come along to Anticapitalist Resistance’s Zoom meeting, “The Overturn of Roe vs Wade: The Struggle for Reproductive Justice in the US” which takes place on June 30th at 7.30 pm. The speakers include Zora Monico, an activist with the Michigan Coalition for Reproductive Liberation and co-founder of WVN, Whenever We’re Needed, Kerry Abel, Chair of Abortion Rights UK, and Beth Douglas whose work you are quite

acquainted with by now. Signup [here](#) and share on [Facebook](#).

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## Left and independentists advance in French elections

The population of the French state go to the polls for the fourth time this year in the second round of the legislative elections on Sunday 19 June. While the right wing Macron won the Presidency again, this was against the far right challenger despite the strong showing of the left. However in the parliamentary elections the left has organised better, into a new coalition known as NUPES (pronounced 'noop') led by Jean Luc Melenchon. NUPES is putting up a strong challenge to the Macron Presidency and stands to be at least the main opposition, and possibly even the majority grouping in the National Assembly.

Of particular interest in Scotland will be the election campaign in France's colonial possessions in South America and the Pacific. In Guyane (French Guiana), the left and independentist movements had a strong showing in the first round in one of the constituencies with only candidates of the left going through to the next round in one of the two constituencies and NUPES are challenging Macron's candidate in the other (see article on Guyane [here](#) – in French at present, we will try to get English language updates shortly). In Kanaky in the Pacific, the independentist forces of the FLNKS (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front) have succeeded in being the challenger to Macron in the second round.

[ecosocialist.scot](#) is pleased to republish two articles

explaining the latest situation – one by fellow [Fourth Internationalist](#) Dave Kellaway, originally published on the website of [Anti\\*Capitalist Resistance](#) (a new revolutionary organisation in England and Wales), and the other an article on the Kanak elections originally published by [L'Anticapitaliste](#) and translated by [International Viewpoint](#).

## Setback for macron in 'third round' of french elections



Dave Kellaway reports on the first round of the French parliamentary elections.

14 Jun 2022

Gérald Darmanin, the French interior minister, the same politician who blamed the Liverpool fans for the debacle of the Champions league final a few weeks ago, did his best to massage the election results. He tried to define some left candidates as not really being part of the left coalition so that the overall vote for the coalition was reduced. Respected news outlets like Le Monde did not stand for it and declared the New Popular Ecological and Social Union (NUPES) the winners by a small margin. No wonder Darmanin was trying to fiddle the figures; this is the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic that a recently elected president has failed to come first in the parliamentary elections that immediately follow the Presidential race.

The margin of victory for the coalition led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon was around half a percentage point. NUPES scored 26%



followed by Macron's Ensemble on 25% and Le Pen's far right National Rally (RN) came in at just under 20%. French politics is still currently structured around these three political blocs. The traditional conservative party which came out of the Gaullist tradition, the Republicans (LR), got 11%.

Notable successes for the left included the election of Danièle Obono, a black woman leader of the LFI who had received much abuse from the right and the first place of Stéphane Ravacley, a left wing baker who did a successful 11 day hunger strike to stop his 18 year old Guinean apprentice being deported. He beat Macron's candidate.

Since it is a first past the post electoral system over two rounds, the popular vote will not translate into the same proportion of seats. At the moment NUPES is projected to get between 150 and 190 seats whereas Ensemble is predicted to get between 255 and 295. A working majority is 289 so at the moment it is likely, but not certain, that Macron will just about do that. Of course Macron could govern without 289 seats by doing deals with the other blocs, particularly the LR, but it would make it more difficult to get controversial legislation through like increasing the retirement age.

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The limits of Macron's popularity were seen in the elimination of the former hated Minister of Education, Blanquer, in the first round. His attacks on teachers have received their just desserts. Macron has still failed to create a solid political base. His success has always been based on skilful manoeuvring, taking advantage of the crisis and decline of the mainstream left and right of centre parties. At the same time the rise of the hard right and fascists allow him to present himself as the safe alternative to the extreme right. Today he is trying to extend the notion of bullwark against extremes by

red baiting Mélenchon. His ministers keep talking about a French Chávez or a risk to the French role in the European Union.

Despite the good showing of the left, particularly compared to 2017 when there was no unity among the left and ecologists, the slogan put forward by the France Unbowed (La France Insoumise – LFI) of ‘Mélenchon Prime Minister!’ will not become reality. It will be the main opposition bloc in parliament and its political centre of gravity will be more radical than the previous social liberal Socialist Party. The LFI will have the biggest number of MPs within the left/ecologist alliance. On paper the LFI has an even more radical left social democratic programme than Corbyn’s.

Only 47% of the French electorate bothered to vote, a new low for these elections. This expresses a real disgust at and alienation from the political system. It also shows both the difficulty and opportunity for the left coalition. Even before the first round, the left recognised that one way of completely blocking Macron was to convince the abstainers to vote for progressive reform. Current projections of seats could change significantly if there were to be a big mobilisation and a cut in the rate of abstention. Mélenchon made his post election speech centre on the notion of ‘deferlement’ – general mobilisation for the second round.

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Although the NUPES are through to the second round in over 300 seats, there is a much smaller stock of potential votes from those parties which did not make it through. NUPES already regrouped the whole of the left except for candidates of Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle), which always rejected the coalition, and the few supported by the NPA (New Anti-Capitalist Party), which generally voted for NUPES except

where social liberal PS candidates were standing. These currents only got about 1.4% of the vote and so will not weigh heavily.

On the other hand, Macron can expect to pick up a good part of the LR vote whether its candidates are standing against NUPES or the hard right RN. Where NUPES are running off against the RN the LR vote is more likely to go to the hard right. Leaders of Macron's coalition have been much more ambivalent about supporting NUPES candidates against the RN as a 'republican duty'. Some have come out clearly for a NUPES vote while others say that it has to be on a case by case basis since some NUPES candidates do not share 'republican values'. Of course, Macron was happy to bleat on about solidarity with republican values when he relied on left voters voting for him in the second round of the presidential elections in order to defeat Le Pen.

The near 20% for Le Pen is much better than in 2017 and is a success for her reactionary current. It will help to further embed her hard right politics in the political institutions. This time she is more confident about getting the 15 seats needed to have an official parliamentary group which confers definite advantages. It will further change the relationship of forces between her current and the mainstream rightwing. Her absolute refusal to make any agreement with the pro-Vichy, fascist Éric Zemmour has paid off politically. He even failed to make the second round in a constituency where he had done well in the presidential elections. It looks like he is very much a busted flush – a balloon pumped up by the media in the preliminary phase of the presidential elections. Le Pen's continued threat to the left is her popularity among some working class communities.

Any weakening of the dominant class enemy is always helpful to working people's struggle to defend their gains and build a fairer society.

Any weakening of the dominant class enemy is always helpful to working people's struggle to defend their gains and build a fairer society. Macron has to get his reforms through parliament and therefore a working majority is important. It is a practical motivation for people to vote left in the second round. Even if, as likely, NUPES fails to block Macron in parliament, the fact of having around 100 MPs on a radical left position could well help any mobilisations. The social liberal PS will not be the leadership of the left.

The anti-capitalist and revolutionary left will be doing their best to mobilise for the second round but will also be calling on NUPES to develop the struggles outside parliament. If you cannot stop reactionary bills going through parliament, you have to do it by mobilising forces on the streets. In recent decades, France has seen various neo-liberal reforms, including by Macron, stopped by mass demonstrations and strikes. Progress in the unity of the left and greens can give confidence to such movements.

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Originally published here:  
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/setback-for-macron-in-third-round-of-french-elections/>

**Kanak independentists present  
common candidates for**

# legislative elections



WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE 2022, BY USTKE

The French elections also concerned the French overseas départements and collectivities such as Kanaky (New Caledonia) in the south-west Pacific Ocean. The results of the vote on 12 June showed that the independendist forces grouped under the FLNKS (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front) banner had achieved their first goal – to be present in the second round, despite the very low turn out of barely one-third of registered voters. The archipelago is divided into two constituencies, in both cases the run off is between the candidate of Macron's grouping (Union loyaliste-Ensemble) and the FLNKS candidate.

At a press conference on Tuesday 17 May at Karigou in the town of Dumbéa, the Kanak independence movement announced the names of its candidates for the June 2022 legislative elections. Grouped around Wasissi Konyi, representative of the Palika in the political bureau of the FLNKS, the independentist candidates presented themselves, along with their alternates. Why were they standing? What were their goals?

“The independence movement must be represented in the National Assembly, it must be in the negotiations with the French government when they start. The independentists will ask for bilateral discussions,” announced the spokesperson for the

Front. Following the last two congresses, that of the FLNKS and the popular congress, on 7 and 8 May at the N'Dé tribe, the independentist, progressive and nationalist forces made this commitment, and they reaffirmed that "the Nouméa Accord is a process of decolonization, the country is on the road to emancipation" . "The goal is to get into the second round, it is completely achievable," indicated the FLNKS spokesperson, before the candidates took the floor to introduce themselves and explain their participation in these national elections.

*"In the National Assembly, our independence movement is not represented"*

In the first constituency (Nouméa, Îles-des-Pins, Loyalty Islands): Wali Wahetra, representative of Palika in the Province of the Islands at the congress, originally from Drehu, has been a teacher for thirty years. In the Congress, she is the Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee. "It's a huge responsibility. The independence movement has chosen us to be ambassadors". During her speech, she recalled the five positions on which the Front and its allies agreed: "Challenging the political legitimacy of the last referendum consultation; the accession of New Caledonia to its full and entire sovereignty by the transfer of the last remaining powers; the non-negotiable maintenance of the achievements of the Nouméa Accord, which is guaranteed by the principle of irreversibility; maintaining New Caledonia on the list of countries to be decolonized; a categorical refusal to choose a new status within the French Republic. The bilateral format was recorded at the N'Dé congresses," she said. "The first constituency is represented by Nouméa, Île-des-Pins and the Loyalty Islands. The delimitation of boundaries (decided by the then Minister of the Interior Charles Pasqua in 1986) is totally iniquitous and unjust. We want to call on the solidarity of the New Caledonian people, if they have the values of democracy at heart. In the National Assembly, our independence movement is not represented. We would like to go

there to have our own say. The last Kanak deputy who went to the Assembly was Rock Pidjot in 1986 and since then the independentists have never been able to be elected because of these boundaries. This is partisan and completely unfair. It is a colonial attitude of the French state..."

*"We must tell the ordinary Caledonian that they must no longer be afraid"*

Her alternate is Jean-Fidéli Malalua, fourth Vice President of the USTKE (Union of Kanak and Exploited Workers). He has been active in the trade-union movement for fifteen years. He says he is "battle-hardened from politics and especially from social questions" . He is of Futunian origin, he was born in La Foa in 1973. "I have taken up a cause that corresponds to my convictions, it is the struggle of the Kanak people. I'm not hiding from you that it's not easy" . Questions might arise. "Why go to the National Assembly if you are asking for independence? Why participate in these elections? It is precisely the opportunity to go there to give a certain tone to the vision of the country and to give our point of view to the elected members of the National Assembly, but especially to Caledonians of all ethnic groups. As a non-Kanak and especially one of our generation. This country is viable together. We have to tell the average Caledonian that they don't have to be afraid anymore. We need respect from the Caledonian voters ... In the word independence, there are clichés that scare people... In Kanak and Oceanian culture, the search for consensus means that we have to discuss anyway...", he explained, saying that the politics of fear would lead nowhere. "The mosaic of communities gathered around an independence project is not exclusive. It is a common project and of general interest," he concluded.

*"We are proud to be in this fight"*

In the second constituency (the municipalities of Grand-Nouméa

and the rest of the territory), the candidate is Gérard Reignier, former head of the Union Calédonienne and the FLNKS. "What we want is to have a representation in the National Assembly to make heard the voice of independentists and nationalists, of those who want this country to become a nation with all its populations in a common destiny". "The load is heavy but the combat is beautiful," he said. "We are proud to be in this fight. We hope to win and bring back some truth to the National Assembly... We have the duty to inform the French political class, but also French public opinion, which is in favour of the full sovereignty of our country. The words liberty, equality, fraternity should not be besmirched. Perhaps France will be less beautiful without New Caledonia, but certainly if the French state, along with the independentists, allows this country to access its full sovereignty, France will be greater," he added.

His alternate, Marie-Pierre Goyetche, was president of the USTKE from April 2012 to December 2015. Currently, she is vice-president of the honorary college of the Trade Union Organization and vice-president of the Labour Party. A teacher by training, she got involved very early in the trade union struggle. This trade union commitment will enable her to make the link with the field of politics. She was elected to a municipal council, to the southern province and to the congress. "I am mixed-race, I am proud of my New Caledonian family who arrived through prison. [1] And I am proud of my Kanak culture in which I was brought up" . She wanted to send this message to the government: "It is out of the question to touch the composition of the electorate, that is the reason for our commitment to these legislative elections."

[1] New Caledonia was a French penal colony from 1864 to 1987. Prisoners sent included those convicted for participation in the Paris Commune ,notably Louise Michel.



<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7704=>

His release is a triumph of popular pressure and international solidarity. On the one hand, the affiliated organisations of CONAIE have come out more forcefully to express their discontent in their territories and in different cities of the country.

In Cotopaxi, the province where Leonidas Iza is from, the communities filled the streets of the main city, Latacunga. When they heard that their leader was being transferred to the Military Fort of Cotopaxi, they went there to demand his release.

In Quito, the capital of Ecuador, young people, university students, feminists, dissidents and ordinary people have also joined the mobilisation in the vicinity of the National State Prosecutor's Office to demand the release of the political detainees and to express their demands for education, health and non-violence by the state.

## **International Solidarity**

International solidarity has been very important, with messages of support for Leonidas Iza and rejection of the persecution of political leaders, as well as other demonstrations such as the collection of signatures to demand his release.

The government of the banker Lasso, who seeks to impose neoliberal policies, has been totally inept in responding to the fair demands of the population and CONAIE. These demands include fair prices for agricultural products; freezing of fuel prices because this generates price increases; access to employment and no job insecurity; respect for the collective rights of peoples and nationalities, budget for health and education; stop the voracious extractivism in indigenous territories; stop speculation and rising prices of basic food basket items; stop the privatisation of strategic sectors; generation of policies to curb the wave of violence and hired killings; public policies to curb gender violence and femicide.

But this government has taken up again the National Security doctrines of the 'internal enemy', persecuting and

criminalising social activists and indigenous leaders, women, students, workers, etc. Under this logic, eight young leaders of the Guevarist Movement were arrested a month ago. And now, in the context of the National Strike called by CONAIE, Leonidas Iza has been arrested. But they have also arrested other indigenous leaders of CONAIE's affiliated organisations, young students and women who took to the streets to protest and demand their rights during these two days of the National Strike.

In addition, during these two days there have been very strong acts of repression, and there have been injuries with tear gas bombs and even pellets. Social communicators were attacked by members of the national police. But in these two days of the National Strike the mobilisation has also grown and strengthened.

Although his release is a victory for mass protests and international solidarity, Leonidas Iza still faces charges and a possible prison sentence for his role in the strike. Worldwide solidarity needs to be stepped up to call for all charges to be dropped and for the Ecuador government to grant the just demands of the strike movement.



Protests were taking place across Ecuador (Pic @CONAIE\_Ecuador)



CONAIE is the largest organisation in Ecuador bringing together the majority of indigenous peoples and nationalities

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# **International Youth Summer Camp, France, 23-29 July 2022 – support the Scotland delegation!**

Are you one of the hundreds of thousands of activists who mobilised for COP 26 in Glasgow last year? Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement? Eager to defend migrant and refugee rights? Furious about the way workers and young people suffer the cost of living crisis while profits soar?

To fight to fix a world torn apart by war, greed and climate catastrophe, it's essential to understand why these things happen, and how you can organise to change them. That's what the Fourth International's annual youth camp is all about.

During a week in the sun with hundreds of young students, workers, and campaigners from across Europe and beyond you'll have the chance to:

- join meetings, workshops and self-organised spaces to

- discuss ecosocialism, feminism, anti-racism, LGBTI struggles, internationalism and fighting austerity
- meet leaders of campaigns that are on the cutting edge of radical youth activism
- socialise, share experiences, debate ideas and plan joint actions

This is a unique opportunity for young activists from Britain to meet with other environmentalists, feminists and socialists.

The International Youth Summer Camp in July is hosted by comrades of the [Fourth International](#) in [France](#).

23 JULY TO 29 JULY 2022,

La Bordé, 03430 Vieure, France (about 320 kms directly south of Paris.)

Socialist Resistance is the Fourth International organisation in Britain. SR will be working with comrades in [ecosocialist.scot](#) in Scotland and [Anti\\*Capitalist Resistance](#) in England and Wales to send a delegation to the camp.

If what we talk about here chimes at all with your politics you'll love the camp.

Already in a different organisation? Ask it to contact us about sending people.

You will need your passport, and you'll need to sort a tent and sleeping bag.

The camp costs roughly £130 for the week, including food – plus travel to France. We are trying to organize transport collectively from both Scotland and from London – and maybe other places if there is enough interest. And the sooner we book the cheaper – so get in touch now if you are interested and we will tell you more

We know that many people may need financial support towards the costs so we are working on raising money to help – that hasn't been a barrier on previous occasions and we hope it won't this time either.



Get ready to change the world and contact us by email: [SRYouthCamp2022@gmail.com](mailto:SRYouthCamp2022@gmail.com) or via facebook (scan QR code)



If you want copies of our postcard to publicise the camp to others email us at: [socialistresistanceoffice@gmail.com](mailto:socialistresistanceoffice@gmail.com)

Find out more about the Fourth International at <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/>

## Help fund the FI youth camp – £5,000 financial appeal

The Fourth International's annual youth camp for young environmentalists, feminists and socialists who want to discuss changing the world will be held in France at the end of July.

There is already a lot of interest in joining our delegation both from people who have been to the camp before and from new

activists.

And if you can help us get the word out further on protests and other events you are going to email us at [socialistresistanceoffice@gmail.com](mailto:socialistresistanceoffice@gmail.com) to ask us to send you cards.

Some of the young people wanting to go, however, will need financial assistance. Young people are one of the groups worst hit by the cost of living crisis so many will need our support. We have therefore launched a £5,000 financial appeal in order to give them the assistance they need.

### **Can you help?**

Please give generously.

You can pay:

- by making a bank transfer to Socialist Outlook 080228 70935370 and send an email to [socialistresistanceoffice@gmail.com](mailto:socialistresistanceoffice@gmail.com) saying you have made a donation for the camp
- by Paypal to [resistance@sent.com](mailto:resistance@sent.com) (please state that this is for the Youth Camp appeal)

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# **War in Ukraine: solidarity with Ukrainian resistance, against all imperialisms**

Statement of the [Fourth International](#) Executive Bureau, 24 May 2022

# 1. State of the war

. Today, three months have passed since the invasion of Ukraine by Putin's troops. The Russian army has occupied parts of the territory, particularly in the East and South of the country, while suffering a serious defeat in the region of Kiev.

. Ukrainians have opposed phenomenal and massive resistance, involving armed and non-armed struggle, the army, territorial defence forces, civil society organizations, and new forms of self-organization. They have received arms deliveries, humanitarian aid and intelligence from EU and NATO countries. The first successes of such resistance have radicalized Ukrainian hopes for a defeat of the Russian aggressor. Citizens in occupied regions continue to demonstrate against occupation, there are reports of partisan activities in some areas.

. The soldiers killed on both sides can be counted in tens of thousands, as can Ukrainian civilian victims. The war crimes committed by the Russian forces are multiple and proven, as in Bucha, Irpin and other cities. The siege of the cities by the Russian army has deliberately caused thousands of inhabitants to die of deprivation and starvation, particularly in Mariupol. Twelve million inhabitants have been displaced, five million to other European countries.

. The conflict has caused massive material destruction by indiscriminate bombing of civilian and military areas, some cities have been almost razed to the ground.

. A readjustment of the offensive was decided by Vladimir Putin at the beginning of April, aiming to annex the whole of Donbass and the industrial and port city of Mariupol, as well as the largest possible territory in the south, on the Black Sea. But in these regions also, Ukrainians continue to resist.



## **2. Our position: support for the Ukrainian struggle for self-determination and independence against a background of inter-imperialist strife.**

. Putin's invasion is a war of aggression, aiming to submit Ukrainian territory to Russian control, as part of the return of a Great Russian imperialist project.

. Ukrainians are fighting a national liberation struggle against the invasion. We support their right to resist, including militarily, and stand in solidarity with their choice to do so. We defend their right to arm themselves and thus to receive the arms necessary to resist against a much more powerful army,

. This war is carried in the context of a renewed inter-imperialist strife. In this war, Western imperialism – represented by NATO and the EU – has taken sides, and is supporting Ukraine's resistance financially and materially. This has clearly reinforced the resistance and improved its prospects.

. We denounce the obvious aim of US and EU leaders to transform the war according to their own interests: the prospect of a second Afghanistan nightmare for Russia already opens huge opportunities for increased military budgets, the deployment of new military technologies, the expansion of NATO and the improvement of the US world geo-strategic position. They aim to use the battlefield of Ukraine for the realization of their geopolitical goals.

. For now, both imperialist powers, Russia and NATO, have avoided any direct confrontation that could escalate into an inter-imperialist war. No one is interested in such an escalation, but it could be the result of uncontrolled spiralling. Such a scenario of world war is an objective danger in the imperialist phase of capitalism. It would be catastrophic for humanity and the planet, and we oppose any escalation that could transform this war into a direct inter-imperialist confrontation.

. As revolutionaries and internationalists, we affirm that the way out of the logic of inter-imperialist conflict and escalation is the resistance of peoples from below: for self-determination and against foreign invasions. The choice of Ukrainians to resist has blocked the quick annexation that Russia was aiming for. The defeat of the Russian invader at the hands of Ukrainian people would be the best scenario for struggles for self-determination and against imperialisms of all kinds. The reinforcement of the Ukrainian resistance and of anti-war movements in Russia (and Belarus) are two necessary factors for this scenario to be realized.

. Putin's invasion has provided a huge boost to NATO's agenda of expansion, with Sweden and Finland requesting their entry. We oppose this dynamic: we reject the logic of military blocks and work for a new trans-European concept of security based on self-determination, egalitarian relations between peoples, including Russia, urgent treaties of denuclearization and the dissolution of NATO and CSTO.

. In the same way, we reject EU treaties and financial institutions and policies, and denounce the way in which they are used to subject countries in Europe's periphery to neo-colonial relations. The contradictions between the Ukrainian demand for "fast and just" European integration and the reality of the EU's criteria should help us raise the issue of new treaties for European relations based on cooperation and not market competition, fiscal and social dumping.

. We aim to build a movement from below, for a just and lasting peace, in solidarity with the struggle of Ukrainian and Russian people against Putin's invasion and NATO strategies, for a just peace and for the self-determination of Ukraine.

. We demand the urgent transfer of military budgets towards the vital needs of an ecosocialist transformation of the world based on social and environmental justice and against all neo-colonial relations.

### **3. Political trends in Ukraine.**

. Zelensky and his government are a neoliberal force, tied to sectors of the Ukrainian oligarchy. His unexpected electoral success in 2019 came on the basis of criticism of corruption and hopes for a peaceful settlement of the hybrid war producing more than 15000 deaths since 2014, and in the context of a deep crisis of all political parties associated with growing social conflicts and activities of the civil society.

. The Ukrainian population is united in resisting the Russian invasion by all means. Many socialist and anarchist militants have joined the Territorial Defense forces. As internationalist militants, we support comrades who have made this choice.

. At the same time, Ukrainians are self-organizing to provide support for victims of the war. Popular initiatives have been launched to provide shelters, social housing and childcare for refugees and internally displaced people, to provide free mental and other health care, transport and much else. These initiatives are an experiment in new ways of social organization, which could break with the neoliberal regression

of the last 20 years; but they are still confronted with the dominant political and economic regime which protects oligarchs.

. In the current stage of the war, it is Russian-speaking Ukrainians that are suffering the most at the hands of the Russian army. They are massively engaged in the armed and civilian resistance. This debunks any claim by Putin that the "operation" aims to protect national minorities. We support the right of populations to democratic self-determination in the absence of national or foreign coercion.

. The building of a Ukrainian national identity is a dominant political trend, a historically progressive resistance against centuries of Russian domination. This sentiment has also often taken the color of anti-communism, also due to oppression during the USSR period. This can only be overcome by a radical democratic movement to consolidate a peaceful Ukraine. The popular resistance and victory against Russian national oppression should allow for a collective appropriation of conflicting interpretations of black pages of Ukrainian history by historians and different political currents, dealing with all past oppressions and crimes. But that also needs the consolidation of a post-war Ukraine free of oligarchic capitalism and socially destructive policies.

. It is clear that the context of violence and increased national sentiment provoked by the invasion is favourable to "anti-Russian" and far-right nationalist ideology. At the same time, the massive engagement of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and Roms in defence of the country, as well as the direct mobilization of the citizens in armed and unarmed resistance, creates potential for a more progressive resolution of the cultural and linguistic issues that have been exploited by the far right in recent years.

. Many women have volunteered for armed service. As Ukrainian feminists say, they know what kind of future Putin's regime

offers to feminists and LGBT. That is why their first choice is to fight for his defeat.

. In the context of war and bellicism, the gender regime tends to shift to more patriarchal forms, which place women in the field of care and men in the frontline and increases sexist, violent and reactionary behaviours (against women and LGBT). Since 2014, the burden of social reproduction in a deeply neoliberal society has fallen more and more on women as social provision has been stripped away. This is a part of the context for the massive surrogacy industry that has developed in Ukraine. Since the Russian invasion the use of rape and sexual violence as war weapons has left women with traumatic after-effects, including unwanted pregnancies, for which they cannot access appropriate care. We support the feminist collectives that are working to help women in all the complex trauma they are facing.

. It is in such a context that the new socialist NGO Sotsialnyi Rukh ("Social Movement") was established. We support their orientation, which includes their open criticisms of wartime emergency measures and labour law reforms that make it easier to dismiss workers, non-enforcement of labour law, and a corrupt legal system and civil service which enables oligarchs and other capitalists to avoid paying wages and taxes or respecting environmental legislation. They are building a popular resistance against the invader which is rooted in solidarity with workers' struggles and egalitarian (feminist, anti-racist, anti-sexist) relations amongst the people. They are promoting an important campaign for the cancellation of Ukraine's external debt.

. Independent workers' unions are also a key factor in building resistance as well as an alternative to the bourgeois and neo-liberal project for Ukraine.

. The links of these progressive forces (in particular trade unions and feminists) with the anti-war movement in Russian

and Belarus will be essential to open progressive alternatives to the dominant inter- imperialist conflicts and settlements.

## **4. The political climate in Russia and the anti war movement**

. The reactivation of Great Russian imperialism has also political consequences within the Russian state. Putin is also taking advantage of his Orwellian “special operation” to further stifle Russian society. His policy is as much aggressively ideological (Great Russian nationalist and “anti-Nazi”) as it is systematically repressive. He wants to put an end to any internal opposition in the long term.

. Education and media have been reformed to promote authoritarian, imperialist values and suppress dissent. Independent labour unions and activist networks, LGBT and environmental activists all face increased repression.

. These regressive tendencies are shifting Russia’s regime into neofascism, in which formal democratic procedures are gradually suppressed.

. Despite this, some sectors of Russian society have shown great courage in opposing Putin’s war. In the initial days of the war, spontaneous demonstrations gathered in many Russian cities to oppose the invasion. These were severely repressed. Individuals continue to protest, and have been fined, imprisoned, and intimidated in their places of work and study.

. Some soldiers are refusing to take part in this so-called “special operation”, and desertion and breaks in discipline afflict the Russian army. Most soldiers serving and dying in Ukraine come from Russia’s ethnic minorities, who have fewer

employment opportunities, and are less able to avoid military service.

. Today, the small feminist movement is playing a key role in denouncing the invasion and standing in solidarity with Ukraine, contributing to the coordination of initiatives nation-wide.

. The movement of mothers of soldiers is also an important factor, giving voice to those critical of Putin's war and propaganda.

. In the meanwhile, sabotage actions, not clearly attributed, are also making it difficult for the Russian state and showing there is more opposition to the war than what is expressed publicly.

. There has also been impressive sabotage of Russian logistics in Belarus. The Minsk regime has reclassified such sabotage as terrorism, carrying the death penalty. Belarus activists are also supporting Russian deserters and demonstrating against Belarus collaboration or future participation in the Russian invasion. Independent trade unions, which have been leading anti-war protests, have been severely repressed, and their ability to function is in question.

. The socialist and revolutionary left in Russia, and in particular the Russian Socialist Movement, have an important role to play, building a militant opposition to the Putin regime, building solidarity links with Ukrainian militants and around the world. They face increasing repression and have to work in a semi-clandestine fashion.

. Some socialists, feminists and other activists have had to leave the country but continue to work from exile to build a radical alternative in Russia. We are committed to supporting them.

## 5. Our tasks outside Ukraine and Russia.

. As radical left forces, we express and organize our support for Ukrainian armed and unarmed resistance while staying independent from, and critical of our governments and their imperialist programme and motivations. We do not stand in the way of any initiative that helps to reinforce the autonomous resistance of the Ukrainian people.

. We participate in mobilizations in solidarity with Ukrainians and against Putin's invasion, trying to connect with Ukrainian refugees and people outraged by the aggression, bringing our slogans and ideas against all imperialisms, for socialism and self-determination.

. We support and build initiatives from below that bring material and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

. We denounce policies that aim to take advantage of Ukraine's war to further the interests of Western imperialism. We oppose all conditionalities imposed by Western governments in order to make profits and subordinate Ukraine to their economic and military sphere of influence.

. We oppose the rise of military expenditure, part of an agenda of increased militarism that precedes Putin's invasion. We stand against NATO and CSTO, for their dissolution, for each country to leave these alliances and we resolutely oppose their expansion.

. We express and organize our solidarity with refugees from Ukraine, calling for the end of all discriminations and a policy of open borders for migrants and refugees of all origins. The forced exile of the Ukrainians has been met with a great deal of popular, self-organized solidarity in the neighbouring countries, in particular Poland. The current EU's



treatment of Ukrainian refugees should be adopted as the standard practice for all new asylum seekers.

. We support direct actions taken against Russian oligarchs. They are protected by the opacity and unfairness of the global financial system, bank secrecy and institutionalized capital flight and tax evasion, of which all oligarchies take advantage, including the Ukrainian. We do not support long term sanctions aimed to “bleed” or “weaken” Russia, which result in increased poverty within the Russian population.

. We combat any Russophobia, which conflates Russia’s people or culture with the actions of its government.

. We point out the contradiction between the support for Ukrainian struggle by Western governments and their complicity with Turkey’s oppression of the Kurdish people and Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people and all other oppressed nations across the world.

## **6. Our main slogans and demands**

. For the defeat of the Russian invasion. Russian troops out of Ukraine.

. Support for Ukrainian resistance, in all its forms.

. For the immediate cancellation of Ukrainian debt.

. Down with Putin! Support the Russian anti-war movement. Solidarity and refugee status for all deserters from the Russian army.

. Against NATO and the Russian-led CSTO expansionism and interventionism. Against all imperialist blocks.

. Solidarity with Ukrainian refugees of all origins, and

provision of the practical short and longer-term aid necessary, taking into account the fact that the vast majority are women and children.

. For a transition to renewable energies to end-up with dependencies and blackmails from oil and gas producers. Transfer of military budgets to investment into a quick decarbonization of the economy under popular control.

. For a socialist Europe free of military blocks and all neo colonial relations. For an ecosocialist revolutionary alternative to capitalist exploitation and the destruction of life on our planet.

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## Defend abortion rights in Scotland and globally

Abortion rights are under attack across parts of the world including here in Scotland, *writes Mike Picken*. [Photo Edinburgh abortion protest US Consulate 14 May 2022, photo: Gillian Mackay]

The recent leak of the imminent decision of the US Supreme Court to [overturn the 50 year Roe v Wade decision](#) that made abortion a right across the USA has provoked [anger and outrage across the States](#), with a coordinated series of rallies and demos on 14 May 2022 (reports [here](#)). Across Europe we have had a series of steps forward in recent decades but more recently [Poland has joined Malta in outlawing abortion](#).

A [solidarity rally](#) against repeal of Roe v Wade was held at the US Consulate in Edinburgh last weekend by pro choice groups and attracted publicity and support (though unfortunately clashed with three other major protest events on other issues in Glasgow).

The attacks on abortion rights by the right wing in the USA have also encouraged anti-abortion activists in Scotland to scale up their intimidation of women attending clinics, with recent [reports from the Back Off Scotland campaign](#) of up to 100 protesters appearing at venues around Glasgow for example. These protestors intimidate women attending the clinics, whether for abortions or other reproductive rights and health support.

[ecosocialist.scot](#) is pleased to see the start of a robust response, both by pro choice organisations in Scotland and by sections of the Scottish government and parliamentary representatives of Labour, SNP and Scottish Greens. At First Minister's Questions in the Scottish Parliament recently, Scottish Labour backbench MSP [Monica Lennon](#) raised the attack on abortion rights and received strong support from First Minister, SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon, who also offered to chair personally a summit on defending abortion rights.

*Speaking at First Minister's Questions, Ms Sturgeon insisted that "women have the right to access abortion without fear or intimidation", adding that demonstrating outside healthcare facilities was "deeply wrong".*

*She added: "I strongly support the introduction of buffer zones and the government is actively considering how this parliament can legislate in a way that is effective and also capable of withstanding legal challenge.*

*...*

*Turning to calls for her to chair a summit on the issues, Ms Sturgeon said: "I am very happy to convene and indeed, I will*

*personally chair a roundtable summit to discuss buffer zones and indeed any other matters that need to be addressed to ensure safe and timely access to abortion services in Scotland within the current law.”*

*Ms Lennon said she would “warmly welcome the First Minister’s agreement to convene an urgent summit that more than a dozen women’s organisations have called for”.*

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/20134691.nicola-sturgeon-chair-abortion-clinic-buffer-zones-summit-deeply-wrong-protests/>

# Scottish Greens defend abortion rights



Green MSP and ecosocialist Maggie Chapman defends abortion rights on Twitter

This week, Scottish Green MSP [Gillian Mackay](#) launched a Bill in Parliament to create a ‘buffer zone’ around healthcare facilities offering abortion services. Mackay has made clear

that unlike measures introduced by the Tories in the UK parliament against protest, her bill was not suppressing civil rights for legitimate protest but was aimed at giving women freedom to exercise their right of choice without fear of intimidation. Other Scottish Green Party MSPs gave their full public support (see picture) and the Party wrote individually to all its members and supporters asking them to campaign in defence of abortion rights.

The consultation phase of the Bill introduced by Gillian Mackay has now opened and we urge readers to indicate their support for defence of abortion rights.

<https://www.bufferzones.scot/>

## **Campaign needed**

The Scottish Government have yet to indicate their formal support for the Bill, though it is welcome that Nicola Sturgeon has indicated her personal position.

Nevertheless pressure needs to be brought across Scotland both widely and within the SNP for the Scottish Government to take defence of abortion rights seriously.

Similarly, although Labour MSP Monica Lennon has campaigned strongly and rightly on this, the full weight of the front

bench of Scottish Labour needs to be deployed to back abortion rights. This is particularly important given the seemingly increased presence among Scottish Labour's ranks of members of the Orange Order, with [the former "world leader" being selected and elected as a Scottish Labour council candidate](#) recently to serve in an council administration where Labour [appear](#) to be doing a backroom deal with Tories. The Orange Order are an important political force in Scotland and are just as [virulently anti-abortion](#) as the Catholic church worldwide.

## Trade Unions defend abortion

Trade unions are a key part of the campaign to defend abortion rights as well: working class women will always be the first to be affected by any weakening of state abortion health services and don't have the resources to seek private treatment. Time after time has shown that restricting or obstructing access to free state abortion services simply results in a rise in backstreet abortions, with all the misery, suffering and death that causes working class women.

The [statement by the Unison national women's and international committee chairs](#) is an important first step in this regard.

*With over a million women in our union, we believe passionately in defending the right to choose. Access to abortion is a trade union issue.*

*Abortion is also a class issue. Rich women can always access abortion, whatever the legal status where they live. It is working class women who always suffer.*

*Abortion rights are high in the priorities for our [Unison] national women's committee.*

*As the UK's largest organisation representing women, UNISON ran a webinar about defending abortion rights as part of our*

*programme of events around International Women's Day earlier this year.*

*It's brilliant to see bold local leadership on access to abortion from Ealing, Manchester and Richmond Councils. They are to be congratulated for putting buffer zones in place to protect women from the protestors handing out leaflets and harassing vulnerable women.*

*UNISON wants to see a change in the law to see buffer zones to protect women in all such places.*

*Anne McVicker, chair of national women's committee, and Liz Wheatley, chair of the international committee, Unison*



*<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/2022/05/legal-abortion-under-attack-why-this-is-a-trade-union-matter/>*

The [Fourth International](#) has been part of the worldwide movement for women's rights and defending abortion globally for many decades as an integral part of the struggle for [Women's Liberation](#). As Fourth International supporters in Scotland, [ecosocialist.scot](https://ecosocialist.scot) gives our full support to campaigns to defend abortion rights both here and across the world.

Mike Picken, 21 May 2022

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# Nuclear Subs and Rolls

# Royce's Silver Bullet

Politicians everywhere seem to boundlessly attracted to hubristic grand projects, from the Pompidou Centre to HS2, and Boris Johnson seems to be particularly addicted to them, writes [Sean Thompson on the Red Green Labour website](#).

His career has involved numerous doomed attempts to create a permanent monument to his greatness; Boris Island, the proposed new airport in the Thames estuary, the Boris Bridge One, over the Thames, Boris Bridge Two, between Scotland and the North of Ireland and, most ludicrously, the Boris Tunnel, between either Anglesey and Dublin or Stranraer and Larne. Now, his new great enthusiasm is for building nuclear power stations, announcing on 2 May that 'Nuclear power stations...are absolutely crucial to weaning us off fossil fuels, including Russian oil and gas. Instead of a new one every decade, we're going to build one every year'.

Clearly, not even even in Johnson's most fevered moments of techno fantasy can even he imagine that such a wild promise could be fulfilled by building more behemoths (or is it dinosaurs?) such as that being built at Hinkley Point – estimated cost £18bn, actual cost £23bn and counting, and proposed for Sizewell – estimated cost £20bn, actual cost £?bn. The [UK] Government is desperate to find someone to take on construction of a new reactor at Wylfa on Anglesey but will have to come up with such a hugely generous deal to get it off the ground (if ever it does) that it's unlikely that any more sites will even be proposed. In order to meet its proposed target of expanding nuclear power generation to provide 25% of Britain's electricity capacity by 2050 (it's currently at 16% and due to fall to 10% by 2030), Johnson's government will have to rely on the successful development and rapid roll out of the SMRs (small modular reactors) being touted by Rolls Royce.



On the face of it, this might seem to be a good idea, since Rolls Royce has been producing small pressurised water reactors, to power submarines, at its Marine Operations plant in Derby since 1965. Rolls-Royce aims to build 16 SMRs, which it says would have a 'target cost' of £1.8bn each (as long as at least 5 are ordered simultaneously – so a sort of super BOGOF deal). Rolls Royce claim that the reactor itself will be 'only' about 16 metres by 4 metres, and thus able to be transported by road, rail or sea, although each plant will have an area of around five and half football pitches.

This all sounds like a very attractive option to those who look to nuclear energy as the silver – though hugely expensive, and radioactive – bullet that might allow for the continuation of business as usual in the face of global warming. However, Rolls Royce and Johnson are ignoring a number of inconvenient issues; so far, not one SMR has actually been manufactured and operated in the real world, the costs – like all large engineering projects using untried technology, will almost certainly be very much higher than estimated – and, like all other nuclear reactors, they will have a limited life before they must be decommissioned and even during their active lives they will produce highly toxic waste that must be safely disposed of.

Of course, the problems of safely dismantling and disposing of small nuclear reactors must surely have been sorted out by now, since Rolls Royce have been manufacturing small pressurised water reactors for nuclear submarines for 57 years? Unfortunately not.

Britain's first nuclear submarine, HMS Dreadnought, launched in 1966 and decommissioned in 1980, has now been tied up in the naval dockyard at Rosyth [on the Forth Estuary in Scotland] far longer than she was in active service. In all, there are currently 21 former Royal Navy nuclear submarines awaiting disposal, 7 in Rosyth and 14 in Devonport, with another due to go out of service next year and five more to be

scrapped by 2040.

The original plan was, like the USA and the USSR, to dispose of decommissioned nuclear subs by filling them with concrete and sinking them in the deep ocean but thankfully the disposal of nuclear waste at sea was banned by the London Dumping Convention in 1983. By now more than £500M has been spent on submarine storage and maintenance since the Dreadnought was retired and the bill is going steadily up each year.

One of the reasons for the extraordinary delay in dealing with this ever growing pile of radioactive junk [much of it in Scotland – eds] is that, while in the civil nuclear industry, operators are required by law to put aside funds and make plans during the life of the plant to pay for decommissioning – which partly accounts for electricity generated by nuclear reactors being by far the most expensive energy source available – no such requirement was made of the MoD and successive [UK] governments failed to make arrangements for the timely disposal of these vessels.

Planning for the dismantling of these submarines should have been started at the time of the London Dumping Convention almost 40 years ago, but only in the last 10 years, as the space available for storing nuclear hulks steadily filled up (Rosyth is full and there is currently space for only one more at Devonport) has there been any serious effort to deal with the issue. As a result, in January Forces Net the MoD's in-house PR website proudly announced a 'world first' – the MoD was going to start to cut up and dispose of its old nuclear submarines. According to the MoD the total disposal cost will be at least £3bn over 25 years and continue into the 2040s.

However this claim looks, to say the least, rather optimistic. In 2003 the facilities for de-fuelling were deemed no longer safe enough to meet modern regulation standards and the process was halted, meaning that 11 of the hulks are still

full of uranium fuel rods. And even if or when the fuel rods can be removed, disposing of the 10% of the hulks that are classified as Intermediate Level Waste remains an unresolved problem.

Low-Level Waste from the hulks can be stored at Sellafield in vaults along with the huge amounts of radioactive detritus generated by Britain's nuclear power stations, and, according to the Navy Lookout website, in 2017 a partly UK Government owned company, URENCO Nuclear Stewardship, was commissioned to provide an interim site at Capenhurst in Cheshire for the more dangerous intermediate level waste, which includes the Reactor Pressure Vessels removed from the submarines. The waste will be 'temporarily' stored in purpose-built buildings above ground but, according to the MoD PR handouts, will eventually be moved to a permanent underground 'Geological Disposal Facility', which will have to be built in the 2040s as by then the Capenhurst facility will be full. The only problem with this plan is that successive [UK] governments have failed to find a permanent disposal site – partly because identifying such a site has proved to be geologically extremely elusive but also because trying to locate it almost anywhere in the UK would be as politically toxic to its proponents as its proposed contents would be radiologically.

This Rolls Royce's vaunted techno-fix runs up against the same intractable problem that has faced the nuclear energy industry since its inception; it produces toxic waste that must be securely stored for tens of thousands years, and and so far no one has found a way to safely and permanently do it.

Reproduced from Red Green Labour:  
<https://redgreenlabour.org/2022/05/19/nuclear-subs-and-rolls-royces-silver-bullet/> 19 May 2022

***[Photo above: One of four UK government nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed submarines, HMS Victorious, departs***

*the Faslane naval base on the Clyde. Photo from Ministry of Defence via WikiCommons Open Government Licence.]*



Protestors at Faslane Peace Camp call for Nuclear Free Scotland.  
Photo: The Nuclear Resister  
[nukeresister.org](http://nukeresister.org)

*[**Editorial note:** This article was written for a Britain wide audience but there is a specific Scottish dimension that needs raising as well. The Scottish Government of the Scottish National Party (SNP), supported by the Scottish Green Party, is currently opposed to Boris Johnson and the UK government building any further nuclear (fission) power stations in Scotland, and under UK devolution laws has control over the planning system to prevent any being built. However, the UK government currently has control over the Faslane naval base on the Clyde and the four nuclear-powered submarines armed with the Trident nuclear missiles that are permanently based there. These submarines are due to be decommissioned and replaced, and as the article above shows the UK government controlled Rosyth naval base on the Forth has been used to store submarine based nuclear reactors no-longer used in active service. With Nicola Sturgeon in Washington this week recommitting a future independent Scotland to membership of the NATO military and nuclear alliance, and thereby the*

*continuation of the nuclear weapons and nuclear powered submarines programme, concerns should be raised at how it is not possible to achieve a **nuclear free Scotland** under the SNP. Mike Picken for [ecosocialist.scot](https://ecosocialist.scot). See also: [Faslane Peace Camp 40th Anniversary 10-12 June 2022](#).]*

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## **Faslane Peace Camp 40th Anniversary 10-12 June 2022**

The Faslane Peace Camp celebrates its 40th Anniversary on 12 June 2022 and is holding three days of events at the camp to commemorate and talk about getting rid of nuclear weapons, *reports Mike Picken*.

The camp, approximately 40 miles west of Glasgow on the Clyde estuary, was one of a number of direct action protests against nuclear weapons set up across Britain in the 1980s – of which the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common came to prominent world attention at the time when US nuclear-armed Cruise Missiles were based there.

Faslane is now the sole location for the deployment of the UK state's huge nuclear arsenal (there are manufacturing and storage facilities elsewhere and [convoys regularly cross Britain's road](#)).

There are four Trident submarines based permanently there, and the UK government has recently [announced](#) a unilateral increase in the number of nuclear warheads deployed to over 200. One of the reasons why the UK state and establishment so fears Scottish independence is because there is a clear commitment

in the independence movement to remove Trident nuclear weapons from Scotland.

Trident means that the Camp has therefore continued for forty years to act as a focus for action against nuclear weapons across the UK state and is deserving of support from across the labour, trade union, peace and Scottish independence movements.

The programme of events is still being finalised, and [ecosocialist.scot](http://ecosocialist.scot) will publish and support it as soon as we have details – so keep a lookout on our [Twitter account](#) and this website. Supporters will be welcome at any time 10-12 June, whether just for a few hours or for the whole period.

The Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) voted at its Annual General Meeting to support the anniversary and can also be approached; details here: <https://www.banthebomb.org/>

You can contact the camp by email: [faslanepeacecamp@protonmail.com](mailto:faslanepeacecamp@protonmail.com) Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/faslanepeacecamp/>

The best way of getting to the Camp for most people is to travel to the nearby town of Helensburgh first, there is a regular train service from Glasgow. For travel to the Camp itself from Helensburgh, the following advice is given:

*The Peace Camp consists of a line of caravans and buses along a short stretch of the A814 approaching Faslane. Visitors, and potential new residents, are always welcome, and the Camp is child- and dog-friendly. Please be aware that alcohol and drugs are not allowed in the communal spaces to which visitors have access.*

*The Camp is most easily reached by bus from Helensburgh; the 316 service travels between the train station and Peace Camp twice an hour through most days, and the fare is £2.15 at the time of writing. Alternatively, it's a 20-minute cycle or*

*hour's walk along the coastal road to the west of the town.*

# Step up opposition to nuclear weapons!

Russia's appalling actions in invading Ukraine, a state that voluntarily gave up nuclear weapons, have put pressure across Europe on governments to increase support for the NATO nuclear alliance and nuclear weapons. We need to oppose this and say loudly and clearly that nuclear weapons are no defence against imperialist actions like Russia's and that more than ever we need to remove nuclear weapons from Europe and the world. Supporting the Faslane peace camp anniversary 10-12 June, opposing Trident, and calling for more states to sign the [UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#) (which finally holds its postponed [first conference](#) of signatories and [civil society](#) in Vienna late June) are among the best ways of bringing an effective future world free from weapons of mass destruction.



CND banners at the Faslane nuclear base (Pic: Sept 2021 M Picken)

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# Power to the People! Scottish Socialist Energy Summit – Glasgow 21 May 2022

POWER TO THE PEOPLE! SOCIALIST ENERGY SUMMIT: SATURDAY 21ST MAY – GET YOUR TICKETS BOOKED NOW!

12noon-5pm [The Renfield Centre](#), 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP ([Directions](#))

This important event is being held by [Socialists For Independence \(SFI\)](#) in conjunction with [European Left](#) and [Democratic Left Scotland](#).

It will be an opportunity to talk and most importantly, organise around how we can fight back against the huge energy prices rises that increases fuel poverty and the next stage for the COP26 demands to fight climate change. The recent ScotWind sale by the Scottish Government has provoked [important debate](#) about what sort of energy system we need in Scotland, both before and after independence, and how it can benefit the entire population especially the poorest.

We can't go on like this. Global warming is threatening the planet and energy prices are going into the stratosphere.

We need a drastic root and branch change. To do that we have to understand how we create energy in Scotland and who owns our energy. This summit is the first step in developing an energy plan where the people in Scotland own and control energy production and consumption for the benefit of the people who live here.

Speakers include:

□ [Maggie Chapman](#) – [Scottish Green Party](#) MSP



- [Stephen Smellie](#) – [UNISON Scotland](#) Depute Convenor
- [Roland Kulke](#) – [Transform](#), [European Left](#)
- Stuart Fairweather – [Dundee Trades Council](#) & [Democratic Left Scotland](#)
- [Alan McCombes](#)

The event is open to anyone who has an interest in environmental issues and is concerned about how we in Scotland can effect positive change for both people and planet.

Tickets for the event are free and can be booked via Eventbrite – see link below:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/socialist-summit-on-energy-tickets-318976165297>

The Facebook event is here:  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/379869394006488?ref=newsfeed>

Come along and have your say!

You can follow **Socialists for Independence** on social media:  
[Twitter: @socialists4indy](#) [Facebook](#) Web:  
<https://socialistsforindependence.scot/> (Members also have a Slack channel for discussion and regular fortnightly meetings)

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## French elections: A New Electoral Union on the French Left

After several weeks of negotiations, mainly with the Greens and the Socialist Party, writes **Leon Crémieux**, La France Insoumise, the left wing organisation led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, has sealed an electoral alliance for the coming

French parliamentary elections on 12th and 19th June which will choose the 577 deputies of the National Assembly.

The NUPES (“Nouvelle union populaire, écologique et sociale” – New Popular, Ecological and Social Union) will therefore bring together La France Insoumise, the Greens (EELV), the Communist Party (PCF) and the Socialist Party (PS). The guiding principle is a single candidacy of this alliance in all electoral districts (except the overseas departments and Corsica). Obviously, this agreement was imposed on the partners of La France Insoumise, given the balance of power resulting from the presidential election and the risk that these parties would be marginalized again in the National Assembly.

On the other hand, La France Insoumise and Mélenchon wanted to seek the widest possible agreement on the left, pursuing the prospect of obtaining a parliamentary majority and the post of Prime Minister. Also, they have redoubled their efforts for this, and to guarantee the agreement and prevent EELV and the PS from presenting alternative candidates, by “buying” their adhesion. While the France Insoumise had initially spoken of a proportional distribution (according to the result of the presidential election) of the candidacies, which would have given 29 for the PS, 38 for the PC, 78 for EELV, the latest proposals have greatly inflated the figures for the PS and EELV which obtain respectively 70 and 100 candidates, with 50 for the PCF, which nevertheless achieved a better result than the PS). But the challenge, especially in relation to the PS, was to be sure that the agreement would have a majority in the party’s National Council and that there would be little chance of a dissident list. Thus, the 19 outgoing deputies of the PS will be candidates for the NUPS.

Given the electoral system for these parliamentary elections (single-member with two rounds) union around a single candidate in the first round is necessary for the election of a large number of deputies. Without an agreement, La France

Insoumise would have obtained a maximum of around fifty deputies.

No one is fooled by the sudden conversion of the PS to the political positions of La France Insoumise, but the PS apparatus, at least the part that is not rallying to a Macronist majority in the assembly, considered that between Macron and Mélenchon, the future of the party was rather to be played on the left. The same was true for EELV.

To obtain its Union, La France Insoumise has therefore, in the name of electoral "realpolitik" in relation to EELV and the PS, chosen to reduce its electoral program, on retirement at full rate at 60, disobeying the treaties of the European Union, and even on immediately increasing the minimum wage to 1,400 euros, in particular. Similarly, the idea of opening up to activist groupings from working-class neighbourhoods within the framework of the new union has been more than limited. Finally, La France Insoumise has never sought to give the Nouveau parti anticapitaliste (NPA) the place, small but real, to which a unitary logic entitled it. Thus, La France Insoumise did not envisage in any way the possibility that Philippe Poutou would be a candidate in a constituency where he could have been electable, let alone run in Bordeaux in continuation of a common political activity with France Insoumise since the municipal and regional elections.

And finally, alongside the gifts made to the PS which obtained 3 times more candidates than its electoral weight, France Insoumise offered the NPA only 5 candidates (3 times less than its electoral weight) and without much hope of electability ... Quite a symbol.

The NPA, which maintained to the end a framework of negotiations with the will to reach an agreement, was therefore confronted with negotiators who did not, in fact, make any serious proposal to the NPA either on programme or candidacies, except to put the acronym of the NPA in an

alliance framework in which it did not politically exist. As Philippe Poutou said, "the NPA understood that in the end, its presence was not really desired by La France Insoumise".

Nevertheless, the NPA will continue to be in the framework of the dynamics that have emerged in recent weeks, trying to stimulate and participate in unitary activist frameworks. As the statement issued by its National Political Council says, the NPA will call for a vote and actively support those NUPES candidates representing a left of rupture. In other constituencies, faced with the candidacies of social liberals, notably the PS, but under the NUPES label, the NPA will seek to make an alternative heard with unitary candidates, from the world of labour and popular neighbourhoods, representing a fighting left, independent of the institutions and social-liberalism.

The rejection the NPA has suffered shows that the France Insoumise is playing all its cards on the institutional side and that of social-compatible moderation while many activist currents want a logic aimed at organizing a unitary mobilization and organization from below. But this does not call into question the analysis of the objective place that this electoral alliance has in the political field.

No one really knows what the electoral impact of this union will be, but the NUPES is clearly becoming the main electoral threat to a majority supporting Macron in the Assembly. This will clearly exceed the cursors of the political debate in the next six weeks.

Until now, Macron has built his image as a bulwark against the extreme right, against his best enemy Marine Le Pen, playing on the anti-fascist instincts of the traditional left electorate. This logic will be totally destabilized. According to initial projections, a majority of second-round duels would pit an En Marche candidacy against an NUPES candidacy.

Also, in recent days, across the media and from En Marche, all the blows are targeting Mélenchon and the new Union. Many politicians deplore the PS scuttling itself by allying with Mélenchon, they would have preferred it to scuttle itself by joining Macron. So, the limited but real risk that the left will become the main opposition to Macron and could even deprive him of a majority really frightens the presidential majority.

There is currently no split in the PS, but a dissident current will clearly organize itself with candidates opposed to the NUPES in some constituencies.

*Leon Crémieux is an activist of the Solidaires trade-union federation and of the [New Anti-Capitalist Party \(NPA, France\)](#). He is a member of the Executive Bureau of the [Fourth International](#) of which [ecosocialist.scot](#) is a part.*

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## **Ukraine: Report of International Conference of European Solidarity Lviv May 2022**

On May 5 and 6, 2022, a two-day international conference of the European Solidarity Network with

Ukraine with the support of the Ukraine-based organisation “[Social Movement](#)” ([Соціальний Рух](#) – Socialny Rukh) was held in Lviv, Ukraine.

The international delegation included left-wing politicians, parliamentarians, trade unionists, journalists from Austria, Argentina, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Spain, Germany, Poland, Finland, France and Switzerland.

Below is a report originally published by [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#) by Tom Harris an activist of the [Public and Commercial Services Union](#) who attended. ecosocialist.scot proudly supports the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and is engaged with others in forming a Scottish branch. You can join or get your organisations to affiliate to Ukraine Solidarity Campaign here: <https://ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org/join/> For regular news about solidarity with Ukraine from a labour movement perspective, see Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières English language news site here: <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?rubrique2>

*On 3rd May, I travelled with other British trade unionists on a delegation to Ukraine. We did this to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people against Russia's vicious imperialist assault, and to try and learn from and make practical solidarity with the Ukrainian left and trade union movement. The delegation was organised by the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine, and was made up of trade unionists, left-wing parliamentarians, journalists and social activists from Europe and South America. At the conference, we met with Ukrainian trade unionists, leftists and activists from a broad range of feminist, ecologist and human rights organisations.*

*Before reporting on the conference, I imagine readers will be interested in how Lviv feels and looks at this stage in the war. In Ukraine's far west, the city is less than 50 miles from the Polish border and many hundreds of miles from the battlefronts in the east and south. As a result, Lviv feels eerily peaceful and 'normal', especially compared with the horrific images of destruction from elsewhere in the country. If you didn't know otherwise, you might suppose you were in any other elegant old Austro-Hungarian city with its pretty cathedrals, Renaissance architecture and streets lined with restaurants and cafes doing a decent trade.*

*A deeper look reveals the truth, though: the military roadblocks here and there, the enlistment points, the soldiers in uniform waiting for trains and buses, the sandbags built up around monuments and sheets of metal bolted over churches' stained glass to protect them from bomb damage.*

*And then there's the air raid sirens, which sound several times a day. We'd been told in advance what the protocol was (get two walls between yourself and the outdoors, head for a basement if possible) but we'd also been told that virtually everyone in Lviv ignores it. This isn't quite as reckless as it sounds: whenever a missile is detected heading for Ukraine, alarms sound in every city it could potentially hit. The vast majority of times the sirens go off, nothing is heading for Lviv. "Reassuring!", we thought, until we learnt that missiles had hit the electricity and rail infrastructure on the outskirts of town the day before we arrived. Two were injured and electricity was cut off to part of the city.*

*The disconnection between how we visitors felt we should react to an air raid warning and how the locals reacted was almost funny at times. On our first night at the hotel, we heard the sirens and dutifully made our way to the basement. No one else was there, and eventually some faintly amused security guards turned up to investigate. We reckon they*

*thought we were up to mischief down there.*

*Many Ukrainians we interviewed told us that this surreal contrast between Lviv's relative normality and the horror elsewhere is a terrible thing to endure psychologically, especially if you have recently lived through a siege, or if, as was true of many we spoke to, your friends and relatives are still being shelled or living under occupation. Lviv's population has been swelled greatly by refugees looking for safety, many of them now living in awful, cramped conditions in cellars or small rooms.*

*The conference began by hearing from Ukrainian trade unionists. Oleksandr Skyba, a railworker from Kyiv's Darnitsya depot and activist in the Free Trade Union of Railway Workers and Transport Builders, described the incredibly dangerous conditions that he and his colleagues had been working under when Russian forces attempted to besiege the capital. The railways are essential for supplying the Ukrainian war effort and consequently were targeted by the Russians, with trains and tracks bombed and rail workers fired upon by Russian troops. Many rail workers have died. In a theme that would crop up again and again at the conference, Skyba described how the work of the union had become centred on keeping its members alive – moving humanitarian supplies, rescuing workers in peril, providing food and support for the many railway workers now fighting in the territorial defence units and the armed forces.*

*Oleksandr later told us how he and the union had been visiting members now enlisted in the armed forces to try and make sure they had basic training in first aid and military skills, including identifying mines. Many older Ukrainians have experience of the army, but the war has thrown many less experienced younger workers into army life for the first time, and their old trade union networks are proving crucial sources of support. This was echoed by Yurii Samoilo, a miners' leader who joined us via Zoom from the industrial*



city of Kryvi Rih, not far from the front line. He described his union's efforts to relay information and supplies to their members engaged in combat.

Other themes emerged from the speeches by trade unionists. Many pointed out how clear it was to workers that their independent organisations stood little chance of survival under Russian occupation. The comrade from Kryvi Rih alluded to the total crushing of trade unionism and all other forms of independent civil society in the Russian puppet-regimes in Donetsk and Luhansk. Serhii and Oksana, trade unionists in the health sector, reported that health workers in the occupied zones had been forced to leave their unions and ordered to join Russian ones instead. This piece of coercion was tied up with the occupiers' demand that the workers sign new, worse employment contracts. Some of these workers managed to contact their old union. They asked what they should do: risk their lives by refusing, or end up looking like collaborators when Ukrainian forces returned? The comrades from the health unions called on the international union movement to condemn Russian trade unions for their complicity in this.

Before the war, health workers were already suffering low pay and poor conditions. These workers – four in five of whom are women – are struggling on salaries below the Ukrainian average, and austerity policies had depleted the capacity of the health service to cope with Covid-19. Volodymyr Zelenskiy issued a presidential decree to increase health workers' wages but cuts to the sector's budget meant this never materialised. The outbreak of war, and the subsequent ban on health workers leaving the country, has left them caught in a perfect storm of poverty, danger and the struggle to meet the dire need for medical treatment in a system buckling under pressure.

The conference also heard from various unions in the energy sector. Vasyl Semkanich from the Independent Trade Union of

Miners in the city of Chervonohrad told us how decades of Russian political intervention had made the Ukrainian economy dangerously reliant on imported fossil fuels from Russia. But he didn't want to absolve Ukraine's native ruling class. He also pinned blame on the Ukrainian oligarchs, who drag the country's energy sector further and further from public interest and scrutiny and use it to line their own pockets. He talked about his union's demands for the industry to be brought into democratic public ownership.

Pavlo Oleshchuk from the atomic worker's union gave an alarming speech about the nuclear industry during the war. The Russian army has repeatedly fired explosives around nuclear power stations, and in the early days of the war the Zaporizhzhia plant complex, Europe's biggest, actually caught fire. The plant is now under Russian occupation. Pavlo said that he had worked at the Zaporizhzhia plant for 17 years and was familiar with the meticulous and careful safety measures that had been developed, many on the union's insistence, to keep the station and its workers safe. He shuddered to think how many of those measures were still in place. As he understands it, the Russians have imported their own managers to oversee the plant, but the original Ukrainian staff are still operating it and are resisting some of their orders. We were also shown slides of the damage the Russians inflicted on the briefly occupied Chernobyl site. Not only were workers' facilities completely trashed, but important safety infrastructure like laboratories, health and safety records and computer databases had been destroyed. Pavlo said he couldn't believe how recklessly the occupiers were behaving, as if "they don't understand where they are or how dangerous it is."

We also heard from feminist activists and campaigns for women's rights. The war has had a profound effect on women's lives. Sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war by the invading Russian forces, creating enormous suffering and

trauma. The ability for women to access abortion is far from guaranteed. Though abortion is legal in Ukraine, those trying to get one can face social stigma and religious predudice. Shamefully, many traumatised Ukrainian women who succeed in escaping to Poland discover that they are now in a country where abortion is effectively banned.

According to Yana Wolf, an activist from the feminist group Bilkis, the militarisation of society has also emboldened some men to abuse women. 'When men join the army, they don't just get a uniform,' she explained. 'They get a sense of power, including over women.' She explained that women and children often face the fall out when traumatised men get back from the front. 'That trauma turns to rage when they return,' she explained, 'and violence provokes more violence.'

The Ukrainian women's movement has achieved much in recent decades, but the infrastructure it has built has been imperilled by war. Marta Chumalo of the group Women's Perspectives described how some women's refuges had to close in the face of the invasion. The conditions of many refugee women, including those who have fled to Lviv, are a perfect breeding ground for domestic violence. Marta's organisation had been helping women, one of whom who'd been living 17-to-a-basement, with scant ability to feed and provide for themselves or their children and little recourse to escape violent partners.

But while women face grave challenges, they have also fought back, both against the invasion and against the oppression of men on their 'own' side. Many women have volunteered to fight the Russians, and the percentage of women in the armed forces has shot up to over 15%. A lot of women have demanded they be allowed to take the fight to the enemy, resisting the army's attempts to allocate them to roles far from combat. Meanwhile, the exodus of refugees to the safer towns of Ukraine's west has allowed previously disparate campaigners

to forge new connections, with Lviv becoming an impromptu centre for feminist and LGBT activism. In Kyiv, a feminist collective fighting for LGBT rights votes each month on which military unit they want to donate to.

Ethnic minorities, too, have been drawn into a common struggle against the occupiers. We heard from human rights activist Yulian Kondur about the high numbers of Roma people volunteering in the armed forces. The participation of so many Roma soldiers in the war is a big source of pride for the community, he said. And yet the Roma are one of the most marginalised and oppressed groups in Ukrainian society, a systematic disadvantage that has by no means disappeared during war. The collective struggle of the war, Kondur said, has presented new opportunities to combat prejudice, but the difficulties are harsh. Roma continue to find it harder to migrate, including internally, and often struggle to access social provision designed to help the victims of war. Roma have also been the victims of vigilante justice amid the chaos of the conflict, and the speaker drew our attention to a particularly horrible incident in Lviv where Roma girls from Eastern Ukraine were tied up, painted and humiliated for the alleged crime of petty theft.

To get a sense of where the socialist left finds itself in Ukraine, we spoke to activists from Sotsialniy Rukh (Social Movement). On the one hand, the war has presented enormous challenges. When the government introduced martial law, the right to strike or organise demonstrations was closed off. The Zelenskiy administration also cut taxes on corporations and diluted workers rights in what it described as an attempt to stabilise the economy. Social Movement are calling for the restitution of the rights that have been suspended, and positively demanding an expansion and deepening of labour and social legislation, levelled up to the standard of those enjoyed in the EU.



*For some years, Ukrainian governments have implemented ‘de-Communisation’ measures aimed at preventing political parties from positively invoking the Soviet past. Earlier in the war, Zelenskyy also banned a series of pro-Russian parties, some of them nominally leftist. We asked Social Movement for their view on this legislation. The problem, they said, is not so much that any of the banned parties were seriously struggling for socialism or workers’ rights (on the whole they were thoroughly rotten bodies of Putin-sympathetic, USSR-nostalgic conservatives, broadening their appeal through Orthodox Christian chauvinism and a few gestures of opposition to benefit cuts). Nevertheless, Social Movement oppose the legislation that banned them. This is partially because of a general interest in democracy and freedom of association, but also because crude bans on leftist iconography and terminology can also be used to crack down on genuine socialists and fighters for workers’ rights.*

*Social Movement activist Denys Pilash told us that, in general, it can be difficult to talk about socialism or anti-capitalism in a country which suffered so terribly under a regime that claimed to be a ‘Socialist Soviet Republic’. And yet, most people in Ukraine are keenly aware of the big social inequalities, the hoarding of wealth by the rich, the robbing of society by the oligarchs. Disgust at the rich is so common that anti-oligarch rhetoric is employed even by the oligarch’s parties themselves!*

*That sentiment hasn't disappeared in time of war, either. Social Movement have been able to make progress by pointing out the unfairness with which some aspects of the war are being managed and by telling workers how to invoke their rights. They highlight how the bosses' selfishness and disregard for workers' living conditions will weaken Ukraine's chances in the war. Pilash said that while Zelenskyy's popularity is very high because of his role as commander-in-chief, many ordinary Ukrainians view the meaner and more unjust policies of his government as somehow unconnected. In this way, popular opinion can be both very pro-Zelenskyy and simultaneously critical of the government.*

*In enormously difficult conditions, Social Movement and other genuine leftists are struggling to outline an egalitarian and democratic alternative that the Ukrainian public can grasp, clear and distinct from both the corrupt present and from the dictatorial Soviet past.*

*I spoke briefly at the conference, along with Ruth Cashman from UNISON. We outlined the aims we felt needed to be taken up by the trade union movement and left internationally: for arms for Ukraine, for the abolition of the country's international debt, for the opening of borders to refugees, for our unions to make meaningful and practical links with the Ukrainian labour movement. Some aid convoys are coming from European unions, but more needs to be done. We also discussed the challenges that face us. These include the sluggishness and bureaucratism of a union movement that has been badly demoralised by decades of defeat. We also need to confront the legacy of the Stalinist politics, still present in our movement, that is only capable of seeing imperialism when it comes from NATO, and which turns a blind eye to the imperialism of Russia or China.*

*That will be a difficult task, but a necessary one. We talk a lot in the labour movement about international solidarity and mutual aid. If any of that is real and sincere, we need to*

act on it now. The Ukrainian left is in a life or death struggle. We owe them any help we can give.

STATEMENT of solidarity with Ukraine as adopted at the end of the Lviv conference.

On February 24, 2022, Russian imperialism launched an open aggression against Ukraine. For more than two months, the people of Ukraine have been fighting an unequal battle with the occupying forces, losing thousands of lives and enduring massive destruction. While a lot of politicians in the west as well as in Russia argued that Ukraine will fall in a few days, great mobilization of Ukrainian people in all spheres of life and heroic fight of the Ukrainian resistance show how misguided this take. Many European Many European countries continue to finance the Russian war machine buying Russian oil and gas.

At the same time, the people of Ukraine are harmed by reforms adopted in the interests of the richest, before and even during the war. These political decisions result in shifting the burden of war to the majority of the population. Examples are the reduction of labor rights guarantees for employees and the reduction of taxes for business owners. These changes are accompanied by an increasing reduction in the social sphere, which creates unbearable conditions for the people of Ukraine affected by the war. In such circumstances Ukraine continues to meet its debt obligations to the IMF and other creditors. Instead of enriching creditors and world bankers, this money should go to the defense of the country and the fulfillment of the basic needs of the population,. Through its policy, the IMF continues to promote anti-people reforms in Ukraine and is increasingly dragging Ukraine into bondage, undermining its independence and making it difficult to rebuild the country.

The destruction of infrastructure, production, and residential neighborhoods raises the task of rebuilding

*Ukraine, under what conditions and at what cost rebuilding will take place after the war is an urgent question. Reconstruction based on the primacy of neoliberal politics will lead to even greater poverty and oligarchization. Comprehensive restoration of Ukraine and its role in providing basic goods for the world's most disadvantaged populations is impossible without changing the course of socio-economic policy at the national and world levels.*

*The response to Russian aggression must be the solidarity of the peoples of the world. Ukraine's victory in the war will weaken authoritarian regimes in Syria, Belarus and other countries, and this will give the world a real opportunity to move towards democratic development with social and environmental justice.*

*Writing off Ukraine's foreign debt will be a step against the dominance of neoliberalism, built on inequality and exploitation. The precedent of such a policy will pave the way for other countries to have stable development policies that will not punish the poorest people in favor of the richest through unfair lending.*

*Our left, trade union, feminist, and human rights communities, fight to promote Ukraine's victory and its post-war prosperity, including:*

- Withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine, in particular, from the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.*
- Military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, as well as the imposition of tough sanctions against Russia.*
- Introduction of a socially-oriented program for the reconstruction of Ukraine, aimed at helping the country's population, rather than enriching business*



*elites.*

- *A Renouncing the purchase of Russian fossil fuels entering a real energetic transition in order to replace fossil fuels with h t for , entering without replacing them with purchases from other sources.*
  - *Abolition of Ukraine's foreign debt and impossibility of withdrawing funds offshore.*
  - *Support for all refugees, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc. Abolition of all discriminatory laws and practices.*
  - *Stopping anti-social reforms in Ukraine and abolishing high administrative fees that hinder the participation of the working class in political life.*
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## **Rising Clyde: Scottish Climate Justice new programme May edition on Scottish Councils**

The third edition of the monthly online TV News programme **Rising Clyde: The Scottish Climate Justice Show**, hosted by Iain Bruce in association with [Independence Live](#), was broadcast on Monday 2nd May and is now available on YouTube (see below).

The programme covered aspects of the climate crisis raised in the **Scottish Council elections on 5 May** and features SNP candidate, refugee and [Kurdish](#) activist [Roza Salih](#) (who won a seat on Glasgow City Council), [North Ayrshire Labour](#) candidate [Aaron McDonald](#), and Transport activist [Ellie Harrison](#) of [Get](#)

[Glasgow Moving](#) and [Free Our City Glasgow](#).

Two earlier editions of the [Rising Clyde](#) programme are available on the [Independence Live You Tube Channel](#) ([April](#) – [March](#) – [Trailer](#)). Iain Bruce also hosted the **INSIDE OUTSIDE** daily Climate Justice programme for the [UK COP26 Coalition](#) during COP26 in Glasgow are available here: Episodes [8](#) – [7](#) – [6](#) – [5](#) – [4](#) – [3](#) – [2](#) – [1](#) – [Trailer](#)

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## 8 March of struggle for women's lives and for equality in the production of life!

Each year, **International Women's Day** is an important moment in giving visibility to feminist struggles against patriarchal capitalism, in its attempt to engender new ways to oppress and exploit us. With the health crisis provoked by the pandemic of COVID-19, added to the economic crisis and the attacks of conservative governments against women's rights, international mobilization on 8 March gains even more importance and urgency

The pandemic has unleashed a crisis in various dimensions of human life, and, when measures of physical isolation have been brought in to protect health, has shown that the jobs

necessary for survival are the really essential ones. Many women were confined to the domestic space of the home and were deprived of jobs that, although precarious, brought them monetary income.

The burden of care work done for the family increased considerably, and came hand in hand with an increase in cases of violence and feminicide, as a way of imposing the burden of this on women. The pandemic crisis has therefore shown that social reproduction work is at the centre of the alternatives for managing such crises and finding solutions, but it also poses the risk of deepening and crystallizing women's role in carrying it out.

As a counterpoint to this, women around the world have been forging and strengthening networks of solidarity and reciprocity, creating forms of protection and denunciation against this type of violence, and also building forms of resistance against hunger, poverty and worsening loss of rights during the pandemic. The cultivation, production and distribution of food, and the exchange of food and health protection materials, the replacement of face-to-face meetings with virtual ones, the creation of self-protection mechanisms, among other initiatives, were carried out in local areas under the leadership of women.

In addition, the active struggles that women have continued during the pandemic have achieved important victories, such as the legalization of abortion this year in Colombia and previously in Argentina and in some Mexican states and women as essential workers (health workers, teachers, etc.) who have not hesitated to engage in strikes to defend their working conditions.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has hit women particularly hard. Women and their children are the overwhelming majority of the more than a million who have already fled the country as refugees. At the same time, younger women in particular are

taking an active part in the armed and unarmed defence of their country. Women are also playing a key role in mobilising diaspora communities elsewhere and are prominent in the anti-war movement in Russia.

On this 8 March, we must rescue the alternatives created during these years of deprivation, highlighting the role that the women's strike has played in giving visibility to social reproduction work in this context.

We will occupy the streets, the internet networks and all the areas where our struggles can take space. We want to live, without machismo, without violence, with recognition of our work and with equality!

## **Long live International Women's Day!**

*Motion adopted by the International Committee of the Fourth International.*

5 March 2022

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