

On Hamas's October Counter-Offensive

Gilbert Achcar

The counter-offensive launched by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023, a day after the 50th anniversary of another Arab surprise attack on Israel—the October 1973 War, is a much more spectacular feat than the latter. Whereas fifty years ago, the two Arab states of Egypt and Syria launched a conventional war to attempt to recover the territories that Israel had seized from them six years earlier in the June 1967 War, the new counter-offensive launched by Hamas evokes the boldness of the biblical David in his fight against the giant Goliath. Combining rudimentary air, sea, and land means—the equivalent of David's sling—Hamas's fighters executed an amazing and highly daring offensive all along the border zone between the Gaza strip and the Israeli state.

In the same way as Israel's arrogant self-confidence in the face of its Arab neighbours was shattered in 1973, the security and impunity that it has been taking for granted in dealing with the Palestinian people and combatting Palestinian guerrillas have been severely and irreversibly impaired. From that angle, Hamas's October counter-offensive is to the Israeli population and state a powerful reminder of their vulnerability and of the fact that there can be no security without peace and no peace without justice.

Whatever one may think of Hamas's decision to launch such a massive operation against the Israeli state, thus inevitably unleashing the Israeli government's massive murderous retaliation and inciting it to attempt to wipe off Hamas and its allies from the Gaza Strip at a huge cost for civilians, the fact remains that this counter-offensive has already and undoubtedly dealt a heavy blow to the unbearable haughtiness

of the Israeli racist far-right government and their belief that Israel could ever reach a “normal” state of coexistence with its regional environment while persecuting the Palestinian people and inflicting upon them a protracted Nakba of territorial dispossession, ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

No less unbearable is the precipitation with which Western governments (and a Ukrainian government that ought to know better about the legitimate fight against foreign occupation) have expressed their solidarity with Israel, very much in contrast with their muted reactions to Israel’s brutal onslaughts on the Palestinian population. The Israeli flag was projected on Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate on the evening of 7 October in a contemptible display of fawning over the state of Israel, the usual hallmark of German misoriented redemption-seeking for Nazi crimes against European Jews by endorsing Israel’s crimes against the Palestinians. This becomes even worse at a time when Israel’s government is composed of the whole gamut of Jewish far-right forces, including people whom a prominent Israeli Holocaust historian did not hesitate to aptly [describe in Haaretz as neo-Nazis!](#)

No less contemptible are the attempts at “analysing” Hamas’s offensive as an Iranian plot to derail the ongoing US-fostered rapprochement between the Saudi kingdom and the Israeli state. Even if it were true that Tehran wishes to derail that rapprochement instead of using it to enhance its own claim of monopoly over anti-Zionism, a very disputable hypothesis indeed, this denial of Palestinian agency by way of conspiracy theory is the exact equivalent of every oppressive government’s reaction to popular revolt. It postulates that there are no sufficient grounds for the oppressed people to revolt against their oppression and that any such move is necessarily inspired by the invisible hand of some foreign government.

Anyone familiar with what the Palestinian people has been enduring for decades, and aware of the kind of open air prison

that the Gaza Strip has become, ever since it was occupied in 1967 and then evacuated by Israeli troops in 2005—an open air prison that is periodically the target of a murderous Israeli “turkey shoot”—can easily understand that the only reason why such quasi-desperate act of bravery as Hamas’s latest operation does not actually happen more frequently is the huge military disproportion between the Palestinian David and the Israeli Goliath. Gaza’s latest counter-offensive brings indeed to mind the 1943 [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#).

There can be no doubt that this new chapter will end with a terrible cost for the Palestinians in general, the Gazans in particular, and Hamas specifically—much higher than the cost endured by the Israelis, as has unfailingly been the case in every round of fighting between Israel and the Palestinians. And whereas it is not difficult to understand the “enough-is-enough” logic behind Hamas’s counter-offensive, it is much more doubtful that it will help advance the Palestinian cause beyond the blow to Israel’s self-confidence mentioned above. This would have been achieved at a hugely disproportionate cost for the Palestinians.

The very idea that such an operation, however spectacular it was, could achieve “victory” can only stem from the religious type of magical thinking that is characteristic of a fundamentalist movement like Hamas. The distribution by its information service of a video showing the movement’s leadership praying to thank God on the morning of 7 October is a good illustration of this thinking. Unfortunately, no magic can alter the fact of Israel’s massive military superiority: the result of Israel’s new ongoing war against Gaza is certainly going to be devastating.

The 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington dealt the United States’ arrogance a spectacular blow. Eventually, they tremendously enhanced George W. Bush’s popularity and enabled him to launch 18 months later the occupation of Iraq that he ambitioned. Likewise, Hamas’s October counter-offensive has

already succeeded in reunifying a previously deeply divided Israeli society and polity, and it will allow Benjamin Netanyahu to implement his wildest plans to inflict massive terror on the Palestinians to precipitate their forced displacement.

On the other hand, if Hamas's leadership had been betting on Lebanon's Hezbollah—and Iran behind it—to join the war at a level that would really put Israel in jeopardy, this bet would be very risky indeed. For not only it is far from certain that Hezbollah would take the high risk of massively entering a new war with Israel, but such a situation, if it were to happen, would inevitably bring Israel to resort unrestrainedly to its massive destructive power (which includes nuclear weapons), thus bringing about a catastrophe of historic magnitude.

Against an oppressor that is far superior in military means, the only truly efficient way of struggle for the Palestinian people is by choosing the terrain on which they can circumvent that superiority. The peak in Palestinian's struggle effectiveness was reached in the year 1988 during the First Intifada, in which the Palestinians deliberately avoided the use of violent means. This led to a deep moral crisis in Israel's society and polity, including its armed forces, and was a key factor in leading the Israeli Rabin-Peres leadership to negotiate the 1993 Oslo Accords with Yasir Arafat—however flawed these accords were, due to the Palestinian leader's indulging in wishful thinking.

The Palestinian struggle must rely primarily on mass political action against Israel's oppression, occupation, and settler-colonial expansion. The new underground armed resistance organised by young Palestinians in Jenin or Nablus can be an efficient adjuvant to the people's mass movement, provided it is predicated on the latter's priority and conceived in such a way as to incentivise it. The regional support that the Palestinian people should rely upon is not that of tyrannical governments like that of Iran, but that of the peoples

fighting against these oppressive regimes. Herein lies the true potential prospect for Palestinian liberation, which needs to be combined with the emancipation of Israeli society itself from the logic of Zionism that has inexorably produced its polity's ever-expanding drift to the far right.

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<https://gilbert-achcar.net/on-hamas-october-offensive>

About Gilbert Achcar

Gilbert Achcar grew up in Lebanon. He is currently Professor of Development Studies and International Relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. His most recent books are *The New Cold War: The US, Russia and China – From Kosovo to Ukraine* (2023), *Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising* (2016) and *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising* (2013). Other books include *The Clash of Barbarisms* (2nd expanded edition 2006); dialogues with Noam Chomsky on the Middle East in *Perilous Power: The Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2nd edition 2008); and *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (2010). He is a member of Anti*Capitalist Resistance in England & Wales.

The UK's suicidal Rosebank decision – Scotland needs a stronger response

Rishi Sunak's scandalous decision to go ahead with the exploitation of the Rosebank oil and gas field, alongside Keir Starmer's cringe-worthy non-response – 'yes, we're opposed but

no, we won't do anything about it' – has left the Scottish government and the SNP with an open goal. Unfortunately, Humza Yousaf and his Net Zero and Just Transition minister, Mairi McAllan, are being so careful not to blast the ball over the bar, they seem reluctant to kick it at all.

The desire seems to be there, sort of. After weeks of edging himself off the fence on the issue, the First Minister did say this was the wrong decision. Mairi McAllan said the same. The Scottish government's Energy Secretary, Neil Gray, said, rather tamely, that the SNP administration was "disappointed" while pointing out, correctly, that Rosebank would not contribute to 'energy security', as most of the oil produced would be sold abroad. In fact, Equinor, the Norwegian state oil company that has been given the go-ahead to exploit Rosebank, was more forceful in its dismissal of the bogus argument about energy security used by the Tory government in London and the oil lobby in Scotland. It said if the UK wanted any of the oil it plans to extract from Rosebank, it would have to buy it on the open world market.

The sound of opposition from SNP ministers is a lot weaker than that coming from Caroline Lucas, still the only Green MP in Westminster, who called it "morally obscene" and "a climate crime", or from the Scottish Green Party, the SNP's partner in the Scottish government, whose spokesman, Mark Ruskell, called it an "utter catastrophe" that showed "total contempt for our environment and future generations".

The day after the announcement, Mairi McAllan told the BBC's Good Morning Scotland that the Scottish government had had "long-standing concerns" about Rosebank and had been "calling for a very strict climate compatibility test, an evidence-led test, to be applied". When quizzed on what evidence was needed, she said there were a series of things that needed to be evaluated: firstly, whether it was in line with both Scotland and the UK's climate commitments, including to the Paris Agreement and its goal of keeping global warming within

1.5 degrees Celsius; but also to things like energy security and the rights of workers in the northeast of Scotland.

We may agree these are vital concerns (although what exactly was meant by energy security could be controversial). However, insisting on them now seems pointless, unless it is just a rhetorical device to avoid saying clearly that no oil or gas should be extracted from Rosebank, or any other new field in the North Sea or elsewhere. We already know because we have been told, endlessly, by the scientists of the UN's IPCC, by the International Energy Agency, and by Antonio Guterres himself, not to mention the climate justice movement across the world and thousands of representatives and experts from the Global South, that staying within the 1.5 limit is simply incompatible with any new oil or coal extraction, and that we also have to phase out, rapidly, the wells and mines that are currently operating.

Most recently and conclusively, we have also been told by the very oil company responsible (as we mentioned before) that Rosebank and any other new North Sea fossil fuel production will contribute more or less zero to any kind of energy security. And although there are many, justified fears among workers in the northeast, oil workers themselves have told researchers that they want to be involved in a just transition away from fossil fuels. Some of them have begun to push for that themselves and to design what it might look like, through the important Our Power campaign.

The SNP government's problem is that it feels unable, or unwilling, to confront the oil lobbies or its right wing. It's unclear if the suspension of the right-wing, anti-Green, anti-woke MSP, Fergus Ewing, might signal a small shift in this respect. But the roots of such reluctance run deeper. They flow from the party's history and its character – as a nationalist party caught between its genuine, social democratic desire to build a fairer, more decent country, that seeks to combat poverty and exclusion at home and deal

decently with migrants, the Global South and the planet, and its refusal to challenge or even query the iron laws of the market economy. The latter is cemented by its yearning to become a junior outpost of the supposedly progressive, European capitalist class.

This has been accentuated since the bruising leadership campaign at the beginning of the year, when Kate Forbes' explicitly right-wing, business-first, climate-light campaign came within a whisper of beating Humza Yousaf as bearer of the legacy of former First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon.

The police investigation into the party's accounts a few weeks later, with the formal questioning of Sturgeon's husband and then herself, drove the process further. Whatever the reality, if any, behind the case, it was certainly used to try to discredit the SNP as a whole and to push the new Yousaf administration to the right.

Ironically, the central target of that campaign, Nicola Sturgeon herself, has come out more strongly against the Rosebank go-ahead than her proteges. She tweeted her agreement with Caroline Lucas calling the approval an act of environmental vandalism, and saying risks slowing the green transition that oil and gas workers need to happen at pace.

The fact is that a sizeable majority of people in Scotland want their government to take urgent action to combat climate change. And despite its constrained powers under devolution, there is a lot it can do too. Taking a clear, unequivocal stand against Rosebank and any other new fossil fuel projects in the North Sea would be a start. It would be one way of marking a clear difference with the pusillanimous position of Starmer's Labour leadership and might even help win the crucial Rutherglen election.

More strategically, that stance against any new oil and gas needs to be clearly stated in the Scottish government's long-

overdue response to the public consultation on its seriously inadequate Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, and built into its new Climate Change Plan, due to be published in November.

It should look at how it can use its existing powers – in areas like planning, transport, and health – to wage a guerrilla campaign against the implementation of new fossil fuel extraction.

And it could put in serious doubt the long-term viability of investments like those of Equinor, if it promised that any government of an independent Scotland would make a priority of nationalising and closing down Rosebank and any other new fields, without compensation.

Such bold action may seem unlikely, unless there is some serious pressure pushing in this direction.

We could all take courage from the historic success of the *Yes to Yasuni* campaign in Ecuador, led by environmentalists and the powerful Indigenous movement, which persuaded nearly 60% of the population to vote in August in favour of mandating their government to leave the oil in the soil beneath the mega-diverse Amazonian rainforest.

Iain Bruce

28 September, 2023

Photo: Steve Eason

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.

"The position now adopted by the TUC...is a huge boost for the morale of the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian unions in

particular.”

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
2021

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 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.

Michael Löwy is emeritus research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research in Paris. He is the co-author, with Bengi Akbulut, Sabrina Fernandes, and Giorgos Kallis, of the call “For an Ecosocialist Degrowth” in the April 2022 issue of Monthly Review, and author of Ecosocialism: A Radical Alternative to Capitalist Catastrophe (Haymarket Books, 2015).

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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 vied 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

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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.

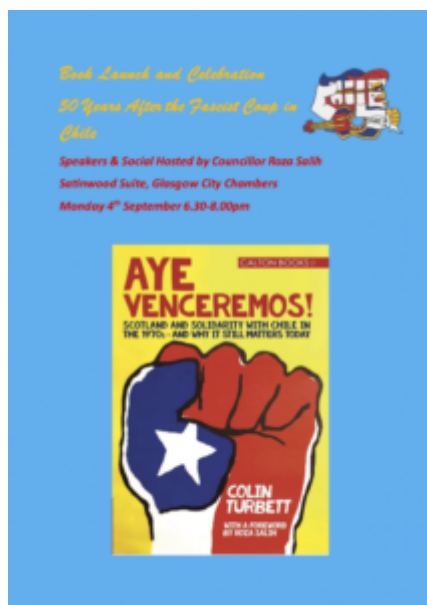
I believe that the coup d'état in Chile was the epilogue of the revolutionary ferment that followed the Cuban Revolution for 10-15 years in Latin America. And as you pointed out in the introduction, the dates clearly tell the story: three months before the coup d'état in Chile, I think it was June 1973, 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.

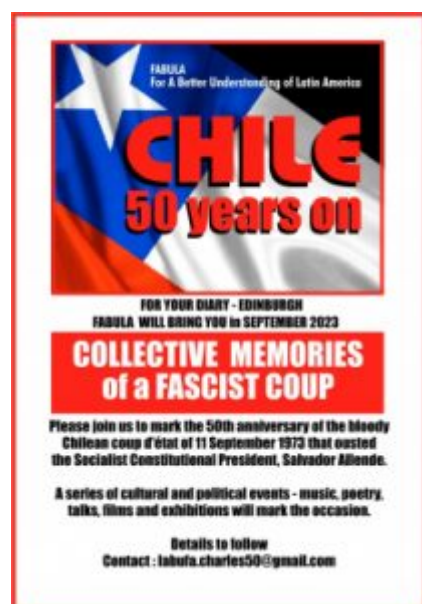
The event will include contributions from Chileans in Scotland, trade unionists and campaigners, as well as the book's author, Colin Turbett.

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 socalled “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.

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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**