

Stand with Ukraine: UK TUC backs their right to resist Russian aggression

Fred Leplat reports on the UK TUC Congress in Liverpool

The TUC congress on 12 September adopted overwhelmingly a [motion in solidarity](#) with the people Ukraine in their war of liberation from Putin's invasion of their country. Three major unions, the RMT, the UCU and the NEU, abstained while the FBU spoke against the motion. It commits the TUC to support "The immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from all Ukrainian territories occupied since 2014" and "A peaceful end to the conflict that secures the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the support and self-determination of the Ukrainian people". The motion also states that the TUC notes "That those who suffer most in times of war are the working class, and that the labour movement must do all it can to prevent conflict; however, that is not always possible".

TUC Resolution Affirms Solidarity with Ukrainian People

The position now adopted by the TUC, which has unions representing over 5.5 million workers, is a huge boost for the morale of the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian unions in particular. The TUC policy is now to support "The full restoration of labour rights in Ukraine and a socially-just reconstruction that ... rejects deregulation and privatisation," which is the opposite of what the Tory government was pushing at its [Ukraine Reconstruction conference](#) in June with its neoliberal emphasis on private investment and reforms.

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The TUC resolution is pro-Ukraine, not pro-war. However it was [caricatured by Andrew Murray](#) of the Stop the war Coalition as “a call for the trade unions to align in support of the most hard-line elements among NATO policy-makers and push for the war to continue until Russian surrender”. The StWC [denounced](#) the vote as “A vote for war that Sunak and Starmer will welcome”, while the [SWP declares](#) that the “TUC backs war and clears the way for more arms spending.” These responses fall into the binary trap set by Blair and Bush to win support for the war in Iraq: “Either you support the war or you support Saddam Hussein.” It is entirely possible to support the people of Ukraine in their armed resistance, be critical of Zelensky’s neoliberal government and also oppose NATO.

No to NATO Expansion and Arms Escalation

Internationalists cannot condemn Ukrainians because they are using every means available for their self-defence. If the war is one mainly for liberation of the country from Russian imperialism, Western imperialism is also involved for its own geostrategic interests. Of course, NATO and Western imperialist countries have not suddenly been converted to being fighters for democracy. They happily support and sell arms to many dictatorships, such as Saudi Arabia, provided they are loyal to their interests. While the TUC motion is silent on the role of NATO, conversely, it does not repeat the Starmer position of “unshakable” support for NATO. The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected. Describing the conflict as only a “proxy war” by NATO removes from the Ukrainians any self-determination, and erases Putin’s responsibility for the military aggression and the brutal treatment of Ukrainian civilians.

“The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected.”

The position adopted by the TUC is a welcome contrast to that adopted a few days earlier by the G20 summit in India. The G20 stepped back from the support they gave to Ukraine in 2022. The G20 summit last year [declared](#) that it “deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine”. This year, it did not directly mention Russia or Ukraine, and [stated vaguely](#) that states should “refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition.”

Eighteen months after the beginning of the war, there seems to be no quick end. While the Ukrainian army has made some gains recently, it has not yet routed the Russian troops. Arms continue to be supplied by the West, but not in sufficient quantities. Internationally banned cluster munitions and dangerously toxic depleted uranium shells are being supplied to Ukraine. These risk the war escalating into a direct inter-imperialist conflict.

The Ukrainians desperately want peace and freedom. But a ceasefire for peace negotiations without simultaneously a withdrawal of Russian troops is in reality and annexation of parts of Ukraine. This will not bring lasting peace. While there have been several attempts at peace negotiations, some were not encouraged by Western leaders who see the war as an opportunity to marginalise Russia. However, Russia’s position has remained that any peace plan can only proceed from Ukraine’s recognition of Russia’s sovereignty over the regions it annexed from Ukraine in September 2022, and that Ukraine should demilitarise and “de-Nazify”. While Ukraine, quite reasonably, wants recognition of its territorial integrity along internationally recognised borders. Putin is unlikely to make any moves for peace any time soon as he has already suffered two defeats. He failed in a quick war for regime change in Kyiv, and NATO has expanded further with Finland and Sweden joining the alliance. Putin’s naked aggression and

invasion of Ukraine has been a gift to NATO which has found a new purpose in a fight for democracy, replacing the failed war against terrorism. Hence the push for increases in defence spending and the possible return of US nuclear weapons to Britain, both of which should be opposed.

The Ukrainians have made tremendous sacrifices and suffered enormous [casualties](#) with over 70,000 dead and 120,000 injured. Russia's casualties are even higher, with close to 300,000 of which 120,000 have been killed, [according to the Guardian](#). A staggering total of 500,000. Apart from the ecological devastation, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and homes, Ukraine is now the most mined country in the world.



The mood of Ukrainians is resigned and sombre, but support for the war effort is still there. A [Gallup poll](#) conducted a year ago in September 2022, showed that 70% of Ukrainians wanted to

continue the war with Russia until victory. Political solidarity and humanitarian aid are necessary to demonstrate that the Ukrainians have not been abandoned. There have been many spontaneous and independent efforts of [practical support](#) for Ukrainians. Today, 64% of [Europeans agree](#) with purchasing and supplying military equipment to Ukraine (it is 93% in Sweden). With the US presidential elections in 2024, Trump's continuing electoral threat and his isolationist policies are affecting the mood in Washington. How long will NATO's support for Ukraine last if the economic cost for western capitalism is too high a cost to pay for the Ukrainians fight for democracy? That's why it was always right to say "don't trust NATO". No peace deal should be imposed on Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them.

"No peace deal should be imposed on Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them."

What you can do:

- Circulate the [motion from the TUC](#), and amend it as necessary.
- Invite Ukrainian trade-unionists and socialists to speak to your organisation.
- Twin your workplace or trade-union with a similar organisation in Ukraine.
- Raise funds for medical and humanitarian aid.
- Support the anti-war activists being persecuted and imprisoned in Russia.
- Affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. info@ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org
www.ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org
- or in Scotland
- uscscotland@gmail.com
<https://ukrainesolidarityscot.wordpress.com/https://www.facebook.com/groups/USCScotland>



Ukraine Solidarity Campaign
Fringe meeting at TUC
Liverpool. Included in the
picture: Maria Exall TUC
President, Gary Smith GMB
National Secretary, Barbara
Plant GMB President, Chris
Kitchen NUM General
Secretary, Simon Weller
Assistant General Secretary
ASLEF, John Moloney PCS
Assistant General
Secretary.

*This article is reposted from Anticapitalist Resistance:
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/stand-with-ukraine-tuc-backs-their-right-to-resist-russian-aggression/>*

*Headline picture: Ukraine refugees hold GMB We Stand with
Ukraine placard, George Square, Glasgow, August 2023 (M
Picken)*

Radical Independence Campaign announces conference on impasse in independence movement

The Radical Independence Campaign invites supporters to join a conference aimed at finding a way through the movement's current impasse.

Break the Impasse: Towards Independence

***Saturday, 21 October 2023 11:00 –
16:00***

Location: The Renfield Training and Conference Centre Glasgow

260 Bath Street Glasgow G2 4JP (Journey Planner [here](#))

The movement for Scottish self-determination is at an impasse – we are stuck. The [Radical Independence Campaign](#) invites independence supporters and the wider Scottish left to join us at a conference in Glasgow on Saturday 21st October to help find a way to break the impasse.

This grassroots-focused event is the first in-person RIC conference since the pandemic and follows an online conference in 2021 which attracted hundreds of participants.

Programme

The conference will begin with speakers from a range of invited organisations, including the Scottish Greens and SNP Socialists, offering their views on the way forward, followed by breakout discussions in which participants can discuss their response to the speakers.

After lunch, there will be a series of participatory workshops on issues including climate justice, trade unions and independence, and how we get organised at a local level.

The day will conclude with a plenary session aimed at establishing concrete next steps.

More information about the programme, including speakers and workshops, will follow.

Get involved

We wish to create a friendly forum to contribute to a discussion on where Scottish politics and the independence movement finds itself now, and to explore the options and strategic implications of the proposals coming from different parts of the movement.

We want to have a good conference with lively discussions that produce clear decisions and commitments – in other words, a well thought-out strategy and plan of action to take forward RIC and the movement for Scottish self-determination.

For more information or to help us organise the conference, please email contact@ric.scot.



Radical Independence
Campaign on the march at
COP26 in Glasgow, November

BETTER BUSES FOR STRATHCLYDE Campaign Launch – Glasgow Friday 29 September

*[Get Glasgow Moving](#) are launching **BETTER BUSES FOR STRATHCLYDE** – a campaign focused on winning an improvement to bus services in the greater Glasgow/Strathclyde region. They are holding a launch in Glasgow on Friday 29 September, details from [Get Glasgow Moving's](#) news release below.*

JOIN THE LAUNCH RALLY

Friday 29 September 2023, 9:30am

SPT Head Office, 131 St Vincent St, Glasgow, G2 5JF – Journey Planner [here](#)

Please share details on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#) to help spread the word.

The next year is crucial in our long-running fight to **take our buses back into public control**. So we're joining forces with trade unions, community councils, environmental groups, students and pensioners associations and more, to launch a new region-wide campaign.

Better Buses for Strathclyde is inspired by the success of the [Better Buses for Greater Manchester](#) campaign, which pushed their transport authority, TfGM, into bringing their region's

buses back into public control in order to deliver a fully-integrated, accessible and affordable public transport network called the [Bee Network](#):

By bringing together bus users and employees from across Strathclyde's 12 council areas, Better Buses for Strathclyde will put pressure on our regional transport authority, SPT, to utilise the new powers in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to deliver a similar fully-integrated, accessible and affordable system for us – and on the Scottish Government to provide the necessary funding and support.

THE NEXT YEAR IS CRUCIAL

From September 2023 – March 2024, SPT is developing the new 'Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy' which will set the direction of bus policy in our region for the next 15 years (until 2038).

This offers us **a once-in-generation opportunity** to end the chaos caused by bus deregulation (introduced by Thatcher in 1986), which has seen millions of miles of [routes cut](#) and [fares hiked](#) well above inflation.

We must ensure that SPT's strategy sets out ambitious plans to:

- re-regulate the all private bus companies in our region (through 'franchising') so that it can plan routes to serve communities' needs and connect seamlessly with trains, ferries and Glasgow's Subway, with one simple, affordable ticket across all modes.
- And to set-up a new publicly-owned bus company for Strathclyde (like Edinburgh's Lothian Buses) which can start taking over routes and reinvesting profits back into expanding and improving our network.

And we must ensure that the Scottish Government provides the funding and support necessary for SPT to deliver the world-

class public transport system that the 2.2 million people living across Strathclyde need and deserve.

Please join the Better Buses for Strathclyde launch rally on Friday 29 September 2023, 9:30am at SPT Head Office, 131 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5JF – as we get ready to build the campaign over the next year.

The launch rally takes place as part of the [Better Buses National](#) Week of Action and [Scotland's Climate Week](#).



Bus Campaigners including Get Glasgow Moving protest at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh



Republished from:
<https://www.getglasgowmoving.org/campaign/betterbuses/>

Degrowth: a remarkable renaissance

There is continuing widespread interest in debate on Degrowth. [ecosocialist.scot](https://www.getglasgowmoving.org/campaign/betterbuses/) is keen to encourage this debate. We published [Michael Lowy's Nine Theses on Ecosocialist Degrowth](#) recently, and below we are republishing two more topical contributions. The first is an overview of the Degrowth debate from Alan Thornett's [Ecosocialist Discussion](#) site and the second is an introduction to degrowth concepts from the [Scotonomics](#) newsletter that was also published by Scottish daily newspaper 'The National'.

Degrowth: a remarkable renaissance

This article was written for the current edition of the Green Left's publication Watermelon in advance of the Green Party conference AT

There has been an upsurge of interest in degrowth –a long-discussed strategic alternative to climate chaos and not just from the radical left. It is experiencing a renaissance at the moment, driven by the relentless rise in global

temperatures and the resulting climate chaos.

It was the theme of a three-day conference in May entitled '[Beyond Growth 2023](#)' which filled the main hall of the European Parliament with mostly young and enthusiastic people. It was organised by 20 left-leaning MEPs and it was opened by the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

According to the [Economist](#) report the young audience 'whooped and cheered' when it was proposed that some form of de-growth will be necessary to avoid societal collapse."

In July, Bill McKibben – the veteran environmental campaigner, founder of 350.org, and prolific author – had a major article in the [New Yorker](#) strongly advocating degrowth from an historical perspective.

Numerous books supporting degrowth – to varying degrees and stand points – have been also published recently from the left: *The Case for Degrowth* by Giorgos Kallis et al; *Less is More* how degrowth will save the world by Jason Hickel; *Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism* by Kohei Saito; and *The Future is Degrowth* by Matthias Schmelzer.

A recent book opposing degrowth is *Climate Change as Class War*, by Matt Huber – from, in my view, an ultra-left and voluntaristic position. He has reviewed himself in the current edition of [Jacobin](#).

Growth is the driving force of the environmental crisis. Over the past 60 years the global economy has grown at an average rate of 3 per cent a year, which is completely unsustainable. John Bellamy Foster has pointed out that a 3% p.a. growth rate of would grow the world economy by a factor of 250 over the course of this century and the next. Over the same period the global human population has risen from 3.6 billion in 1970 to 8 billion in 2022.

Such growth rates are incompatible with the natural limits of the planet, and will ultimately defeat any attempts to resolve the environmental crisis that fail to deal with it.

An early attempt to analyse this issue was undertaken in 1970 by Donella Meadows and a team of radical young scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It was published in 1972 as the [Limits to Growth Report](#)

The Meadows Report, as it became known reached the monumental conclusion that: “if the present growth in world population, industrialisation, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continues unchanged”, the limits to growth on the planet will be reached sometime around the middle of the 21st century. The most probable result “will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity.”

It sold 12 million copies world-wide, was translated into 37 languages. and remains the top-selling environmental title ever published. It also became the driving force behind the emergence of the ecology and green movement in the 1970s, and the degrowth movement itself.

It was remarkably accurate, as Bill McKibben notes, and it's conclusion puts us exactly where we are today, facing increasing frequent climate related societal breakdowns that may soon become generalised.

McKibben also notes that Ursula von der Leyen directly referenced to the Meadows Report at her opening speech in Brussels: “Our predecessors”, she had said, “chose to stick to the old shores and not lose sight of them. They did not change their growth paradigm but relied on oil. And the following generations have paid the price.”

The Report, however, was ignored by the socialist left, with a few exceptions. Tony Benn's Alternative Economic Strategy of the 1980s, for example, made ever-faster economic

growth its key demand. No wonder the trade unions and the Labour Party remain dominated by growth productivism today because they have never been challenged by the left.

William Morris – the outstanding environmentalist in the 19th century – had also gone unheeded when he raged against useless and unnecessary production. In his lecture ‘How We Live and How We Might Live’, delivered in December 1884 in Hammersmith [Image above]– he raised the issue of how to live dignified and fulfilling lives without the need for mass produced commodities and consumerism, and what kind of future society could best provide such an approach.



What degrowth offers is a planned reduction of economic activity, within a different economic paradigm, and first and foremost in the rich countries of the Global North. Giorgos Kallis puts it this way in *The Case for Degrowth* (page viii): “The goal of degrowth is to purposefully slow things down in order to minimise harm to human beings and earth systems”.

Jason Hickel in *Less in More* (page 29) — tells us that degrowth is: “a planned reduction of excess energy and resource use in order to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a safe and equitable way”.

The adoption of such an approach will need a mass movement involving everyone who is prepared to fight to save the planet on a progressive basis, including environmental movements, indigenous movements, peasant movements, farmers movement as well as trade unions and progressive political parties. It must demand that the big polluters pay for the damage they have done. This means heavily taxing fossil fuels in order to both cut emissions and to ensure that the

polluters fund the transition to renewables as a part of an exit strategy from fossil fuel that redistributes wealth from the rich to the poor, and is capable of commanding popular support. Such an approach must be the cornerstone of ecosocialism and an ecosocialist strategy designed to save the planet from ecological destruction and create a post-capitalist, ecologically sustainable, society for the future.



Alan Thornett, ecosocialist writer and activist, was a leading British trade unionist and car worker in the 60s and 70s

Written by Alan Thornett September 2013. Republished from <https://www.ecosocialistdiscussion.com/2023/09/16/degrowth-a-remarkable-renaissance/> Alan Thornett's 'Facing the Apocalypse – Arguments for Ecosocialism' is published by Resistance Books and available for £15 [here](#).

An introduction to degrowth: What is it and how does it work?

This is the latest edition of the Scotonomics newsletter – [click here](#) to receive it free to your inbox every week.



As a global society, we must pursue policies to reduce material consumption and increase our wellbeing. This is the core of degrowth. It is exceptionalism that leads us to think that our [economy](#), which grows by consuming natural resources, can grow forever. There must be a limit. That much is self-evident. However, even for those who agree that there is some future limit, many people think that we are a long way from that.

It is often a shock when you tell people that with an annual growth rate of only 3%, the economy doubles in only 24 years. By 2070, it would be four times bigger than it is today. Can we really look at our ecological problems and seriously picture an economy four times bigger?

2070 might seem too long a timeframe. So, let's look at 2050. There are approximately 9.7 billion people on the planet. If all of them were to live according to the living standards of a country like Scotland, assuming that 3% growth, our global resource use would be 15 times higher than it is today.

It is the bury-your-head-in-the-sand growth paradigm that is detached from reality.

Growth is not wellbeing

The mistake our society continues to make is to consider

growth the same thing as wellbeing. The growth of an economy can increase and reduce wellbeing. Degrowth makes this connection implicit; a degrowth economy is one in which wellbeing increases.

Ecological economist Herman Daly talked about “economic and uneconomic growth”, and he suggested that it is likely that economies in the global north became “uneconomic” at some point in the 1980s. Herman’s argument focused on the depletion of non-renewable resources, the ecological consequences of overfilling waste sinks and an understanding that not all expenditure is beneficial. Spending £10 billion to deal with an [oil](#) spill would increase GDP. But it is hard to argue that it improves wellbeing.

The idea that growth is always good has become what George Monbiot (above) calls a “root metaphor”. So deeply rooted is the idea that growth equals well-being that it frames our understanding and choices without us even being aware. Growth is now more than a simple process; it has become a powerful idea.

According to degrowth scholar Giorgos Kallis: “Growth is not only a material process. It is also a cultural, political and social process. Growth is an idea, produced, imagined and instituted. An idea that growth is natural, necessary and desirable.”

Degrowth challenges that growth is natural, necessary or desirable.

Degrowth is a broad transformative process. It is a decrease in ecological damage and an increase in well-being.

In a degrowth economy, our human society reacts in a co-evolutionary way to its surroundings, in a way familiar to humans for around 99% of the last 100,000 years. In other words, we act more in tune with our environment.

Degrowth is selective and will involve increases in some things and decreases in others, such as less private and more

public [transport](#).

In a society guided by degrowth policies, we set limits on harmful activities and move our society to stay within specific and defined boundaries. Our life, not our economy, is placed within the planet's biophysical boundaries. Once we return to within our current constraints, these boundaries can be seen as fluid, advanced or reduced by managing technology and other factors to create a steady state or "Goldilocks" economy.

Degrowth policies, in general, are highly redistributive. It is degrowth for the global North to allow space for "economic" growth, as defined by Herman Daly, for the global south.

Within global north nations like Scotland, degrowth starts with the wealthiest in society. The actions and lifestyles of the wealthiest degrow before anyone else, and there is a clear rationale for this. In the UK, the top 1% emit 10 times as much carbon yearly as the poorest do in two decades. Where else could you possibly start if you wanted to be effective?

There are no "non-reformest reforms" in a degrowth paradigm. However, a degrowth economy would be familiar enough to today's economy that we can use today's economic terms to make sense of a degrowth economy.

The ecological economist Tim Jackson, who describes himself more as a "post-growth" economist, wrote in his book Prosperity Without Growth: "The economy of tomorrow calls on us to revisit and reframe the concepts of productivity, profitability, asset ownership and control over the distribution of social surplus."

"It calls for a renegotiation of the role of the progressive state." This would need to happen in a degrowth economy.

The end game for degrowth is a much more balanced society and

economy that prioritises planetary well-being. It is a post-capitalist world.

Common among those who support degrowth is the belief that degrowth is inevitable: We deal with the need to drastically reduce throughput by design or by disaster. Degrowth uses the agency we have to solve the problems we have created.

In next week's article, we will take a closer look at degrowth policies.

[Join us at 2.30pm on September 27](#) to discuss all of the topics we have discussed this month.

*Republished from The National.
<https://www.thenational.scot/politics/23800528.introduction-degrowth-work/>*

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Picture: 'How We Might Live' – from the cover of *How We Might Live: At Home with Jane and William Morris* by Suzanne Fagence Cooper

Rising Clyde: Cumbrian Coal – leave it in the ground

This month's Rising Clyde programme is about the protest movement against the proposed coal mine in West Cumbria with a discussion with Cumbrian climate justice activist, [Allan Todd](#), and interviews with Cumbrian activists at the 'speakers'

corner' events against the coal mine.

Rising Clyde is the Scottish Climate Show, presented by Iain Bruce, and broadcast on the Independence Live Channel. Previous editions can be found in the embedded video above, Episode 14, by clicking in the three lines in the top right hand corner and choosing from the video list.

*Allan Todd is a climate and anti-fascist activist, and has been active with Greenpeace and XR. He participated in the anti-fracking protests at Preston New Road in Lancashire, where he organised the 'Green Mondays' from 2017 to 2019. Allan is a member of [Anti-Capitalist Resistance](#) and of Left Unity's National Council. He is the author of *Revolutions 1789-1917* (CUP) and *Trotsky: The Passionate Revolutionary* (Pen & Sword). His next book is *Che Guevara: The Romantic Revolutionary*.*

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

Theses on Ecosocialist Degrowth

Ecosocialist writer and [Fourth International](#) activist. Michael

Löwy. presents **'Nine Theses on Ecosocialist Degrowth'** in an issue of the US magazine [Monthly Review](#) dedicated to a discussion on this important topic. If you can afford it please buy this issue (details below).

I. The ecological crisis is already the most important social and political question of the twenty-first century, and will become even more so in the coming months and years. The future of the planet, and thus of humanity, will be decided in the coming decades. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change explains, if the average global temperature exceeds the pre-industrial period by 1.5°C, there is a risk of setting off an irreversible and catastrophic climate change process. What would be the consequences of this? Just a few examples: the multiplication of megafires destroying most of the forests; the disappearance of rivers and the exhaustion of subterranean water reserves; increasing drought and desertification of land; the melting and dislocation of polar ice and rise in sea level, leading to the flooding of the major cities of human civilization—Hong Kong, Kolkata, Venice, Amsterdam, Shanghai, London, New York, Rio de Janeiro. Some of these events are already taking place: drought is threatening millions of people in Africa and Asia with hunger; increasing summer temperatures have reached unbearable levels in some areas of the planet; forests are burning everywhere over increasingly extended fire seasons; one could multiply the examples. In some sense, the catastrophe has already begun—but it will become much worse in the next few decades, well before 2100. How high can the temperature go? At what temperature will human life on this planet be threatened? No one has an answer to these questions. These are dramatic risks without precedent in human history. One would have to go back to the Pliocene Epoch, millions of years ago, to find climate conditions similar to what could become reality in the future due to climate change.

II. What is responsible for this situation? It is human

action, answer the scientists. The answer is correct, but a bit short: human beings have lived on Earth since hundreds of thousands of years ago, but the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere started to accumulate only after the Industrial Revolution and only began to become dangerous to life since 1945. As Marxists, our answer is that the culprit is the capitalist system. The absurd and irrational logic of infinite expansion and accumulation, productivism, and the obsession with the search for profit at any price are responsible for bringing humanity to the brink of the abyss.

The capitalist system's responsibility for the imminent catastrophe is widely recognized. Pope Francis, in his Encyclical *Laudato Si*, without uttering the word "capitalism," spoke out against a structurally perverse system of commercial and property relations based exclusively on the "principle of profit maximization" as responsible both for social injustice and destruction of our common home, nature. A slogan universally chanted the world over in ecological demonstrations is "System Change Not Climate Change!" The attitude shown by the main representatives of this system, advocates of business as usual—billionaires, bankers, so-called experts, oligarchs, and politicians—can be summed up by the phrase attributed to Louis XV: "After me, the deluge." The complete failure of the dozens of United Nations COP Conferences on Climate Change to take the minimal measures necessary to stop the process illustrate the impossibility of a solution to the crisis within the limits of the prevailing system.

III. Can "green capitalism" be a solution? Capitalist enterprises and governments may be interested in the (profitable) development of "sustainable energies," but the system has been dependent on fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas) for the last three centuries, and shows no sign of willingness to give them up. Capitalism cannot exist without growth, expansion, accumulation of capital, commodities, and profits,

and this growth cannot go on without an extended use of fossil fuels.

Green capitalist pseudo-solutions such as “carbon markets,” “compensation mechanisms,” and other manipulations of the so-called “sustainable market economy” have proven perfectly useless. While “greening” goes on and on, carbon dioxide emissions are skyrocketing and catastrophe gets closer and closer. There is no solution to the ecological crisis within the framework of capitalism, a system entirely devoted to productivism, consumerism, and the ferocious struggle for market share. Its intrinsically perverse logic inevitably leads to the breakdown of the ecological equilibrium and the destruction of the ecosystems. As Greta Thunberg put it, “it is mathematically impossible to solve the ecological crisis in the framework of the present economic system.”

The Soviet experience, whatever its merits or shortcomings, was also based on the logic of growth, grounded on the same fossil resources as the West. Much of the left during the last century shared the ideology of growth in the name of “developing the productive forces.” A productivist socialism that ignores the ecological crisis is unable to answer the challenges of the twenty-first century.

IV. The degrowth reflection and movement that emerged in the last few decades has made a great contribution to a radical ecology by opposing the myth of an unlimited “growth” on a limited planet. But degrowth in itself is not an alternative economic and social perspective: it does not define what kind of society will replace the present system. Some proponents of degrowth would ignore the issue of capitalism, focusing only on productivism and consumerism, defining the culprit as “The West,” “Enlightenment,” or “Prometheanism.” Others, which represent the left of the antigrowth movement, clearly designate the capitalist system as responsible for the crisis, and acknowledge the impossibility of a “capitalist degrowth.”

In the last few years, there has been a growing coming together of ecosocialism and degrowth: each side has been appropriating the arguments of the other, and the proposal of an “ecosocialist degrowth” has begun to be adopted as a common ground.

V. Ecosocialists have learned much from the degrowth movement. Ecosocialism is therefore increasingly adopting the need of degrowth in the process of transition to a new socialist ecological society. One obvious reason for this is that most renewable energies, such as wind and solar, (a) need raw materials that do not exist on an unlimited scale and (b) are intermittent, depending on climate conditions (wind, sun). They cannot, therefore, entirely replace fossil energy. A substantial reduction of energy consumption is therefore inevitable. But the issue has a more general character: the production of most goods is based on the extraction of raw materials, many of which (a) are becoming increasingly limited and/or (b) create serious ecological problems in the process of extraction. All these elements point to the need for degrowth.

Ecosocialist degrowth includes the need for substantial reductions in production and consumption, but does not limit itself to this negative dimension. It includes the positive program of a socialist society, based on democratic planning, self-management, production of use values instead of commodities, gratuity of basic services, and free time for the development of human desires and capacities—a society without exploitation, class domination, patriarchy, and all forms of social exclusion.

VI. Ecosocialist degrowth does not have a purely quantitative conception of degrowth as a reduction in production and consumption. It proposes *qualitative* distinctions. Some productions—for example, fossil energies, pesticides, nuclear submarines, and advertising—should not be merely reduced, but *suppressed*. Others, such as private cars, meat, and

airplanes, should be *substantially reduced*. Still others, such as organic food, public means of transport, and carbon neutral housing, should be *developed*. The issue is not “excessive consumption” in the abstract, but the prevalent mode of consumption, based as it is on conspicuous acquisition, massive waste, mercantile alienation, obsessive accumulation of goods, and the compulsive purchase of pseudo-novelty imposed by “fashion.” One must put an end to the monstrous waste of resources by capitalism based on the production, on a large scale, of useless and harmful products: the armaments industry is a good example, but a great part of the “goods” produced in capitalism, with their inbuilt obsolescence, have no other usefulness but to generate profit for large corporations. A new society would orient production toward the satisfaction of authentic needs, beginning with those which could be described as “biblical”—water, food, clothing, and housing—but including also the basic services: health care, education, transport, and culture.

How to distinguish the authentic from artificial, factitious, and makeshift needs? The last ones are induced by mental manipulation, that is, advertisement. While advertisement is an indispensable dimension of the capitalist market economy, it would have no place in a society transitioning to ecosocialism, where it would be replaced by information on goods and services provided by consumer associations. The criterion for distinguishing an authentic from an artificial need is its persistence after the suppression of advertisements (Coca-Cola!). Of course, old habits of consumption would persist for some time, and nobody has the right to tell the people what their needs are. The change in patterns of consumption is a historical process, as well as an educational challenge.

VII. The main effort in a process of planetary degrowth must be made by the countries of the industrialized North (North America, Europe, and Japan) responsible for the historical

accumulation of carbon dioxide since the Industrial Revolution. They are also the areas of the world where the level of consumption, particularly among the privileged classes, is clearly unsustainable and wasteful. The “underdeveloped” countries of the Global South (Asia, Africa, and Latin America) where basic needs are very far from being satisfied will need a process of “development,” including building railroads, water and sewage systems, public transport, and other infrastructures. But there is no reason why this cannot be accomplished through a productive system that is environmentally friendly and based on renewable energies. These countries will need to grow great amounts of food to nourish their hungry populations, but this can be much better achieved—as the peasant movements organized worldwide in the Vía Campesina network have been arguing for years—by a peasant biological agriculture based on family units, cooperatives, or collectivist farms. This would replace the destructive and antisocial methods of industrialized agribusiness, based on the intensive use of pesticides, chemicals, and genetically modified organisms. Presently, the capitalist economy of countries in the Global South is rooted in the production of goods for their privileged classes—cars, airplanes, and luxury goods—and commodities exported to the world market: soya beans, meat, and oil. A process of ecological transition in the South, as argued by ecosocialists, would reduce or suppress this kind of production, and aim instead at food sovereignty and the development of basic services such as health care and education, which need, above all, human labor, rather than more commodities.

VIII. Who could be the subject in the struggle for an ecosocialist degrowth? The workerist/industrialist dogmatism of the previous century is no longer current. The forces now at the forefront of the social-ecological confrontations are youth, women, Indigenous people, and peasants. The resistance of Indigenous communities in Canada, the United States, Latin

America, Nigeria, and elsewhere to the capitalist oil fields, pipelines, and gold mines is well documented; it flows from their direct experience of the destructive dynamics of capitalist "progress," as well as the contradiction between their spirituality and culture and the "spirit of capitalism."

Women are very present in the Indigenous resistance movement as well as in the formidable youth uprising launched by Thunberg's call to action—one of the great sources of hope for the future. As the ecofeminists explain, this massive women's participation in mobilizations comes from the fact that they are the first victims of the system's damage to the environment.

Unions are beginning here and there to also get involved. This is important, because, in the final analysis, we cannot overcome the system without the active participation of urban and rural workers who make up the majority of the population. The first condition, in each movement, is associating ecological goals (closing coal mines, oil wells, coal-fired power stations, and so on) with guaranteed employment for the workers involved. Ecologically minded unionists have argued that there are millions of "green jobs" that would be created in a process of ecological transition.

IX. Ecosocialist degrowth is at once a project for the future and a strategy for the struggle here and now. There is no question of waiting for the conditions to be "ripe." It is necessary to provoke a convergence between social and ecological struggles and to fight the most destructive initiatives by powers at the service of capitalist "growth." Proposals such as the Green New Deal are part of this struggle in their more radical forms, which require effectively renouncing fossil energies—but not in those reforms limited to recycling the system.

Without any illusions on a "clean capitalism," one must try to buy time, and to impose on the powers that be some elementary

measures of degrowth, beginning with a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The efforts to stop the Keystone XL Pipeline, a polluting gold mine, and a coal-fired facility are part of the larger resistance movement, called Blockadia by Naomi Klein. Equally significant are local experiences of organic agriculture, cooperative solar energy, and community management of resources.

Such struggles around concrete issues of degrowth are important, not only because partial victories are welcome in themselves, but also because they contribute to raising ecological and socialist consciousness while promoting activity and self-organization from below. These factors are decisive and necessary preconditions for a radical transformation of the world—that is, for a Great Transition to a new society and a new mode of life.

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Republished from Monthly Review:
<https://monthlyreview.org/2023/07/01/nine-theses-on-ecosocialist-degrowth/>

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Report from the Fourth International's Revolutionary Youth Camp

This summer the Fourth International held its annual Revolutionary Youth Camp in France. As part of the Fourth International, ecosocialist.scot participates in building this camp but also welcomes other individuals and comrades from fellow revolutionary organisations. This year we invited RS21 – Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century – in Scotland to participate and were delighted they were able to send a representative. Below is their report from the RS21 website.

This summer, younger comrades met to foster international solidarity across

the socialist movement. Becky Brown reports.

This year the 4th International youth camp was held in Vieure, central France, from 23-29 July. 200 youth from across Europe came together to better understand how their own political landscapes are situated within the context of globalised capitalism and, likewise, in the context of international solidarity. The camp itself was self-organised around an understanding of anti-capitalist, anti-racist, feminist and LGBTI+ liberatory values, and everyone participated in the maintenance of the camp by sharing security, bar, cleaning, translation and 'awareness' team (for dealing with conflicts and concerns) shifts, allowing us to have a taste actually living-out our values and ideas.

The first FI youth camp was held in 1984, making this the 38th camp (accounting for a two-year gap over Covid). It holds the idea that young people should be given the space to test and develop their ideas together, emphasising that youth education in politics should not be based on receiving lectures by old men. Likewise, it doesn't expect all groups and individuals participating in the camp to hold the exact same politics – it sees a commitment to international solidarity, non-Stalinism and non-reformism as sufficient common ground to build for healthy discussions. I found this to work well, as strategic discussions tended to focus on actual struggles rather than party building or petitioning our respective liberal/conservative states, allowing us to share ideas on how to build on-the-ground momentum and actively engage in solidarity work. Likewise, I found it helpful to hear from experiences of different groups across the camp, some of whom were from small organisations with no party affiliations and others were youth wings of far left political parties or far left party blocks.

Participants were primarily from France, Denmark, Spain,

Belgium, Switzerland, Portugal and Scotland, as well as some comrades from South American countries who were able to provide key perspectives and experiences from beyond Europe. International solidarity was not simply a form of tokenistic rhetoric. This was nicely exemplified by the organisation of the camp itself, where participation fees were scaled according to the buying power of each country. Want to buy some beer? Then you'll have to go to the bank to exchange your euros for 'tou-cramer' (burn everything!) with a similarly scaled exchange rate.

Programme

The programme was centred on a different theme per day, these themes having been elected on by a meeting of delegates in Amsterdam during Easter. This is nicely indicative of the way in which the camp is developed mainly by the participants themselves, both before and during the camp, in a way that consciously aims for openness and internal democracy. These themes were selected as key sites of struggle in the present moment, as we face up to a system of ecocidal global capitalism that has led rise to the most recent onslaught of floods, fires, droughts across the world as well as spiralling cost-of-living crises. Likewise, the present growth of reactionary policies and movements has emphasised how questions of anti-racism, feminism and LGBTI+ liberation must also be placed centrally in the revolutionary movements, in acknowledgment of the central role they play in capitalism's reproduction and social-reproduction.

Each day began with a session known as an 'educational', delivering an in-depth analysis of how each of these themes – eco-socialism, anti-racism, feminism, LGBTI+ liberation, social movements, and party and strategy – is situated within the contemporary landscape. The educationals showed how the Marxist method of analysis could be applied to each topic, foregrounding the question of how ruling classes materially benefit from perpetuating a system that is racist, ecocidal,

etc. The camp participants ranged from the ages of 15 to 30 and therefore they encompassed a wide range of experiences and prior exposure to this method of analysis. Considering this, it was useful to keep returning to this material analysis, ensuring that all camp participants were developing their critiques on the shared understanding that, for example, racism is not simply a moral position but that it serves as a useful tool for the benefit of capitalist ruling classes. LGBTI+ oppression was therefore analysed through the framework of the hetero-patriarchal family, using social reproduction theory. It was shown how LGBTI+ identities pose a challenge to the way capitalism has organised the labour force in the public and private spheres, exemplifying how matters of our supposed 'private life' and of identities are not divisible from the economic system we live under.

The camp recognised that people have had different experiences regarding how capitalism has intersected with their identities. A key part of the camp organisation was to privilege several 'closed' spaces, whereby people who had experiences of (1) being racialised, (2) being LGBTI+, (3) womanhood (from a trans-inclusive perspective) and (4) being transgender, were timetabled discussion periods in spaces reserved only for those who identified as belonging to that group. This gave them the opportunity to focus on strategic questions, for example how to organise as racialised minorities in our organisations, or organising the fightback against transphobia, ensuring that liberatory struggles could be developed and spearheaded by those who are most affected. The educational on anti-racism emphasised that the FI camps had had women's and LGBTI+ closed spaces since the 1980s and 90s, and this had not extended this to a racialised peoples until 2017. The camp acknowledged that it had not always recognised the significance of race in revolutionary struggle, and the delegations have never been a good representation of the racial diversity of the countries they supposedly represent.

Unfortunately there was no session timetabled for feedbacking any key ideas developed in the closed spaces, so I do not know what strategic insights came about within most of the closed spaces. In the women's space, however, participants were keen to hear about the histories of sexual violence within the SWP. Links were drawn to other far-left organisations who have also faced the same problems, and questions emerged surrounding the accountability of organisational structures that have consolidated unhealthy and patriarchal power systems within themselves despite having well-formed critiques when looking outwards.

The themes of accountability and internal democracy emerged in a variety of discussions over the week, somewhat in continuation of these questions surrounding the internal organisation of left groups and the concurrent intersection with identity-based oppression. It seemed that the youth wings of political groups/parties were keen to foreground accountability procedures as a way of fighting against oppressive systems that have marred their groups in the past. It was recognised as worthy of serious consideration and as necessary of consideration as external struggles, something that is not traditionally foregrounded in left wing strategic discussions. The importance of this is painfully clear though from experiences that each delegation brought to the camp. For example, the Swiss party Solidarité recently experienced an elected cohort of older men who broke away and stole significant finances from the Solidarité, following disputes about their refusal to maintain accountable to the party.

Workshops

Another key part of the camp programme were daily workshops and inter-delegation meetings. Workshops were led by youth participants from each delegation, who would introduce a prominent issue from their national context (strikes, social movements, policy changes etc) and then open this up to the rest of the group for discussion and comparison with correlate

issues from their own contexts. Topics included fights against Airbnb; union struggles; resisting Denmark's deeply racist 'ghetto-isation' laws; Frontex and fortress Europe; undocumented migrants and refugee struggles; LGBTI+ struggle; French resistance against pension reform; Switzerland's compulsory conscription, amongst many others. There were also practical workshops on how to build a tripod, feminist self-defence and building defensive frontlines against security services.

The Scottish delegation led the workshop on the transphobic movement in Britain. Other delegations reported back how useful they had found this workshop, as Britain's transphobic reactionary movements are further along than the many transphobic movements elsewhere, meaning that key strategic lessons could be developed out of hearing about our experience.

Members of the French delegation delivered a workshop on *Soulevement de la Terre* and the fight against mega-basins. It gave an overview of why the mega-basins were selected as a target, given that they appear to be less harmful than major fossil fuel infrastructure that is typically targeted by climate groups across Europe. It progressed onto discussing the movement's strategies and the subsequent police repression. It was clear that mega-basins are both ecologically damaging and part of an extractivist agribusiness economy, making them deeply unpopular with the 95% of local farmers who are outside of the agribusiness economy. This shared opposition allowed a strong alliance to form between the local farmers union and the climate movement, building a resistance movement that numbered 30,000 people. It led to conversations about how these lessons of mobilisation could be applied to our own climate movements and fed into a conversation about the fight in Denmark against the building of a new island near Copenhagen, an unjustifiable vanity project that is going to have major impacts on flooding in the

future and yet has no public opposition to currently tap into.

Swiss delegates led a workshop questioning the significance of political parties in developing a revolutionary horizon. The workshop was attended by people from a broad range of views and organisational experiences, from those acting in autonomous groups to members of revolutionary parties sitting within parliamentary left-wing blocks. The participants were keen to discuss the value of parliamentary politics within a bourgeois state, debating if the state's formal power can be viated for or if it inevitably leads to the co-optation of far-left politics once the parties have been absorbed into the political system. This theme re-emerges over and over again – both in and out the camp- and was reiterated by the splits recently experienced by several of the parties/organisations present at the camp.

Interdelegation meetings

Interdelegation meetings were an opportunity to meet with another national grouping to learn more about their context, and to draw comparisons or points of disagreement. Other delegations were keen to hear about the current state of the Scottish Independence movement, as well as about the UK climate movement, the parliamentary left and an assessment of the strength of a far-right movement. The rise of the far-right was a theme that emerged across many inter-delegation meetings, giving a visceral impression of the growing threat they are currently posing across Europe.

I came away with a greater sense of how comparable many of the struggles are and it felt good to be faced with the reminder of how our respective states are acting on similar interests in the protection of capital – meaning that providing space for discussions like these can be invaluable for comparing our experiences of fighting back and sharing strategies. In practice, the workshops actually provided a better platform for comparing tactics, as in the workshops the conversations

remained focused on a single struggle and therefore allowed more time for them to be fully explored. The inter-delegation meetings were only an hour long, meaning that they were typically more of a Q&A session where individuals from each delegation would ask about areas they were interested in. Few of us knew much about the political landscape of the other countries, so the inter-delegation meetings were a good opportunity to ask someone with similar politics for their perspective on their country's political situation and the role/strength of organised struggles. It felt important to learn these things, but meant that the inter-delegation meetings' supposed aim was not necessarily achieved – maybe if the camp was two weeks long rather than one!

Conclusions

In all, the camp was an impressive experience where many ideas were shared, critiqued and developed. Moreover, it was a valuable space where we had the opportunity to live beside one another, sharing our experiences of struggle, resistances, strategies, and to socialise and build friendships across borders. It gave us a taste of what it is like to live with a sense of consciousness – both political and interpersonal consciousness – as we participated in, maintained and led the camp's programme and logistics, and worked within the camp's internal democracy to make continuous improvements. The result was festive and liberating which stands in stark contrast to the way neoliberalism infects our normal environments. It really did allow us to live out a form of 'revolutionary tenderness', in the words of a previous attendee.

25 August 2023

Republished

from:

<https://www.rs21.org.uk/2023/08/25/report-from-the-fourth-internationals-revolutionary-youth-camp/>

Photo: The Scotland delegation of the Fourth International

Remembering September 11, 1973: The US-backed Pinochet Coup in Chile

This September marks the 50th anniversary of the US backed coup by Pinochet in Chile. It was one of the heaviest and bloodiest defeats ever suffered by the left and progressive movement in Latin America. There are a number of events being organised in Britain, [including in Scotland](#) (full details also below), this year to remember and discuss the Chilean process and coup and links are provided below. (The introductory note is compiled by Dave Kellaway of [Anti*Capitalist Resistance in England & Wales](#).)

*The following article is an edited extract of a chapter in a book, Recorded Fragments, by Daniel Bensaïd that [Resistance Books](#) has translated into English (published in 2020). The book is a transcript of a series of radio interviews Daniel did with the radio station Paris Plurielle in 2008. He discusses the politics behind a series of key dates in 20th Century history. Daniel Bensaïd was born in Toulouse in 1946. He became a leader of the 1968 student movement and subsequently of one of France's main far left organizations (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire) and of the [Fourth International](#). He is the author of **Marx for our Times**, Verso: 2010, **Strategies of Resistance**, Resistance Books: 2014 and **An Impatient Life**, Verso: 2015. He died in Paris in 2010.*

On 11 September 1973, the Chilean military put a bloody end to the three year reformist experience of the Salvador Allende governments. Augusto Pinochet leader of the armed forces initiated a new cycle of bloody repression and brutal economic liberalism that had started in Bolivia with the 1971 Banzer coup. He was soon followed by other dictatorships in South America such as the one led by General Videla in Argentina in 1976.

The United States, which intervenes throughout South America, has no intention of allowing the people in its backyard to raise their heads against its interests.

Perhaps we should begin by recalling that the 11 September coup, in 1973, and not that of 2001 Twin Towers terrorist attack, was first and foremost an emotional shock. We were transfixed by the news that arrived on the radio from the headquarters of the Presidential Palace, La Moneda, and then by the announcements that gradually came in about the success of the coup d'état. At first we hoped it would not succeed, since another coup d'état had failed in June three months before, but then we got the news of Allende's death.

How can such an emotional shock be explained, this had not been our reaction during the bigger bloodbath in 1965 when the Indonesian Communist Party was crushed or more recently with the repression of the Sudanese Communist Party? I believe it is because there was a very strong identification in Europe and Latin America with what was happening in Chile. There was a feeling that this was indeed a new scenario and a possibility, practically a laboratory experiment, which was valid for both Europe and Latin America, in different ways.

So, why was it so important for Europe?

Because we had the impression, partly false I would say today, that we finally had a country that was a reflection of our own

reality. Unlike other Latin American countries, there was a strong communist party, there was a socialist party represented or led by Salvador Allende, there was an extreme left of the same generation as ours. Small groups existed like the MAPU (Unitary Popular Action Movement, a Christian current) and MIR, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left, born in 1964-65 under the impulse of the Cuban Revolution. There was an identification with the latter organization, with its militants, with its leaders who were practically of our generation, who had a fairly comparable background. The MIR was formed from two sources: on the one hand inspired by Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution; on the other hand there was a Trotskyist influence, it must be said, through a great historian of Latin America, Luis Vitale. He was one of the founding fathers of the MIR, even if he was removed from it, or left shortly afterwards. All this in a country where, in the end, Stalinism had never been dominant, including on the left, nor did it have the role that the communist party had in Argentina, for example.

There was a specific factor in Chile, which is one of the difficulties in understanding the situation. The Chilean Socialist Party, even though it called itself socialist, had little to do with European social democracy. It was a party that had been built in the 1930s as a reaction, in opposition to the Stalinisation of the Communist International. So it was a party more to the left of the CP than to the right, so there was a strong sense given to the idea that Chile could give the example of a scenario where the left came to power through elections. This would then be the beginning of a social process of radicalization leading to, or, let's say, transitioning towards a radical social revolution at a time when, it should also be remembered, the prestige of the Cuban Revolution in Latin America was, if not intact, then at least still very important.

I believe there are still lessons for us about what happened

in Chile.

Today, I would be more cautious about this reflection of European realities. I think that, seen from a distance, there was a tendency to underestimate the social relations and the reserves of reaction and conservatism that existed in Chilean society. We saw this a lot in the army because, as was said and repeated at the time, the army had been trained by German instructors on the Prussian army model, which was already not very encouraging. But what's more, as I've seen since then, it's a country where the Catholic tradition, the conservative Catholic current, is important.

And besides, this was just a starting point. Allende was elected in September-October 1970, in a presidential election, but only with a relative majority of about 37%. For his nomination to be ratified by the Assembly conditions were set. These conditions included two key aspects: no interference with the army and respect for private property. These were the two limits set from the outset by the dominant classes, by the institutions , for accepting Allende's investiture.

Nevertheless, it is true that the electoral victory raised people's hopes and sparked a strengthening of the social movements, which culminated in a major electoral victory in the municipal elections of January 1971. I believe that Popular Unity, the left-wing coalition on which Allende was relying at that time, had on this occasion (and only then) an absolute majority in an election.

This obviously gave greater legitimacy to developing the process. So we had an electoral victory, a radicalization, but also a polarization that was initially internal to Chile, which gradually translated into a mobilization of the right, including action on the streets. The landmark date was the lorry drivers' strike in October 1972. But it should not be thought that it was employee led: it was the employers who organised it. Chile's long geographical configuration meant

that road transport was strategic. So there was this truckers' strike, therefore, supported by what were called ***cacerolazos (people banging empty pans)***, i.e. protest movements, particularly by middle-class consumers in Santiago. Santiago makes up more than half of the country in terms of population. It constituted a first attempt at destabilization in the autumn of 1972.

At that point, there was finally a debate on the way forward for the Chilean process, which opened up two possibilities in response to the destabilization of the right. The latter was also strongly supported by the United States. We know today with the disclosures of the Condor plan how much and for how long the United States had been involved in the preparation of the coup d'état, through the multinationals but also through American military advisers. So in early 1973, after the warning of the lorry drivers' strike, there were several options. Either a radicalization of the process, with increased incursions into the private property sector, with radical redistribution measures, wage increases, and so on. All of which were debated. Or on the contrary, and this was the thesis that prevailed, put forward by Vukovik, Minister of Economy and Finance, a member of the Communist Party. The government had to reassure the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes by definitively delimiting the area of public property or social property, and by giving additional guarantees to the military.

The second episode of destabilization was much more dramatic, no longer a corporate strike like that of the lorry drivers, but in June 1973 we saw a first attempt, a dry run for a coup d'état, the so-called ***tancazo***, in which the army, in fact a tank regiment, took to the streets but was neutralized.

I believe that this was the crucial moment. For example, it was the moment when the MIR, which was a small organisation of a few thousand very dynamic militants – we must not overestimate its size, but for Chile it was significant –

proposed joining the government, but under certain conditions. After the failure of the first coup d'état, the question arose of forming a government whose centre of gravity would shift to the left, which would take measures to punish or disarm the conspiring military. But what was done was exactly the opposite.

That is to say, between the period of June 1973 and the actual coup d'état of September 11, 1973, there was repression against the movement of soldiers in the barracks, searches to disarm the militants who had accumulated arms in anticipation of resistance to a coup d'état, and then, above all, additional pledges given to the army with the appointment of generals to ministerial posts, including Augusto Pinochet, the future dictator.

So there was a momentum shift, and Miguel Enriquez, the secretary general of the MIR who was assassinated in October 1974, a year later, wrote a text, in this intermediate period between the dry run and the coup d'état, which was called **"When were we the strongest? »**. I think he was extremely lucid: until August 1973 there were demonstrations by 700,000 demonstrators in Santiago, supporting Allende and responding to the coup d'état. That was indeed the moment when a counteroffensive by the popular movement was possible . On the contrary, the response was a shift to the right of the government alliances and additional pledges given to the military and ruling classes, which in reality meant in the end encouraging the coup d'état.

That is how we were surprised. You referred to the reformism of Salvador Allende but, in the end, compared to our reformists, he was still a giant of the class struggle. If we look at the archive documents today, he still has to be respected.

In the movement of solidarity with Chile, which was very important in the years that followed, 1973, 1974 and 1975, I

would say that we were, somewhat sectarian about Allende, who was made into someone responsible for the disaster. That does not change the political problem. It implies respect for the individual, but there is still a conundrum: during the first hours of the coup d'état, he still had national radio, it was still possible to call for a general strike, whereas a call was made in the end for static resistance in the workplaces, and so on. Perhaps it was not possible. Even an organisation like the MIR, which was supposed to be prepared militarily, was caught off guard by the coup. We see this today in Carmen Castillo's book, *An October Day in Santiago* or in his film, *Santa Fe Street*, 2007. They were caught off guard, perhaps in my opinion because they did not imagine such a brutal and massive coup d'état. They imagined the possibility of a coup d'état, but one that would be, in a way, half-baked that would usher in a new period of virtual civil war, with hotbeds of armed resistance in the countryside. Hence the importance they had given – and this is related to the other aspect of the question – to working among the peasants of the Mapuche minority, particularly in the south of the country.

But the coup d'état was a real sledgehammer blow. They hadn't really prepared, or even probably envisaged, a scenario of bringing together:

- a) the organs of popular power that did exist,
- b) the so-called "industrial belt committees (cordones)" that were more or less developed forms of self-organization, mainly in the suburbs of Santiago ;
- c) the "communal commandos" in the countryside ;
- d) work in the army, and finally
- e) in Valparaíso even an embryo of a popular assembly, a kind of local soviet.

Whatever else can be said, all that existed and suggests what

could have been possible – but that would have required the will and the strategy. It was another way to respond to the coup d'état, whether in June or September, with a general strike, the disarmament of the army, something akin to an insurrection. It was always risky, but you have to weigh it up against the price of the coup d'état in terms first of all of human lives, of the disappeared, of the tortured. Above all, you have to consider the price in terms of peoples' living conditions, when we see what Chile is today, after more than thirty years of Pinochet's dictatorship. It has been a laboratory for liberal policies. It was an historic defeat. If you look at two neighbouring countries, Chile and Argentina, the social movement in Argentina has quickly recovered its fighting spirit after the years of dictatorship, despite the 30,000 people who disappeared. In Chile, the defeat is clearly of a different scope and duration.

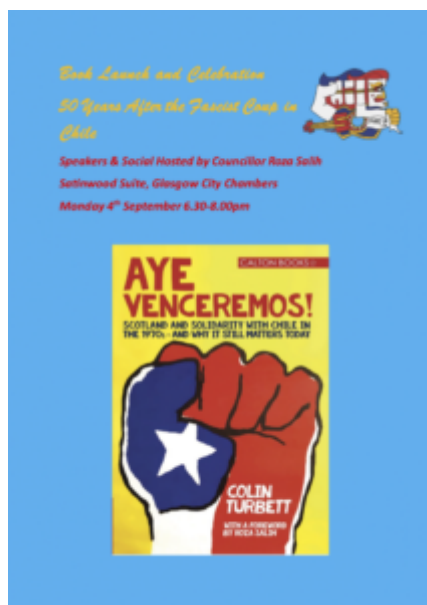
I believe that the coup d'état in Chile was the epilogue of the revolutionary ferment that followed the Cuban Revolution for 10-15 years in Latin America. And as you pointed out in the introduction, the dates clearly tell the story: three months before the coup d'état in Chile, I think it was June 1973, there was the coup d'état in Uruguay. In 1971 there was the coup d'état in Bolivia. While the dictatorship had fallen in Argentina, it returned in 1976. But let's say that symbolically, the killing of Allende, the disappearance of Enriquez and practically the entire leadership of the MIR, closed the cycle initiated by the Cuban Revolution, the OLAS (Latin American Solidarity Organization, meeting in Havana in 1967) conferences, and Che's expedition to Bolivia in 1966.

Republished from Anti*Capitalist Resistance, 29 August 2023:
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/remembering-september-11-1973-the-us-backed-pinochet-coup-in-chile/>

Forthcoming events in Scotland

Book Launch – “Aye Venceremos – Scotland and Solidarity with Chile in the 1970s – and why it still matters today.

Monday 4 September @ 18:30 [Satinwood Suite, Glasgow City Council, Central Chambers, George Square, Glasgow, G2 1DU](#)



The new book celebrates acts of Chile solidarity in Scotland in the 1970s, including the action by Rolls Royce workers in East Kilbride. It also describes the welcome given to refugees at the time. All this is set against events in Chile before and after the Coup, with eye-witness accounts from some who ended up as political exiles in Scotland. The event is being hosted by City of Glasgow Councillor Roza Salih – herself a Kurdish refugee from Iraq, and a well known campaigner since her school days, for refugee and human rights.

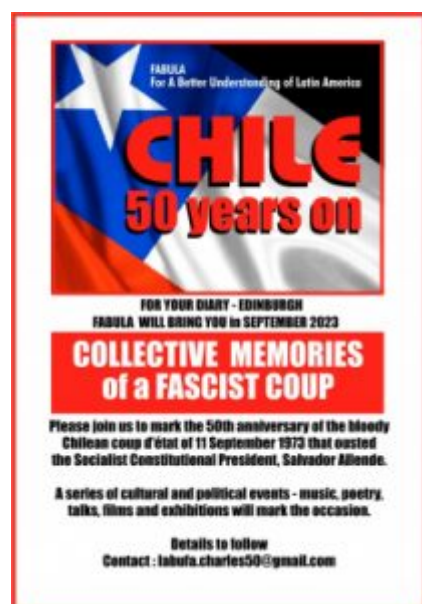
The event will include contributions from Chileans in Scotland, trade unionists and campaigners, as well as the book's author, Colin Turbett.

For a free ticket via Eventbrite see here >
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/aye-venceremos-book-launch-anniversary-celebration-glasgow-4th-sept-tickets-674133751197>

SCOTLAND – COLLECTIVE MEMORIES OF A FASCIST COUP

Monday 4 September – Thursday 21 September

A series of cultural and political events -music, poetry, talks, films and exhibitions to mark the 50th anniversary of the bloody coup d'état of 11 September 1973.



Programme still in development for September 2023 with participation of FABULA (For A Better Understanding of Latin America) Full details here:
<https://chile50years.uk/event/scotland-collective-memories-of-a-fascist-coup/>

For further information email labufa.charles50@gmail.com

**Public event hosted by the Scottish
Trades Union Congress (STUC)
Saturday 16 September @ 16:00**



[STUC, 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton,
GLASGOW, G40 1BP](#)

***All welcome! Speakers, music, food and
wine available***

***Please [register for the event here >>](#) so
that the organisers can best cater for
the food and wine!***

Rising Clyde: Climate Camp vs. Scotland's biggest polluter

This month's Rising Clyde programme was recorded at [Climate Camp Scotland](#) in Grangemouth.

The year's most important gathering of climate justice activists from different movements across the country, took on the giant INEOS oil refinery and petrochemical plant which spews out close to 3 million tons of CO2 equivalent every year.

We talked to Kenny Alexander, a former oil worker who is from Grangemouth, Jessica Gaitan Johannesson, an organiser with Climate Camp, and Duncan Harbison from the Stop Rosebank campaign. about the aims of the camp and the challenges ahead for the climate justice movement in Scotland.

[\(581\) Rising Clyde: Climate Camp vs. Scotland's biggest polluter – YouTube](#)

Rising Clyde is the Scottish Climate Show, presented by Iain Bruce, and broadcast on the [Independence Live](#) Channel. Previous editions can be found in the embedded video below by clicking in the three lines in the top right hand corner and choosing from the video list.

A report on Climate Camp Scotland by RS21 members is here:

Building International Solidarity for Ukraine: Three Perspectives

The Russian left wing website [Posle \(После – ‘After’\)](#) recently published three perspectives on Building International Solidarity for Ukraine, from the UK state, from Poland and from the USA, that [ecosocialist.scot](#) is republishing below. You can find about Scottish solidarity with Ukraine from the website of the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland](#).

With the Russian invasion of Ukraine the Western left split into two camps. Yet, attempts to build a broad solidarity movement with Ukraine have been underway since February 24. International activists talk about their work:

Simon Pirani [UK], honorary professor, University of Durham

His most recent book on Russia is [Communist Dissidents in Early Soviet Russia \(2023\)](#)

I have always believed that support for people resisting imperialist violence is central to socialism. It was the US war in Vietnam that first moved me to political action, when I was a teenager. Supporting Ukrainian resistance to Russian imperialism is consistent with supporting Vietnamese

resistance then, and supporting Palestinian resistance to Israeli apartheid. For me, the difference is that Ukraine is closer, in the sense that I have been travelling there, and to Russia, for the last thirty years. (I worked in both countries as a journalist and doing academic research.)

After the invasion in February last year, the most effective responses from the labour movement and social movements in which I am involved were the direct ones. Some young people from the UK and other European countries travelled to Ukraine to join volunteer units; a much larger number of people organised material aid for front-line areas. Personally I supported those efforts, and played a small part in trying to highlight the situation in the Russian-occupied areas.

In the labour movement, perhaps the clearest voice in support of Ukrainian resistance was that of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). We have no deep mines left in the UK, but the union – which historically was one of the strongest, until its defeat in the big strike over pit closures in 1984-85 – continues to support former miners and their communities. It has a historical connection to Ukraine: [links](#) were established in 1990 between the miners union in Durham, in north east England, with the Independent Miners Union of Ukraine, in the first place in Pavlograd, in the western Donbass.

Straight after the invasion, the NUM and other unions sent more than £20,000, and supported trade unionists who [drove vehicles](#) full of medical equipment and other supplies to Ukraine, and left them with miners' union activists there. There have been at least seven deliveries of that kind. Along with the NUM and the train drivers union ASLEF, a strong source of support has been a cross-party group, Senedd Cymru [Welsh parliament] Together for Ukraine. The chief legal officer of Wales, Mick Antoniw, is a labour movement activist of Ukrainian family background, and has travelled several times to deliver vehicles, with fellow parliamentarians and trade union representatives.

Other unions have participated in, or at least declared support for, such solidarity actions, including those representing civil servants, teachers, university staff and health workers: efforts to win them over have been coordinated by the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), which works with the Confederation of Independent Unions of Ukraine (KVPU).

The USC last month also organised a conference, [Another Ukraine is Possible](#), at which labour, feminist and anti-capitalist perspectives on the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine were advanced, in contrast to the neoliberal slant of the government-level talks also held in London. Another initiative, that I have myself been involved in, has been to raise the profile of [Solidarity Zone](#), the group supporting Russians who take [direct action against the war](#), for example by translating and circulating material.

In terms of actual material aid delivered, all these initiatives by labour movement and anti-capitalist movements are smaller than the mountains of support given to Ukrainian people by civil society in a wider sense. Community groups, churches, voluntary associations, charities, and e.g. Ukrainians living in the UK and their friends have not only raised very large sums of money but also taken vehicles and other aid to Ukraine. On the other hand, the UK's support for Ukrainian refugees, or for Russians fleeing war and repression, has been very limited. While the government, for cynical political reasons, made it easier for Ukrainians to get to the UK than it is for most refugees from other wars, it is still difficult. The number of Ukrainian refugees here is negligible compared to Poland, Germany or other countries in continental Europe.

In my view, in the UK there are two problems that we face, in building a broad Ukraine solidarity campaign. The first is that, for reasons we all understand about inter-imperialist rivalries, the UK government has steadfastly supported Ukraine militarily, e.g. with weapons supplies. This has given the

most right-wing UK government in decades the opportunity to pose as lovers of freedom. And this has its effect on society: the media reports Ukraine sympathetically; president Zelensky appears smiling for the cameras with our ministers, who to people here represent austerity and racism. The hypocrisy of the British ruling class, who for so long prevailed over an empire that dripped with blood (and who have spent the last thirty years gearing its financial system to the benefit of Russian kleptocrats), is obvious – especially to migrant communities whose suffering has been shaped by British and other western imperialism.

There is a danger that this hypocrisy can cause resentment and division. People in the UK who face constant pressure from the state for supporting Palestinian rights, or who deal daily with the consequences of the state's racist migration policies, can not fail to be struck by the state's "favouritism" towards Ukrainians, or, for another example, political refugees from Hong Kong. Socialists and labour movement activists who support Ukrainian resistance have answered this in the best way possible – by seeking to build alliances between Ukraine's struggle and others resisting other imperialism. This is a work in progress.

The other issue is that, as in other western countries, there are post-Stalinist tendencies that in practice oppose solidarity with Ukraine. A tiny handful of pro-Putin extremists issue soundbites à la Solovyev or Rogozin. But more numerous groups describe themselves as "anti imperialists", seeing the Kremlin as the lesser evil and Ukraine as a tool of the western powers, or "pacifists" who issue disingenuous calls for peace talks, without e.g. withdrawal of Russian troops, and repeat Kremlin talking points about NATO being to blame for the war. So in the Labour party, the left minority is divided: John McDonnell (effectively deputy Labour leader when Jeremy Corbyn was leader), has [supported](#) "the provision of weapons to Ukrainians to defend themselves"; Corbyn himself

is [against](#) that.

Just as the sore of the illegitimate, Russian-supported “republics” festered in the body of Ukrainian society, so reactionary forms of ideology that supported them gnawed away at the labour movement across Europe

Looking back, I think that, collectively, those in the labour movement with connections to Russia and Ukraine did far too little after 2014 to explain our case. This so-called “anti-imperialism” was already vocal, with regard both to [Ukraine](#) and [Syria](#). Like others, I made individual efforts to oppose it (see e.g. here, [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) but these efforts were inadequate. Just as the sore of the illegitimate, Russian-supported “republics” festered in the body of Ukrainian society, so reactionary forms of ideology that supported them gnawed away at the labour movement across Europe.

Hopefully the very widespread, and very human, feeling among ordinary people in the UK, that Ukrainians deserve solidarity against a brutal, violent onslaught, will serve as the background for a new clarification of what socialist anti-imperialism actually means

One good thing that has happened in the last 18 months is that these issues have come out into the open and been discussed more widely. Hopefully the very widespread, and very human, feeling among ordinary people in the UK, that Ukrainians deserve solidarity against a brutal, violent onslaught, will serve as the background for a new clarification of what socialist anti-imperialism actually means.

Zofia Malisz [Poland],

Razem International Office

[Razem](#) is [a left party in Poland](#) with six members of parliament and structures at home and abroad. We support the sovereignty of Ukraine as well as the efforts of the Belarusian and Russian people to democratise their countries since our party was formed in 2015 (see "[Polityka wschodnia](#)"). After the Russian invasion we launched and co-organised several campaigns, often in cooperation with [Sotsialnyi Rukh](#), to gain support on the European and global left for sending weapons that the Ukrainian people needed to defend themselves.

We co-founded the [European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine](#) (ENSU), which is so active today. There we worked within the feminist "right to resist" group. Our co-leader Magdalena Biejat and other female left coalition MPs filed a motion in the Sejm to expedite access to abortion for Ukrainian refugees who had been raped. Unfortunately the right-wing parliamentary majority rejected it. Other initiatives of ENSU also include a visit to Lviv in 2022 with various left parliamentarians. Right after the invasion we gathered members of Nordic and Eastern European left parties in Warsaw and [issued a statement](#) in support of Ukraine, condemning the invasion and appealing for sanctions against Russia. Our [cooperation on a range of issues](#) including [cancelling Ukrainian external debt](#) has made a difference, in the form of several legislative efforts in Europe and the US in favour of supporting the cancellation. This was a result of broad social media campaigns, meetings, press conferences and [articles](#) on the topic that we took direct part in, initiated or co-ordinated.

We took part in countless meetings, live and remote in 2022, with the global left, to challenge Russian propaganda regarding the invasion and Ukrainian statehood. We confronted falsehoods embedded on the left, particularly within the Western "peace" movement. We did our best to explain the

complexities of our regional situation that many were disappointingly ignorant about or chose to ignore – despite decades-long relationships. As a consequence of such unwillingness to engage with the challenges facing the Eastern European left and to support Ukrainian sovereignty, we decided [to leave Progressive International and Diem25](#) shortly after the invasion.

We do feel the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian opposition left movements have unique contributions to make to the global left. Our traditions and the challenges we face, be it geopolitical or stemming from the transformation, are different, so are our solutions and ways of communication. Much can be learned from us. One of the hardest challenges is the neoliberal ideologisation in our societies. Due to that we see the great risk that rebuilding Ukraine entails – we believe, together with our partners in Ukraine, that it should be rebuilt for the benefit of the people, not foreign corporations or domestic oligarchs, with great focus on social infrastructure and support for workers, women as well as on nurturing bottom up communal organising that grew strong during the war. Our politicians have been communicating this constantly: there can be no sell-out of Ukraine to corporations in exchange for weapons. These days we put most of our efforts for Ukraine into campaigning for socially oriented rebuilding.

We do feel the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian opposition left movements have unique contributions to make to the global left

Razem also [wants to offer](#) to millions of Ukrainian refugees in Poland [our vision](#) of a safe, environmentally sustainable welfare state for everyone. A vision that we believe we can realise together both in Poland and in Ukraine. We want to show that Ukraine, in order to rebuild itself, needs its workers to return to stable working conditions with expanded

labour rights. It needs its veterans to heal and to receive support from a well funded public services sector. Its children need to be able to grow up with the prospect of a planet that is not only livable, but thriving. We need Ukrainian victory for that, as well as a great deal of left cooperation and campaigning together for social Ukraine. We continue paving the way for that with our partners, both within the Central-Eastern European Green-Left Alliance organisation including Ukrainian partners that we have been building (that is launching at the moment). We also work with partners on the Western left who are willing to engage and to develop concrete proposals of rebuilding plans that challenge the liberal plans (e.g. many activists in the UK and some Labour politicians).

There is broad consensus in Poland, as you know, regarding condemning the invasion as well as political and military help for Ukraine. There are no disagreements on that within the left in Poland. We are a political force though that keeps a watchful eye on the government's attitude and possible emerging far right threats to Ukrainian refugees. We also criticize any attempts to sacrifice human rights, the right to due process etc., regarding whatever issue concerning Russian citizens on Polish soil.

[John Reimann](#) and Cheryl Zuur [USA],

co-chairs Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign

Supporting Ukraine is the concrete expression of the number one responsibility for any socialist. That responsibility is international working class solidarity. But that is not just some moral responsibility; it is directly connected to the class struggle at home.

We see Putin's invasion of Ukraine as a decisive step in the

general world process of the rise of extreme right wing nationalism, bigotry and counterrevolution. The more Putin succeeds, the more that process advances. We saw that with the Assad/Putin led counterrevolution in Syria which played a big role in the setback of the whole Arab Spring. And the Arab Spring did, in fact, inspire workers and young people around the world. The result of its defeat (for now) has been, among other things, the increase of religious reaction – Islamic fundamentalism in this case.

Here in the United States, Trump used Islamic fundamentalism and Islamophobia as a major tool to get elected in 2016. Once in office, his first major initiative was to, in effect, bar Muslim people from entering the United States. This is an example of how the Putin-led counterrevolution had an effect on politics here in the United States.

Trump supports Putin not only because he [served as a money launderer](#) for the Russian oligarchy for many years. His support is also because of political affinity. That is also why extreme right wing politicians, even outright racists and fascists like [America First](#) and individuals like [Matt Heimbach](#), support Putin. If Putin's imperialist invasion succeeds even in part, it will strengthen these forces and further drive forward global reactionary movements.

Finally, if we as socialists and as working class activists ignore this massive attack on the Ukrainian people, what are we saying to US workers? We would be telling workers "think only of yourselves in the most immediate sense. Think only of your own paycheck. Don't think about the wider issues that directly affect our lives." It would be no different from saying that oppression of women, or people of color or LGBTQ people is not a matter for all workers to oppose. It would be impossible to help strengthen the working class with that attitude, never mind to build a truly working class socialist movement.

As a result of this, a small group of us founded the Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign shortly after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine started. (In reality, Putin's military invasion of Ukraine started in 2014!). We base ourselves on [several points of unity](#), including the demand that in order to fight the invaders Ukraine should receive all the weapons it needs and with no strings attached. That means we criticize Biden not because he is sending arms to Ukraine but, on the contrary, because he is too hesitant and putting too many handcuffs on Ukraine, on how it may use these arms. That is an unusual position for socialists to take, but it is not unprecedented. During the Spanish Civil War, US socialists called on the US to send arms to the Spanish republicans who were fighting fascism, and during WWII no socialist in the U.S. would have opposed the US's sending arms to the Soviet Union to fight the Nazis.

The Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign has a lively presence on social media, including a [Facebook group](#) with over 630 members and almost 2,000 followers on [Twitter](#). Both of these present news and analyses related to the war in Ukraine. We have a [linktree](#) with quite a few public resources. We also have regular public Zoom forums on topics such as the environmental aspects of the war in Ukraine, the Iranian revolution, whether Russia is fascist (with Ilya Budraitskis), the present political situation in Ukraine, and coming up a [presentation on the Holodomor](#). Recordings of those forums are available on our [youtube channel](#).

One of the most important discussions we had was a two part series on "fascist ideas on the left". That was a discussion on how and why the ideas of the far right, including even fascist ideas, have come to permeate the socialist movement. This is vitally important because – we have to admit it – the majority of the socialist movement and the "left" in general supports or at least apologizes and makes excuses for Putin's invasion of Ukraine. We explicitly decided to include

“Socialist” in our name because we believe it is vital to reclaim socialism from this betrayal.

This betrayal is not accidental. It relates to the generally low political level of the US working class, a working class that has never had its own political party and that has been under attack, both ideologically and practically, for many decades. This ideological attack has been carried out not only by the capitalist class, but also from our very own leaders – every wing of the union leadership – who have also collaborated in helping the capitalists drive down the living conditions of US workers.

So, while the majority of US workers support Ukraine, they do so passively. “It’s not for me (us) to play an active, independent role in politics,” is the attitude.

In addition to our regular forums, the Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign has mobilized in the streets where and when we can. We have participated in wider street mobilizations in support of Ukraine, for example a unity march organized by Iranian Americans in San Francisco. We have also mobilized to counter the pro-Putin propaganda of the “left”, such as Code Pink and various “socialists.” We also have done some fundraising for Ukraine, including selling t-shirts we designed, and a member of ours actually carried medical supplies to Ukraine last year. We are currently encouraging unions to pass [a resolution](#) we produced calling for full support – including arms – for Ukraine and we also have [a petition](#) calling for the IAEA to take over operation of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (you can sign it [here](#)).

We are still a very small group of activists and, can hardly have a major effect on objective events. What is needed is a renewed uprising of the working class in the United States and globally. We hope to help prepare the way by trying to clarify some of the most vital political issues of the day, many of which revolve around the fascistic imperialist invasion of

Ukraine. That and building support for Ukraine to the maximum degree we can.

It is an honor and a privilege to work with and be associated with those brave Ukrainian and Russian comrades (as well as others) who are fighting against the Putin-led counterrevolution. We think that, together with a renewed worker uprising, this sort of collaboration in both the ideological and the practical realms will be the basis for the rebirth of a new, healthy, working class oriented socialist movement.

1 August 2023

First published by Posle editorial collective:
<https://posle.media/language/en/building-international-solidarity-for-ukraine-three-perspectives/>



Yes to Life, Yes to Yasuní!

On 20 August, at the same time they elect a new president and a new National Assembly, Ecuadoreans will be voting in one of the most important environmental referendums of modern times. They are being asked if the government should leave the oil beneath the [Yasuní national park](#) in the ground,

indefinitely.

As Iain Bruce reports, this was one of the key themes of a recent visit by Leonidas Iza, Ecuador's main Indigenous leader, to Europe to launch the English edition of his book, [*Uprising: the October Rebellion in Ecuador*](#).

Winning support

In a week of meetings and events in Madrid, Brussels, Paris, London, Oxford, Glasgow and Grangemouth, Leonidas Iza and his co-authors, Andres Tapia and Andres Madrid, won support from MEPs, British MPs, trade unionists, peasants, climate justice activists, academics, migrants and many others, for a Yes vote in Ecuador's August referendum.

Leonidas Iza and fellow authors meet with Scottish trade unionists including STUC Deputy General Secretary Dave Moxham and Unison Scotland Depute Convenor Stephen Smellie in Glasgow during the recent tour to promote "Uprising: the October Rebellion in Ecuador".



Iza was a central figure in the Indigenous-led uprising of October 2019, triggered by the removal of fuel subsidies and therefore a sharp rise in the cost of living. He was then elected President of [*CONAIE, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador*](#), the most powerful movement of its kind in Latin America. In that role, he led the follow-up national stoppage, or *paro*, of June last year. That closed down the country for even longer, 17 days in all, and expanded

the list of demands. Alongside opposition to a broader range of neo-liberal policies, mandated by the International Monetary Fund, the Indigenous movement and its allies put at the centre of their struggle the need to halt oil drilling and mining on protected, sensitive and Indigenous land. On both occasions, they forced the government to negotiate and won significant concessions, but not enough.

This August's referendum, which includes the question on stopping oil drilling in three oil fields known as Block 43, in the Yasuni, and another on limiting mining near the capital, Quito, is in effect a continuation of the 2019 and 2022 struggles. It brings together environmental campaigners with the Indigenous communities and other social movements that staged those insurrections, in a National Anti-mining Front. This combination is itself a significant, if tentative, achievement. The relationship of the Indigenous leaders and mass movement that led the insurrections, with the NGO left that has tended to dominate the environmental movement, has sometimes been difficult in recent years.

Biodiversity hotspot

As Iza and his colleagues repeated many times on their European tour, the campaign for Yasuní is not just about saving one of the most biodiverse spots on the planet. Of course, it is that too. The Yasuni National Park comprises 9,823 sq. kms of rainforest (almost half the size of Wales) in the Ecuadorean Amazon, just 200 kms from Quito and bordering the eastern range of the Andes. Perhaps because it was one of the few places that never froze over during the last ice age, it is one of the most biodiverse areas in the world, possibly *the* most biodiverse. Botanists have recorded 685 species of tree in one hectare of the Yasuni. That is more than in all of the United States and Canada. The same hectare also contains about 100,000 species of insects, again similar to the total number for North America. The Yasuni National Park is also

home to Ecuador's two Indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation, the Tagaeri and the Taromenane. The pressure from oil companies operating on the edges of their territory has already resulted in three massacres, putting their survival in jeopardy.

Climate Justice activists at Climate Camp Scotland in Grangemouth send a message of solidarity "Yes to Life, Yes to Yasuni" July 2023

<https://www.ecosocialist.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Yes-to-Yasuni-at-Climate-Camp-Scotland.mp4>

A novel initiative for mitigation

At the same time, the campaign for a Yes in the referendum has a broader international significance, because it revives one of the world's most original proposals for mitigating climate change. The Yasuni ITT Initiative was launched by the progressive government of Rafael Correa in 2007, during its early, more radical phase. It was based on proposals coming from Indigenous communities in Ecuadorean Amazonia and some environmental NGOs. It proposed leaving in the ground the 20 percent of Ecuador's oil reserves that had been identified in the Ishpingo, Tambococha and Tiputini oil fields, known as ITT or Block 43, most of which lay beneath the Yasuni National Park. In return, the rich countries would pay Ecuador for *not* exploiting those reserves. US\$3.6 billion over 13 years was what the Correa government was asking for, in public and private sector contributions, when it took the Yasuni ITT initiative to the UN General Assembly in 2007, and to COP15 in Copenhagen two years later, where it formed a central plank of the proposals put forward by the ALBA alliance led by Bolivia, Cuba and Venezuela. That amount was calculated as 50 percent of the money the country would make if it did exploit those reserves. This was emphatically not conceived as compensation

or as any kind of offset, nor was the money to be obtained through any sort of carbon market, as Alberto Acosta, Correa's first energy minister and an architect of the Initiative, repeatedly insisted. The idea was not to leave the oil in the ground beneath the Yasuni National Park in exchange for some northern polluters being allowed to continue their business as usual; on the contrary, the rich countries should pay as part of their responsibility to cut global emissions.

Towards a global just transition

As the ecosocialist theorist, Michael Lowy, suggests in his foreword to the English edition of Iza's *Uprising*, the Yasuni ITT Initiative could have been an unparalleled example to other countries – an inspiration for how the global south and the global north, both producers and consumers of fossil fuels, could have engaged together in a just transition away from the carbon economy, in a way that would be fair for communities across the planet.

In the end, President Rafael Correa abandoned the Yasuni Initiative. By 2013, the international pledges amounted to only US\$336 million, of which less than 4 percent had actually been delivered. At the same time, the right-leaning and often pro-oil developmentalists in his Citizen Revolution movement had gained ground, bolstering Correa's own sympathies with the extractive industries – and his impatience with both the Indigenous and environmental movements, which he liked to refer to as “infantile”. Alberto Acosta and others on the radical left in his government had either left or been marginalised. Blaming “the international community” for failing in its response (quite correctly of course), Correa declared the Yasuni Initiative dead, and ordered the state oil company, Petroecuador, to press ahead with drilling. In 2016, oil began to flow from the ITT fields, but in lesser quantities than expected, given the slump in world prices. Nonetheless, Correa's retreat from the Initiative sealed the

already deep breach between his government and the bulk of the Indigenous and environmental movements.

The latter had argued that the oil should be left in the ground, with or without the international financial contribution. Already by 2014, a campaign called *Yasunidos*, launched by the environmental NGO *Accion Ecolologica*, had collected enough signatures to trigger a referendum. But the electoral authorities refused to recognise hundreds of thousands of them, and for a number of years the Yasuni question all but disappeared from the political agenda.

The Yasuni returns

It was only in May this year that Ecuador's Constitutional Court ruled, somewhat unexpectedly, that the call for a referendum was valid. It set the vote to coincide with the snap presidential election on 20 August, called by Ecuador's right-wing president, Guillermo Lasso, to avoid his own impeachment. Since then, the Yasuni question has burst back into the centre of Ecuador's political life. In a context that has been changed fundamentally by the two Indigenous-led insurrections of 2019 and 2022, it has unleashed an unprecedented debate on what kind of social and economic development the Ecuadorean people want for their country. It is a debate that cuts through the middle of the electoral options on offer on the same day. It also reveals, once again, the profound contradictions that run through Latin America's diverse experiences with progressive governments, and their complicated relations with powerful social movements, like the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.

For the last decade or more, the left and progressive forces in Ecuador have been riven by a bitter, debilitating division. The supporters of former president Rafael Correa and his Citizen Revolution movement have been ranged against much of the Indigenous and women's movements (the country's two most

important social movements) and most of the trade unions (much weakened from their high point of the 1980s), as well many environmental NGOs and a number of small far-left groups and currents.

Yasuni, elections and beyond

This split is playing out once again in the presidential election on 20 August. But whether as tragedy or as farce, it may be for the last time. On one side, the favourite to become Ecuador's next president, possibly in the first round but more likely in a second round in October, is Luisa Gonzalez, the candidate of the Citizen Revolution movement. She has avoided taking a very explicit position on the Yasuni referendum, and her party has said its members will be free to vote as they choose. But like Correa himself, she has left little doubt about her opposition to leaving the oil in the ground. Both insist the country needs the money to build schools and hospitals. Most of the half a dozen candidates vying to represent a discredited right have maintained a similar ambiguity, and used the same arguments.

On the other side, Yaku Perez, who was the candidate of the Indigenous movement's party, Pachakutik, in the 2021 election and came third, is the only presidential candidate this time to support openly a Yes vote in the Yasuni referendum. He still has the support of the old, right-leaning leadership of Pachakutik and some environmental NGOs, as well as parts of the anti-Correa left and centre-left. But this bloc has lost much of its credibility. In particular, the Pachakutik leaders who engineered his candidacy last time and who led the large group of Pachakutik members in the now-dissolved National Assembly, revealed an extraordinary capacity for opportunism. Putting their virulent anti-Correa stance above loyalty to any particular ideology or policy, they struck a series of deals with Guillermo Lasso's right-wing government, in exchange for favours and positions. As a result, last April's national

conference of Pachakutik voted them out and elected a new leadership aligned with the positions and priorities of CONAIE itself. They appealed against their removal, and since the National Electoral Council had still not ruled on the dispute, Pachakutik was not allowed to give formal endorsement to any candidates at a national level in this election.

7 August 2023



Save The 13th Note! Fundraising Gig, Glasgow, Sun 6 August 7pm-late

A gig ran by and in support of the workers of The 13th Note

Sunday, 6 August 2023

7:00pm - 11:00pm

Classic Grand

[18 Jamaica St, Glasgow, G1 4QD](#) (Public Transport Planner:
<https://www.spt.co.uk/journey-planner/>)

Advance Tickets here: [Save The 13th Note! – Buy tickets \(citizenticket.com\)](#) [also available on the door]

Information

We the workers of the 13th Note, since hearing of owner Jacqueline Fennesy's decision to close the venue in direct response to worker led trade union organisation and strike action, have decided that our jobs, livelihoods and the great cultural legacy of The 13th Note is far too important to give up on.

This gig is part of our larger crowdfunding campaign to support the workers left destitute by the closure of The 13th Note. Classic Grand has kindly agreed to waive hire fee so all money made on ticket sales will go directly to supporting the workers and their goal of rescuing The 13th Note from neglectful, money-hungry owners who are blindly ignorant of the vast importance of this most cherished cultural institution.

Performing on the night will be:

- [Apostille](#)
- [Calum Baird](#)
- [SIANNEN](#)
- [Vos Rough](#)
- 1 more tbc

Please come down, enjoy the bands, support our cause and share this event!

SAVE THE 13TH NOTE!

CLASSIC GRAND

06/08

DOORS 7PM

8ADV/10OTD

VOS ROUGH

SIANNEN

CALUM BAIRD

+1 TBC

**A NIGHT OF MUSIC AND SPEAKERS TO ENTERTAIN AND EDUCATE
ALL PROCEEDS GOING TOWARDS THE FUND TO SAVE THE 13TH NOTE**

Worth Fighting For – Bringing the Rojava Revolution Home, Book Launch Glasgow Govan Sun 6 August

Authors Jenni and Natalia are launching their book describing their three years supporting the Kurdish Freedom Movement in Rojava.

The event in Glasgow on **Sunday 6 August 4pm-6pm** is to share the book and the ideas in it, to discuss how we can relate the revolution in Kurdistan to our own lives and to come together and celebrate struggle. They will introduce the book and come together to discuss the ideas. There will also be snacks and fiddle music. Bring friends, comrades, colleagues, kids and grans!

The event will be at [Galgael, 15 Fairley Street in Govan, Glasgow G51 2SN](#) (public transport journey planner here: [Journey Planner | SPT | Strathclyde Partnership for Transport](#))

The book is £7, distributed by Active Distribution and can be ordered here: <https://www.activedistributionshop.org/shop/books/5436-worth-fighting-for.html>

Or from bookshops – Title: Worth Fighting For: Bringing the Rojava Revolution (Paperback – published 1 Jun. 2023) by Jenni Keasden (Author), Natalia Szarek (Author), Matt Bonner (Cover Art) ISBN-10 : 1914567218 ISBN-13 : 978-1914567216

“We wanted to bring (the Rojava) revolution home through stories of both the epic and the mundane, through day to day moments in all of their messiness and poetry. In a world where earnestness is looked down on, this book is where we give ourselves permission to fall in love with a revolution. This book is a product of shared moments with hundreds of comrades, of tales hundreds of years old, of the novels we read as children, of militant struggles old and new, and of an ongoing conversation that’s happening right now. We didn’t start it and we certainly aren’t trying to finish it. But the more people contribute the richer we can build the future. This is what we are committed to be a part of.”

Russia’s war on Ukraine and the European lefts – Murray Smith writes

Murray Smith writes on the Russia’s war on Ukraine and the response of the left.

Editorial note by ecosocialist.scot: Murray Smith is a well known figure on the left in Scotland. He studied History, Politics and Soviet Studies at the University of Glasgow, was a founder of the [Scottish Socialist Party \(SSP\)](#), SSP International Secretary for a period in its early days, and editor of the journal Frontline, a prominent marxist journal in Scotland during the early 2000’s. Currently he lives in Luxembourg where he is is a leading member of the left wing party [Déi Lénk \(The Left\)](#), and its representative on leading bodies of the [European Left Party](#). In this lengthy article Murray Smith explains the background to the internationalist

and marxist position on the war in Ukraine and describes the retrograde position of 'campism' – those on the left who see the Ukraine war as nothing more than a proxy war between the USA and Russia in which the interests of the 40+million Ukraine working class are regarded as irrelevant. He also explodes the myths that the Russian aggression against Ukraine was justified by the allegations of a 'right wing coup d'etat' in 2014 and that US foreign policy is entirely aimed at military aggression against the Russian state. At its most recent conference in March 2023, the current day SSP lapsed into the position of 'campism', with many of the arguments used by leading figures, such as the present International Secretary Bill Bonnar, being drawn entirely from the arguments that Murray Smith demolishes below. The (unpublished) position passed by the SSP in March supports the campaign of those who now seek to disarm the Ukraine working class, a position that has been regrettably [advanced in the UCU](#) and other trade unions in Britain, and stands in counter-position to that [passed overwhelmingly by the annual congress of the Scottish TUC](#) , backed by the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), which supported Ukraine's right of self-defence against the Russian invasion and right to get weapons from wherever it wishes. All the evidence is that the vast majority of working class people in Scotland support Ukraine's right to self-determination and right to resist Russia's invasion militarily. Bill Bonnar has been declared as the SSP candidate in the forthcoming Rutherglen and Hamilton West Westminster by-election and this will provide an opportunity for the SSP position on Ukraine to be examined in public and contrasted with the arguments of Murray Smith below. The article was originally published on the website of ['Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières'](#) ([European Solidarity without Boundaries](#))

Russia's war on Ukraine and the European lefts – by Murray Smith

The war in Ukraine has cast a harsh light on the radical left in Europe, revealing the best and the worst. On the one hand, an internationalist response of solidarity with Ukraine. On the other, a “peace camp” where you find pacifists, but especially sectarians, for whom the main enemy is always US imperialism. Rather than a movement for peace, it is above all a movement of non-solidarity with Ukraine. We will come back to that.

Let's start with some thoughts on war. We can be against war in general. We can consider that we must overcome this barbaric way of settling conflicts. We can think that it is possible to do it in the existing capitalist society, or that to put an end to war it is necessary to finish with capitalism. But historically, and again today, the left is never confronted with war in general, but with real existing wars, specific wars, which succeed each other and do not always have the same nature. So, each war must be analyzed in its specificity. There are no slogans outside of time and space, which are valid for all wars. It is not because Lenin or Luxemburg or Liebknecht spoke of revolutionary defeatism or said that the enemy was in one's own country, that we can trot out these slogans for any war, independently of the context.

World War I was an inter-imperialist conflict over the distribution of territories, resources and markets. Those who refused to support their own imperialism were right. And history proved them right. The activity of the small minority of internationalist circles of 1914 led to strikes, mutinies, mass parties and revolutions. Yet since 1914 no war has been a simple repetition of World War I, and a simple repetition of the slogans of 1914 has not been enough. In all the wars of national liberation against the colonial empires, it was clear that it was necessary to support the insurgents who fought for

the independence of their countries. The same applies to attacks on independent countries by imperialist powers. So, in the 1930s, the left supported China against Japan and Ethiopia against Italy. And, closer to the present day, Iraq against the United States. This despite the fact that these countries were ruled by regimes that the left could not support.

In general, it is not obligatory for the left to take a position in the civil wars of other countries. But in some cases it is, on the basis of political criteria. Obviously, it was necessary to support Soviet Russia against the Whites and the imperialist armies that helped them. And in Spain from 1936 to 1939, without going into all the political complexities, it was a war against fascism where the Republican camp had to be supported against the Francoists, whatever one might think of the Popular Front government. And this would have been the case even if the Francoists had not been supported by Germany and Italy. Immediately after came World War II, which was much more complex (and more global) than the first. And which posed political and tactical problems that cannot be dealt with in detail here. But it must be clear that revolutionary defeatism and the enemy being one's own country did not fit there. It was not indifferent to live in a bourgeois democracy or under the Nazi yoke. Many European countries learned this from bitter experience.

The guiding line is to put ourselves at the service of the exploited and oppressed. Of those who want to liberate their country from colonialism or other forms of domination, or to defend their country against aggression. We must think in terms of peoples and classes, not blocs or spheres of influence, which are only vehicles for the oppression of small countries by the dominant powers. In doing so, we must give priority to political action and not geopolitical constructions.

The current war is in its essence not complicated at all. A country, Ukraine, which had been part of the Russian empire,

was invaded by Russia, the current expression of this empire, which it wants to rebuild. Whether you call Russia imperial, imperialist or whatever, it is indisputable that it launched the war with the aim of subjugating Ukraine to its will.

Even those who refuse to support Ukraine cannot deny the reality of the invasion. So, they find excuses. Yes, Russia invaded, but it was threatened, surrounded, provoked, so it had to defend itself. And they build a whole edifice to demonstrate that the war is really between the United States and NATO on the one hand and Russia on the other. And the Ukrainians who resist the invasion? Nothing but pawns in a “proxy war”.

In all this mess one could almost believe that Russia is a peaceful country, which has never hurt anyone. But, in reality, it is the most reactionary, repressive and aggressive country in Europe. And it is the heir of centuries of wars and annexations by an empire of which Marx always understood that it was the gendarme of Europe, of the peoples of Europe. As for Lenin, he never underestimated the reactionary force represented by Great Russian chauvinism.

In the European left, we can agree on at least three points:

- Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022.
- To resist this invasion, Ukraine received a considerable amount of weapons, mainly from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries and especially from the United States.
- NATO has seen an eastward expansion since the 1990s, notably incorporating the countries that were previously part of the Warsaw Pact, as well as three former Soviet republics, the three Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

From these three observations, we can arrive at different, even contradictory, analyses and conclusions. But those who

seek to relativize or even deny Russia's responsibility for the war are forced to deny certain facts and invent others.

Russia invaded

Why did Russia invade Ukraine?

Whether the invasion is against international law, however true that may be, is entirely secondary. The bottom line is that Russia, an imperial, imperialist, dominant power for centuries, does not accept that the republics of the former Soviet Union, independent since 1991, should escape its control. In particular, it has never really recognized the independence of Ukraine. It has always wanted, at a minimum, a government in Kyiv under its orders, without excluding the annexation of all or part of its territory. And it has said so more and more openly.

Ukraine had been part of the Tsarist empire, of the "prison house of nations". It was Lenin who characterized it thus and who also said: "What Ireland was for England, Ukraine has become for Russia: exploited to the extreme, without receiving anything in return." In addition to economic exploitation, there was under Tsarism the banning of the Ukrainian language and the repression of anything that could express Ukrainian identity, culturally and politically. After a brief period in the 1920s when Ukrainian language and culture were encouraged, the Stalinist counter-revolution brought a halt to it. Between famine and terror, the 1930s were a dark decade for Ukraine, followed by war.

Despite this history, a certain left would have us believe that if Putin went to war it was because of NATO's eastward expansion, which he saw as a threat and against which he was reacting.

In fact, there is plenty of evidence that Putin always knew exactly what he wanted, that he was not pushed or provoked by anyone. We can start with his famous observation in 2005, when

he said that “the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century.” Geopolitical, not social. What he wanted (since well before 2005) and still wants is to regain control of the territory of the former USSR, which moreover corresponded more or less to that of the Tsarist empire. And it is this empire that he wants to rebuild. Not necessarily by annexing the former republics but by controlling them. And in addition, to regain the sphere of influence in Europe that Stalin had established in 1945. In this project, Ukraine occupies a central place. As Zbigniew Brzezinski, adviser to Carter and Obama, said: “Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire.” Because we must never forget that Russia is not a national state, but precisely an empire.

So, in Putin’s vision and in his plan there was no room for an independent Ukraine, especially since it was increasingly turning towards the West.

Euromaidan

Before February 24, there was 2014. The gulf between a part of the Western left and the Ukrainian reality already manifested itself then.

The idea that the annexation of Crimea was a reaction to the Maidan “coup” does not hold water. First, we can only speak of a far-right “coup d’état” or “coup de force” without taking the trouble to make a concrete analysis of a mass movement that lasted three months and of its evolution. And by replacing it with a *made in Russia* caricature. But the peddlers of such a caricature should no longer expect to be taken seriously. For those who want to understand, there are books, interviews with participants and articles that are easily accessible online. There’s even Wikipedia.

The same people who talk of a far-right coup in Kyiv explain that Putin annexed Crimea in reaction to it. But the

annexation of Crimea was discussed and planned before the fall of Yanukovych and the victory of Maidan. And not only Crimea. The whole plan to annex the eastern and southern oblasts, going through a phase of “people’s republics”, was also put forward in a document submitted for discussion in the Russian presidential administration between the 4th and 12th February 2014 and published in full by the newspaper [Novaya Gazeta on February 26, 2015](#). The newspaper’s introduction begins with a quote that says it all: “We consider that it is appropriate to initiate the accession of the eastern regions to Russia”. The document begins with three observations: the bankruptcy of Yanukovych, who was rapidly losing control of the political process; then the paralysis of the government and the lack of a body politic of interlocutors with which Russia could negotiate; and finally, that such an “acceptable” body politic was unlikely to come out of the scheduled elections.

Moreover, we were able to recently read the testimony of Bill Clinton, who recounts a conversation with Putin in 2011, where the latter said that he did not agree with the agreement that Clinton had made with Yeltsin. This was the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, where in exchange for giving up its nuclear weapons, Ukraine’s sovereignty and borders would be guaranteed by Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom. Putin reportedly said: “I don’t agree with this deal. And I don’t support it. And I am not bound by it”. And Clinton adds: “I knew from that day that it was just a matter of time.” Three years in fact, before Putin found the right opportunity to do what he had already decided to do.

To get the “accession” plan started, it was obviously necessary to be able to count on support from the population. In his speech before the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, where he already questioned the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state, Putin spoke at one time of 17 million Russian speakers in Ukraine and at another time of 17 million Russians. It is possible that he thought they were the same thing. And even

that he believed his own propaganda about the “persecution of Russian speakers”. But being a Russian speaker does not mean that you are Russian. One can be a Russian speaker and a Ukrainian patriot. This was already evident in 2014, even in the Donbas. And even more today. But there are many testimonies of Russian soldiers who were truly astonished to encounter the hostility of the inhabitants of the occupied areas. They had believed what they had been told, that they would be welcomed as liberators.

NATO enlargement

The equivalent of NATO in the Soviet bloc was the Warsaw Pact, established in 1955. East Germany – the German Democratic Republic (GDR) – which was part of it, ceased to exist upon German reunification in October 1990. But after the fall of the Wall in November 1989 and even before the first free elections in the GDR in March 1990, it was obvious that we were moving towards more or less rapid reunification. The question was: what reunification? One possibility was that of a united and neutral Germany. The other, that of a united Germany, a member of NATO, the preferred choice of the United States in particular. It was in this context that US Secretary of State James Baker, seeking a way forward, floated in conversation with Gorbachev on February 9, 1990, the idea that a united Germany could be a member of NATO, and that in return there would be a commitment that NATO would not advance one inch (“not an inch”) towards the East. Gorbachev mostly agreed. The day after. Baker put both possibilities to Kohl, who ended up preferring the second choice. We know how events went afterwards.

The whole edifice of this history of NATO, which supposedly promised not to expand towards the East and which broke its promise, is built around this little phrase from Baker, which is still subject to debate. A promise or a mere hypothesis? Concerning only Germany, or all of Eastern Europe? What is certain is that there was never a written commitment. Putin

himself regrets this, saying in his interviews with Oliver Stone that nothing “was written down...In politics, everything has to be written down”. Besides, even if there had been something written down, it could not have been definitive. Like the Budapest Memorandum... Diplomacy and international relations are not based on promises, oral or written, but on formal treaties. Which can also be violated, but this is rather rare, since if a regime systematically violates treaties, no one will want to negotiate with it anymore.

The only treaty signed was the “[Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany](#)” of September 1990. The signatories were the two German states, plus France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States. This treaty stipulated that there would be neither non-German troops nor nuclear weapons on the territory of the former GDR. It was respected.

On the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Wall, Gorbachev confirmed that there was no promise regarding NATO enlargement, that there was not even a discussion about it. But he added that the enlargement had been a “big mistake” and a violation of the “spirit” of what was said in 1990.

So this story of the broken promise, which is after all the starting point of the entire discourse about an aggressive and treacherous NATO, is based on a sentence from a US politician to the president of a country, the Soviet Union, which neither of them suspected would no longer exist less than two years later.

Not only did the Americans not see the breakup of the Soviet Union coming, they did not even want it. They were quite ready to deal with Gorbachev’s Soviet Union. President George H. W. Bush even initially opposed Ukrainian independence, [notably in his famous “Chicken Kiev” speech](#).

Let us look at the East-West relations at the time. Already in 1991, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) had been

created between the countries of NATO and those of the Warsaw Pact. In 1994, the Partnership for Peace was created, with the members of the NACC and a few others, notably Kazakhstan.

In 1993, Yeltsin wrote to Clinton: "Any possible integration of Eastern European countries into NATO will not automatically lead to the alliance somehow turning against Russia." In 1997, the NATO-Russia Deed of Foundation was concluded, which noted that NATO and Russia "do not consider each other as adversaries" and saw NATO enlargement as "a process which will continue".

All of this was happening under Yeltsin's mandate. This does not indicate an attitude of confrontation or a search for a weakening of Russia, rather a search for cooperation and integration into the international order dominated by the West.

Did Putin have a different attitude? Initially, there was no break with NATO. Putin was not against equal relations with the alliance. The NATO-Russia Council was established in 2002. Putin said the same year in a press conference with Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma: "I am absolutely convinced that Ukraine will not remain in retreat from the growing processes of interaction with NATO. The decision is to be taken between NATO and Ukraine. This is a question that concerns these two partners". And in 2004, when seven countries joined NATO: "Each country has the right to choose the option it considers the most effective for ensuring its own security". At the time, Russia expressed some concerns, but did not really see NATO as a threat. How to explain the change?

Putin was convinced from the beginning of his first term, or even well before, of the need to restore order inside the country (by asserting his own authority) and to restore Russia to what he considered to be its place in the world. At first, he may well have thought that this could be done within the framework of good economic and political relations with the

United States and Europe and even with NATO. In reality, the West was perfectly prepared to have good relations with Russia. But accepting a Russian sphere of influence, as Putin understood it, especially in Europe, was another matter.

Putin began to adopt a more muscular discourse, [in particular in his speech in Munich in 2007](#). He took part in the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, raising his tone by questioning the legitimacy of Ukraine. Even after the lightning war against Georgia in 2008, Russia took part in NATO exercises in 2011. It was from 2014 that the rupture was consummated, following the annexation of Crimea and the intervention in Donbas. And it is also from that point that the anti-NATO discourse became systematic. The rupture took place not following the enlargement of NATO but following the use of force by Russia against Ukraine. And this use of force took place following the Maidan revolution, which far from being a coup was a profound movement, especially of the youth.

As far as Ukraine is concerned, Russia never accepted its independence, but was at first confident in its ability to influence politically the course of events by relying on Ukrainian political currents favorable to strong ties with Russia. We must add to that a systematic infiltration of the Ukrainian state apparatus, especially the security organs, the extent of which was revealed in 2014. The first shock occurred in 2004, with the so-called "[Orange Revolution](#)", in fact a mass movement against electoral fraud. Coming after the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia and before the "Tulip Revolution" in Kyrgyzstan, it was enough to worry Putin, who feared contagion. Hence the discourse on "color revolutions" supposedly guided by the hand of Washington. In Ukraine, Yanukovych's rise to power in 2009 seemed like a return to normal, but the next shock, the Maidan, was a bigger blow for Russia.

NATO enlargement took place quite quickly, between 1999 and 2009 for the most part. It certainly corresponded to the

interests of the United States, but probably more to consolidate its influence in Europe rather than to confront Russia. But we must not, as the Western left often does, forget what the most interested parties thought, those who lived in the countries concerned. It is clear that NATO membership corresponded not only to the wishes of the new capitalist elites in these countries but also to the will of the peoples. In Hungary a referendum saw more than 85 per cent vote "Yes" to NATO. There is no reason to think that NATO membership would not have had broad majority support everywhere. Simply because all these countries had been dominated by Russia for decades, and some of them, for centuries.

As for the "encirclement" of Russia by NATO, let's be serious. Just look at a map. The three countries with the longest borders with Russia are China, Mongolia and Kazakhstan, none of which are members of NATO. What there is today, from Finland through to Bulgaria is a barrier, a line of defense. And this line is a defense against Russia, not a threat to it. Putin is not afraid of NATO attacking Russia. Russia is a nuclear power, as he keeps reminding us, and no nuclear power has ever been invaded. What bothers Putin is not a military threat. It's quite simply that the accession of these countries to the European Union and to NATO is a way of definitively turning their backs on Moscow and gravitating towards the West.

Weapons for Ukraine

No one disputes the fact that Ukraine received weapons. What is questionable is the idea that this demonstrates that what is happening is therefore a proxy war between NATO and Russia. And for this to be credible, a story is invented where Ukraine has been armed and prepared for this war since 2014.

Before returning to this, let's look at the example of the Vietnam War.

What was the character of this war? It was obviously a war of national liberation against US imperialism and its Vietnamese auxiliaries, the continuation of the First Indochina War against France. Did Vietnam have support in its fight? Yes, it was helped by the Soviet Union and China.

Chinese military aid began in the latter period of the First Indochina War. Following the victory of the Chinese Revolution, between 1950 and 1954, this was considerable and very useful: rifles, machine guns, mortars, artillery pieces, etc. After the Geneva agreements in 1954, which split Vietnam in two, China did not want a new war. But when the Vietnamese took the decision to reunite their country by force, it continued to provide military aid, which was still very useful, especially in the first period of the war, from 1959 to 1963. China also sent troops to Vietnam, especially to defend Hanoi and its surroundings. At the high point in 1967, there were 170,000 Chinese troops. A thousand Chinese troops died during the war.

At the height of the war, Soviet aid began to play an increasingly important role in quantity and quality. Faced with the escalation of US intervention from 1964, the type of aid that the Soviets were able to provide played a crucial role, in particular in defending North Vietnam against US bombardments. This aid seriously increased after the fall of Khrushchev. On November 17, 1964, the CPSU Politburo decided to increase its support for Vietnam. This aid included combat aircraft, radar, artillery, anti-aircraft defense systems, small arms, ammunition, food and medicine deliveries. In 1965, the Soviets took a step further by sending surface-to-air missiles and fighter planes. In addition, Vietnam received about 2000 tanks, as well as helicopters and other equipment. The Soviet Union also sent about 15,000 military specialists to Vietnam. As advisers, but also, especially at the beginning, as fighters operating anti-aircraft defense systems. And also, occasionally as pilots. Which was less

necessary once 5000 Vietnamese had been trained as pilots in the Soviet Union. All this equipment and Soviet specialists were sent to North Vietnam. Some of the equipment subsequently headed south. But not the specialists. The Soviets wanted to avoid any escalation, and therefore took no risk of Soviet-American clashes.

US forces lost 4000 planes during the war. Without Soviet help, this would have been hard to imagine. The extent of Soviet military aid, but also Chinese, is striking. Obviously, they were weapons of the 1960s, less sophisticated than those of today. But, in the context, this aid was certainly more substantial than the weapons sent to Ukraine up until today.

The Vietnam War coincided with the Sino-Soviet schism. Relations between the two countries were execrable; in 1969 they even came close to armed conflict. Out of necessity, and not without friction, they were obliged to cooperate to help the Vietnamese. But each of them was trying to pull Vietnam into its orbit. Did all this change the nature of war? No. It was still a war of national liberation. The extent of Soviet and Chinese aid and the possible motivations of these two regimes did not change anything.

Back to Ukraine. I have appendix at the end of this article, a piece from the *Quotidien* in Luxembourg (based on the work of the Kiel Institute): a good summary of the arms deliveries. First observation: the weapons are indeed more and more heavy. But at the beginning, in February-March 2022, they were not heavy at all. At first the Americans, like the Russians, like almost everyone, thought that the Russians would quickly occupy Kyiv, Kharkiv and other cities, and that Ukrainians would at best wage a war of resistance in the west and a war of partisans elsewhere. That is why the US wanted to evacuate Zelensky to Lviv or even out of the country. Against all expectations, things turned out differently. The Russians were forced to withdraw from the north of the country. The Ukrainians had therefore scored a first victory. It was

important. Having shown what they could do, they were given heavier weapons, which they would need for the fighting in the east and south.

But some weapons were still missing. The Ukrainians had been begging for months for modern tanks before receiving them, and so far, not enough of them. They have had HIMARS short-range missiles (70km) since last year. Then medium-range missiles (130km) and finally, in May, the British long-range Storm Shadows. It seems that now they will also receive long range missiles from France. And only now do they have the promise of receiving what they have been demanding for months: F-16 fighter jets. In the meantime, they operate with Soviet-made planes (considerably modernized, of course) that they have received from Eastern European countries. Quite recently, Germany authorized the delivery of five MiGs that had been part of the air force of the GDR, a country that ceased to exist in 1990. Putin must have trembled...

US goals and actions

The United States has two concerns. They really want to help Ukraine to defend itself; they do not want to see it occupied by Russia. But at the same time, they are afraid of an escalation with Russia, which explains the slowness and hesitation in the delivery of sophisticated weapons. It is also possible that they wish to avoid a total military defeat of Russia for fear of the destabilizing consequences, preferring to let them withdraw gently or even let them keep some territorial gains. But this also depends on the balance of power on the ground. Nevertheless, if the blockages on the types of armament supplied tend to be lifted, albeit slowly, it is not only because of pressure from Ukraine and some other countries, but because of the behavior of the Russians. Except for the use of nuclear weapons, they do just about everything, including attacks against infrastructures and civilian targets, not to mention the crimes they commit in the occupied areas.

It should be added, however, that the slowness of deliveries from certain countries can also have a logistical aspect. Because contrary to what some campists/pacifists say, far from permanently militarizing, the reality is that after the end of the Cold War, most NATO member countries seriously reduced their military personnel and expenditure. This was particularly the case in Germany.

An examination of the period between 2014 and 2022 is quite revealing. We are very far from the image of a NATO that was arming Ukraine against Russia. During Obama's presidency, until 2017, the total arms deliveries by the United States to Ukraine was zero. That was Obama's policy. And since it was the United States that led the way, NATO member countries in Western Europe followed its lead. Poroshenko, then president of Ukraine, was present at [the emergency NATO summit in Wales in September 2014](#). He asked for weapons but left empty-handed. Only certain Eastern European countries, notably Poland, provided some weapons, but in small quantities. After some hesitation, Trump supplied Javelin anti-tank missiles: a first delivery in 2018, followed by others in 2019 and 2021. But the Ukrainians only received authorization in 2020 to deploy them to the front in the Donbas.

The Wales NATO summit was supposed to sound the alarm and push member countries to increase their military spending to two per cent of their GDP. It must be noted that the response was overall quite lukewarm. It took February 24 for that to begin to change.

Minsk agreements

Far from preparing for war, the response of the United States after 2014 was to push Ukraine towards an agreement with Russia within the framework of the infamous Minsk agreements, the application of which was subcontracted to France and Germany. These agreements had been imposed on Ukraine by Russia in 2014-15 on the basis of a military balance of forces

unfavorable to the Ukrainians. Beyond their inconsistencies and ambiguities, they had, according to [according to Wolfgang Sporrer](#), a diplomat working for the OSCE who was involved in the Minsk process, an even greater weakness. They were not getting to the root of the conflict. According to him, this stemmed from Russia's desire to exert its influence on Ukraine's internal policy and international relations: the fundamental conflict was that between Moscow and Kyiv. In itself, the Donbas problem was quite solvable. But for Russia the "republics" constituted a useful lever of pressure on Ukraine.

While refusing to send weapons, the United States and NATO did send military equipment – helmets, boots, bulletproof vests, night goggles, computer equipment, etc. But they did something more important: they provided training for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). And in a serious way. During 2015, there were three major training programmes, led by the United States, Canada and Great Britain, respectively. In total, the number of Ukrainian military personnel who went through these programs was more than 70,000. So, NATO was ready to give Ukraine the means to have what it had lacked in 2014, a modern army worthy of the name. But not to provide it with the necessary weapons. If they had, the current war could have been shortened or even avoided.

In conclusion, we can say that the United States and, even more so, some of their NATO allies (especially France and Germany) still bear some responsibility for the current war. But not in the sense of pushing for war. Quite the opposite. They persisted beyond reason in treating the Putin regime as a rational, responsible and reliable partner. Yet the alarm signals were not lacking. From Chechnya in the 1990s, via Georgia, Syria, Crimea, Donbas. We can even consider that the softness of the West's reactions on all these occasions encouraged Putin to think that he could safely dare to invade Ukraine in 2022. Besides, it is even possible that if "the

special operation" had been as rapid as expected he might have been right...

The divisions of the left

The European radical left is deeply divided over Ukraine. It is not just an ideological battle but involves choices that determine political action. Not only does the left adopt different positions from one country to another, but often there are divisions within the left in the same country.

It is possible to identify three major currents: the internationalist current, the campist current and the pacifist current.

The first is clearly in solidarity with Ukraine. It supports the country in its war of resistance against the Russian invasion. For many, this also includes support for sending arms, but, at a minimum, support is expressed by clearly putting forward the demand for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, unconditionally. And also, as much as possible, by providing material assistance.

The campist current considers that the main cause of the war, or at least an important cause, is the enlargement of NATO towards the east, which leads it to dilute Russia's responsibility for the war without necessarily denying it completely. In general, this current calls for ceasefires and negotiations. Without conditions and sometimes specifying on the current front lines. And it either refuses to support the sending of weapons or even calls for a ban on arms deliveries. Obviously, this position is objectively pro-Russian. Its result would be to push Ukraine into negotiations in a position of weakness. Some campists admit this, in the name of the primacy of the fight against NATO. Others hide behind calls for peace whose sincerity is doubtful, to say the least.

Being against war on principle, the pacifist current starts from the desire to end the war as quickly as possible. It does

not necessarily share the campist vision. But this is often the case, since in Western Europe certain peace movements date from the Cold War era and were directed against US imperialism and NATO. But whether it is out of campism or simply the sincere aspiration for peace, they often arrive at the same demands as the campists: ceasefire, negotiations, no delivery of arms.

Where do these divisions come from? Let us look at the campists first. Some comrades ask why we speak of campists. It must be said that there is a touch of irony. During the Cold War, there were indeed two camps: the Soviet camp, which called itself the socialist camp, and the western US-NATO camp, which called itself the democratic camp and was correctly called by others the imperialist camp. Today, there is no longer a camp that claims to be socialist. Nobody can regard Russia as socialist or even progressive and the countries which vote with it at the United Nations are just as indefensible, if not worse: North Korea, Syria, Iran, Eritrea, Nicaragua.

Quantitatively, the majority of campists come from Communist parties or were trained by them. Which does not mean that all Communists are campists nor that all campists are Communists. There is also a second source of campism, among those who opposed US wars after 1991. But whether before or after 1989-91 the result is the same: an ossified view of the world, ultimately dogmatic and sectarian. No need to make the concrete assessment of a concrete situation so dear to Lenin. In all circumstances, the main enemy is US imperialism. It is enough to apply this assumption to any situation, deforming reality as required. For example, by demanding the withdrawal of several hundred US soldiers from Syria, without saying a word about the Russian and Iranian forces and their active participation in Assad's war against the Syrian and Kurdish peoples.

True pacifists, unlike campists who hide behind calls for

peace, are something else. We may think that they are naive. In an interview with *Médiapart* at the start of the war, the French philosopher Etienne Balibar, a strong supporter of Ukraine, noted: "Pacifism is not an option". In fact, in a war, pacifism is never an option. Trying to end a war as soon as possible, regardless of the context, can lead to the worst results. On the other hand, in times of peace, campaigning against war in general is quite respectable, without necessarily being effective. Conducting campaigns of information and action against nuclear weapons is more than useful.

What characterizes the internationalist current in the face of war? To precisely make a concrete analysis, to define the nature of the war. If it is a war of national liberation or a war of national defense, then support to those who fight against oppression. Support to those who are oppressed and exploited and help to their resistance and their right to self-determination. In the specific case of the current war, it is a war of defense, national and democratic. The Ukrainian left is therefore a thousand times right to participate in the defense of its country. The real Ukrainian left, not the pro-Russian "left". In passing, we can again refer to Lenin, who is said to have been against the slogan of defense of the fatherland. This is inaccurate. In 1914 he was against the use of this slogan as a justification for supporting one's own imperialism. But not against the slogan as such, when it was a question of national wars, as he later made clear.

We might add that the internationalists are not giving lessons from afar to those who are fighting. We are currently witnessing campists and pacifists who do not limit themselves to calls for a ceasefire and negotiations. The Ukrainians are also called upon to make concessions, compromise and to take into account the interests of Russia. Campists are the worst and their advice is mostly given from the comfort of the countries of the imperialist core of the European Union. We

may wonder what political or moral right they have to do that. We are consoled by the observation that they have less and less respect and credibility in Eastern Europe.

Appendix: Ever heavier weapons

Le Quotidien (March 30, 2023)

Recent deliveries of tanks and long-range rockets illustrate how the West is adapting to Kyiv's needs.

From the start of the Russian invasion in February 2022, Ukrainians benefited from the first deliveries of weapons by the West. Between February and March, they received more than 40,000 light weapons, 17,000 manpads – portable surface-to-air defense systems – as well as equipment (25,000 helmets, 30,000 bulletproof vests, etc.), according to data from the Kiel Institute which has listed since the beginning of the war the weapons promised and delivered to Ukraine. Greece notably has sent 20,000 Kalashnikov AK-47s, the United States 6000 manpads , 5000 Colt M4 carbines and 2000 Javelin portable anti-tank missiles , Sweden 10,000 manpads , the Czech Republic 5000 Vz58 assault rifles and 3 20 Vz59 machine guns.

In an emergency, these lightweight weapons and equipment are easy to deliver, pick up, and move across the battlefield. Faced with fierce resistance in Kyiv and Kharkiv, the country's second city, the Russian army withdrew at the end of March to concentrate its efforts on the territories of Donbas and the south.

In April, artillery deliveries began (howitzers, rocket launchers, etc.), capable of striking behind enemy lines to reach ammunition stocks and block Russian logistics chains. There were delivered until the autumn 321 howitzers, including 18 French Caesar guns, 120 infantry vehicles, 49 multiple rocket launchers, 24 combat helicopters, more than 1,000 American drones, as well as 280 Soviet-made tanks, sent mainly by Poland, which the Ukrainian army is accustomed to using.

The armor arrives

Despite its withdrawal to the east and south of the country, Russia has been conducting parallel waves of air strikes (kamikaze missiles and drones) on energy infrastructure and urban centers, well beyond the front. To deal with this, the Ukrainians were asking for missile defense systems. The United States has provided eight systems, the United Kingdom six, Spain four and Germany one. Washington recently ended up agreeing to deliver to Kyiv its Patriot medium-range surface-to-air missile system, considered one of the best anti-aircraft defense devices in Western armies.

In recent months, trench warfare has taken hold in Bakhmut and Ukraine feared a major Russian offensive with the arrival of conscripts. Against this background, Kyiv got heavy and modern Western tanks, long demanded, in order to seize the initiative and get out of the war of attrition. Several Western countries promised at the end of January to deliver them: Washington announced Abrams tanks, London Challenger 2s, Berlin Leopard 2s, reputed to be among the best in the world. The green light from Germany has also allowed other countries to promise Leopard 2s, of which Poland has sent 14.

Until now, Kyiv only had Soviet-made tanks and lost a lot of them. Western tanks are more technologically efficient with more precise sighting systems, on-board electronics... On Monday, the first deliveries of armored vehicles by London, Washington and Berlin were confirmed.

Promised by the United States in early February, long-range GLSDB rockets were also provided, according to Russian claims not denied by Kyiv. Ukraine considers these munitions, with a range of up to 150 kilometers, crucial to launch its next counter-offensive and threaten Russian positions far behind the front lines.

Murray Smith Sunday 16 July 2023

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Photo of Internationalism in action, Welsh union members and politicians hand over supplies to Ukrainian miners in Pavlograd

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraine-russia-uk-trade-unions-solidarity-support/> Photo by Mick Antoniw