Portugal Election – Far Right Surges

First results

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

Chega *[Enough!]*, the far-right party led by ex-TV football pundit Andre Ventura, was the big winner of the night, increasing its votes by over ten points but quadrupling its seats to 48. It now competes as the third major party, way ahead of the rest of the field. The biggest loser is the PS

[Socialist Party] which led the last two governments; it lost 13% of its vote and 43 seats. On the other hand, due mostly to the rise of Chega, the mainstream right of centre alliance, the AD (Democratic Alliance), which had been the main parliamentary opposition, only edged up by barely two points, with just two more seats. Even this small advantage could be altered once the overseas votes are counted. The pro-business, neo-liberal IL (Liberal Initiative) held on to its 8 seats.

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

Government

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

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

accommodating then the AD could change its position on an alliance with Chega.



Andre Ventura Photo: Esquerda net

The Right

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

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

Ventura outlined a whole raft of new laws and actions to weed

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

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

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

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

Today being excluded from government could provide the conditions for Chega to further grow. An AD government permitted to govern by the PS would provide further confirmation of its claim that the two party system is a stitch up against the people. If there were to be a more formal programmatic agreement that could create an even greater opening. The AD might still want Chega votes to pass legislation if the PS opposes specific laws. Ventura has said he has contacts with PSD people and one tactic will be to step

up pressure on their MPs to be more open to an agreement with Chega. We are seeing this scenario of far right parties pulling mainstream right parties to more extreme positions or working to create internal splits elsewhere in Europe.

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

Bloco

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

In her first reaction to the results, Bloco leader Joana Mortágua, who was re-elected in Setúbal, said that they “confirm a shift to the right”, as a result of a “negative assessment, which we share, of how a PS government with an absolute majority delivered.” As for the Bloco’s result, by keeping the parliamentary group and increasing the vote compared to 2022, “it’s a sign that there’s confidence in the

Bloco for whatever the political situation: whether it's to form a majority or to be a determined and fierce opposition to the right."

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

Austerity

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

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

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*Dave Kellaway is on the Editorial Board of Anti*Capitalist Resistance, a member of Socialist Resistance, and Hackney and Stoke Newington Labour Party, a contributor to International Viewpoint and Europe Solidaire Sans Frontieres.*

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

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS RESULT IN A SHIFT TO THE RIGHT

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

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

“I want the people of the left to know that they will have in the Bloc the most combative opposition to the right,” said the

Bloc coordinator, promising to contribute to “building an alternative to the left to defend our people”.

11 March 2024

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

Statement: The rich make us pay for their profits! Let’s mobilize against the rise in the cost of living

The following statement on the cost-of-living crisis across Europe has been prepared by sections of the Fourth International and is signed by ecosocialist.scot.

The rich make us pay for their profits! Let’s mobilize against the rise in the cost of living

For several months now, strike movements and popular mobilizations have been developing in Europe – both inside and outside the European Union – to resist the explosion in the cost of living.

The price of energy, food, rents, transport has increased over the past two years in all countries, aggravating the living conditions of the working classes already under heavy attack in recent years by precariousness, job cuts with Covid and a fall in real wages and benefits.

After inflation in the EU-27 and the UK of respectively 2.6% and 2.5% in 2021, in August 2022, the CPI year-on-year inflation rates reached at 10.5% and 9.9%, with 12.0% and 13.1% for food, 37.5% and 32.0% for fuels (44.6% and 48.8% in 15 months), (sources STATISTA and ONS). Electricity prices began to rise last autumn across Europe, with gas prices exploding during the same period (well before the Russian military invaded Ukraine), tripling over a year in Germany and the Netherlands, while energy prices doubled for households in Britain. In the all-Ireland energy market, prices have risen across the board, north and south, including in the important cost of heating oil, with government interventions stalled in the north by the collapse of political institutions and the ongoing impact of Brexit.

The driving force of this inflation is found in the stock market speculation on raw materials since the recovery in demand since the height of the Covid pandemic, in the context of an oligopolistic market. The catastrophic climate situation in recent months, drought and heat, explicit consequences of climate change, have worsened this situation, as of course the invasion of Ukraine by Putin’s army. Global oil supply is set to tighten, intensifying concerns over soaring inflation after the OPEC+ group of nations (including Russia), faced with falling prices, announced at the beginning of September its largest supply cut since 2020. The move comes ahead of European Union embargoes on Russian energy over the Ukraine war. Speculation on energy prices and an explosion of profits distributed to the shareholders of large companies have resulted. Underlying all this, there is an epochal reduction in the availability of fossil fuels.

Marginal rates of profit have risen, not only in large transport, energy and pharmaceutical companies. Profits in 2021 have been historic. In an unprecedented move, the five largest French banks generated more than €31 billion in profits in 2021. Spain's Santander recorded €8.1 billion in net income, Italy's Intesa San Paolo €4.2 billion and Germany's Deutsche Bank €3.4 billion. Volkswagen's operating margin almost doubled to €20 billion. In the first half of 2022, Shell (Netherlands) leads the way with profits of $20.6 billion, followed by BP (UK) with $21.5 billion and TotalEnergies (France) with $14.7 billion.

These few examples of dazzling enrichment, which is also accompanied by the personal enrichment of the propertied class, especially by distribution of dividends and increase of shares value, contrast with the low wage and benefit rises, the drastic loss of purchase power and labour rights, which have increased the impoverishment of the popular classes. The unequal distribution of wealth worsened during the beginning of the Covid years. This inequality has sharpened even more, particularly for women, young people, the racialized working classes, disabled people, and those populations living in the most deprived areas. A study predicts that by the end of the year 80% of households in the UK will be in energy poverty and a further explosion of energy prices is anticipated in 2023.

In this period, neoliberal governments have stepped up tax measures in favour of corporations, cut social spending and significantly increased military budgets – with the concomitant impact on inflation – further worsening the living conditions of the most precarious. The Ukraine war is instrumentalized by reactionary forces, multinational firms and imperialist powers to push their own agenda, arguing that all military budgets are aimed at helping Ukrainian resistance, which is obviously false. Solidarity against the Putin invasion does not prevent fighting against neoliberal and imperialist agendas and austerity policies directed

against the working classes.

Governments at different levels (national, regional, local) have introduced support aid systems, energy price ceilings or transport packages, so the weight of inflation on popular classes is uneven depending on the state, but these systems are temporary and do not make up for the increase in the cost of living.

Material conditions, including the interminable wait for the next pay or benefit cheque, have become the essential concern for the vast majority of the working class. Energy, food, housing costs are essential for everyone and these costs are all increasing to unbearable levels

Such a situation is intolerable.

Many struggles have taken place in recent months:

Across the UK state there has been a significant increase in national strikes since the spring despite the most repressive anti-strike laws in Europe – particularly in transport, on the post, in telecoms and in several major ports. A significant vote has just been won for strikes by university lecturers, while schoolteachers and health workers are also balloting. On the other hand, there have been signs of fragmentation of action on the rail and mail by the leaderships of those unions. There is a significant level of public support for the strikes that are taking place. This is combined with political action especially around the right to food and the right to housing. A six months' rent freeze has been imposed across Scotland by the devolved government there.

At the same time, we have seen the development of a movement to boycott the payment of energy bills with "Don't Pay UK" across Britain and in Italy, especially in Naples. In Germany, the demonstrations on the left have so far been limited to the oppositional left and some trade unions. This weakness is due mostly to the fact that the leadership of the big

industrial unions, the chemical workers union and the metal workers union, are embedded in a tripartite structure which is proposing relief measures for the population. The far right tries to profit from the huge price increases with demonstrations that outnumber those of the left. Huge demonstration occurred in the Czech Republic on 3 October. Several days of strikes called by the trade unions, demonstrations against the high cost of living have taken place or are scheduled (in France 29 Sept, 16 and 18 October, 21 September and 9 November in Belgium). In France, strikes developed around the oil refineries, with workers on strike for four weeks.

Attacks on living conditions will worsen further in the coming months, particularly with the planned increase in contracts and energy prices, and the end of measures which partially cushioned their impact.

In Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, France, we see different political currents with different motivations attempting to divert popular classes' anger away from the capitalists responsible for this crisis and moreover refusing concrete measures to be taken immediately to protect and improve the level and conditions of life for the poorest and most precarious part of the population. At the time when the far right is seeking to exploit this situation, it is our responsibility to seek to organize the broadest class, social and political fronts to impose social demands, the requisition of the wealth produced and the organization of public services for the benefit of the popular classes by aiming at capitalist profits. We particularly want to see the whole movement devoting resources to organizing and supporting the most precarious.

In these mobilizations, we stand for:

• Increase in wages and benefits at least in line with inflation, with particular protection for those on low

incomes, and “uberized workers”, who are de facto employees of capitalist groups

• For automatic increases to keep pace with inflation – a sliding scale of wages and benefits with real measures of inflation determined by organized workers and benefit recipients themselves.

• Abolition of gender inequality at work; give effect to the principle of equal pay for men and women for work of equal value

• Access to free childcare for any child that needs it

• Abolition of VAT on food and energy and reduction and freeze of rents and prices of basic necessities

• Increase of effective tax rate on wealth and profit

• Free local and regional transport, growth of public transport systems

• Free power and heating corresponding to people’s basic needs

• Energy, banking and transport companies, to be socialized under democratic control by workers and users

• Audit of the public debt with citizen participation leading to the cancellation of the illegitimate debt as a way of finding more room for an increase in social spending and in the struggle against the ecological crisis.

• Massive investment into renewable energy, no new fossil fuels – for the decommissioning of nuclear.

At a time when ultraliberal governments are developing, attacking democratic rights, including in alliance with neo-fascist forces as in Sweden or Italy, it is vital that the anti-capitalist forces, the workers’ movement as a whole, develop an emergency plan against the high cost of living and

inflation to support all the already existing popular mobilizations and develop them while fighting attempts by the far right to exploit popular anger.

16 November 2022

Signatures

Belgium: -SAP-Antikapitalisten / Gauche anticapitaliste

England and Wales: – Anticapitalist Resistance

France: – Ensemble ! (Mouvement pour une Alternative de Gauche et Ecologiste)

– NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste)

Germany: – ISO (Internationale Sozialistische Organisation)

Greece: – TPT (Fourth International Programmatic Tendency) & Magazine "4" – Greek section of FI

Italy : – Sinistra Anticpapialista

Norway: – FIN (Fourth International in Norway, Forbundet Internasjonalen)

Portugal : – SPQI : collective of FI activists

-Toupeira Vermelha: collective of FI activists

Scotland: – ecosocialist.scot

Spanish State: – Anticapitalistas

Sweden : – Socialistik Politik

Switzerland : – BFS/MPS (Bewegung für den Sozialismus/mouvement pour le socialisme/movimento per il

socialismo)

– solidaritéS

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Against NATO and Russian military escalation in Eastern Europe

Statement of the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

We must mobilize against the looming military (and nuclear) threats, in the context of political instability, economic disorder and inter-imperialist collision; in defence of the rights of the Ukrainian people.

A serious and dangerous situation with a worldwide geopolitical dimension

For the past month or so, we have been witnessing a military escalation around Ukraine that constitutes a serious threat to Europe and the world, and which takes us back to the most serious crises at the height of the Cold War, such as the Korean War (1950-53), the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 or the deployment of the Euro-Missiles (and the Soviet SS20) in the early 1980s, when Ronald Reagan contemplated the possibility of resorting to tactical nuclear armaments on the European theatre.

The danger of the ongoing verbal and military spiral and the risk of sliding into armed conflict, whether low-intensity or far-reaching, localized or generalized, conventional or also including some form of nuclear threat, is greater than in the episodes already mentioned. While the Ukrainian people are the first to be affected, the threats concern all the actors involved in the verbal and bellicose spiral of the current crisis, in particular all the peoples of Europe.

We are therefore faced with a double challenge:
• to respond to the fears expressed in Ukraine regarding the Russian troops on its borders, allegedly aimed at preventing Ukraine's integration into NATO;
• to take the measure of the real dangers produced by the escalation of warmongering declarations and behaviour whose stakes go beyond the Ukrainian question.

Our overall position on NATO is twofold: in the aftermath of the Second World War the Fourth International opposed NATO at its inception and, a fortiori, demanded that this military alliance should be disbanded in 1991 along with the Warsaw Pact. We also condemn Russia's imperialist rhetoric and behaviour, which has led a growing section of the Ukrainian population to turn to NATO. The withdrawal of foreign forces (Atlantic and Russian) and the military neutrality of Ukraine are the only protection of its independence. But it is up to the Ukrainian people – and not to blackmail and negotiations between great powers – to decide on their membership or not of NATO.

The main factors that contribute to the danger of an unstable geo-political situation are
• Major energy issues (especially associated with the problems of the transition to renewable energy) with Russian power able to exploit the different energy situations (and dependencies) of the EU and the US – in the context of enormous economic volatility and the very real risk of a new financial crash; problems of scarcity and inflation, energy difficulties and

major problems of the transition to renewable energy.
• A series of armed conflicts in the former Soviet Union, from Ukraine since 2014 to Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, via Chechnya and a long process of rebuilding Russian military power and making up for the setbacks and humiliations suffered since the end of the Cold War – and a relative consolidation of Russia's grip on Belarus and Kazakhstan encouraging Putin's great power posturing;
• And, more specifically, the crisis of the political system and the internal instability of the United States – barely a year after the coup-style assault on Capitol Hill promoted with impunity by a Trump who sees himself returning to the White House very quickly – the European Union and, above all, Russia itself, after two years of widespread pandemic and revolts against authoritarianism, corruption and repression.
• The stalling of the "Normandy Format" (France, Germany, Russia, Ukraine) of conflict management in Ukraine after Russia's occupation of Crimea since 2014.

Both Putin and Biden need to present a strong and aggressive image on the one hand to regain domestic credibility and legitimacy and on the other to discipline what they consider to be their respective areas of influence: Putin to recover from the biggest wave of anti-authoritarian protests since Perestroika, which Russia has been experiencing for several months, and the revolts against corruption, inequalities and post-Stalin paternalism in what he believes to be Russia's area of influence (Belarus, Kazakhstan, etc…); Biden, who is on the verge of midterm congressional elections, after a humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan and weighed down by a disappointing domestic policy that has brought him a level of unpopularity comparable to that of Trump in the last months of his presidency. Putin's position inside Russia also depends directly on his foreign policy stance. His fourth presidential term ends in 2024, after which he will have to retain power (in the face of his declining popularity) or hand it over to his "successor". This process of "transit of power" in a

situation of complete degradation of all political institutions depends only on Putin’s own decision and his ability to rally the bureaucratic and financial elites around him in front of internal and external threats.

First threat of nuclear war in sixty years

The arrogance of their respective statements is proportional to their political weakness: “I hope Putin is aware that he is not far from a nuclear war”. “Putin wants to test the West and he will pay a price for it that will make him regret what he has done”, said Biden during a press conference on 20 January. But bellicose declarations of this type, even if they are the result of gesticulations and a game of lying poker, are never harmless and without the risk of uncontrolled spiralling.

The determining factor behind the massive concentration of its troops on Ukraine’s northern and eastern borders is Russia’s fear of a hypothetical Ukrainian entry into NATO, which would allow the deployment of hostile nuclear weapons next to its country.

30 years after the end of the USSR and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact: between NATO enlargement and the reconstruction of Russian imperialism

When Mikhail Gorbachev decided to dismantle the Warsaw Pact 30 years ago, NATO leaders agreed to dissolve the Atlantic pact and pledged that the future reunified Germany would be a neutral country, as Austria had been since the end of World War II. As we know, not only did the reunified Germany join the Atlantic Alliance, but the Alliance has since expanded eastward, integrating most of the countries that for 45 years had belonged to the Soviet Bloc: in 1999 Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In 2004 Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia followed. Albania

and Croatia in 2009, and in 2020 it was the turn of North Macedonia.

The maintenance and expansion of NATO, far from pacifying the continent's relations, is actually straining them – and can only encourage a grand Russian expansionist logic to the detriment of the countries situated between the EU and the Moscow-dominated Eurasian Union.

Russia's military mobilization along the Ukrainian border explains why Biden has announced that he is willing to negotiate that strategic weapons will not be deployed in Ukraine and that Ukraine's NATO membership is not on the agenda. However, we cannot forget that, according to the FBI's own reports, since the overthrow of the Yanukovich government in Ukraine, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the secession in the Donbass, Ukraine has become a training ground for the international fascist movement, which has recruited anti-Russian fighters to be integrated into Ukrainian militias in much the same way as Islamic fundamentalism used the war in Afghanistan first (with the formation of Al Qaeda at the time by the CIA and Pakistani military intelligence), then the war in Bosnia and, more recently, in Iraq and Syria (the origin of Daesh terrorism). But the so called "People's Republic of Donetz" is also recruiting fascist and ultranationalist Slav forces.

Logically, despite the Russian escalation and the mobilization of NATO troops and US armaments stationed in the Baltic republics, there is fortunately room for negotiation, but it will be difficult to reach a flexible solution when both sides have made the situation very tense and are starting from positions of political weakness and internal institutional instability.

From military follies to economic follies: on the “sanctions” threatened by Biden

Despite Biden’s and NATO’s aggressiveness, European powers are divided over what to do. While some countries such as France and Germany are very reluctant to engage in military deterrence, the subservient attitude of the “progressive” Spanish government is particularly pathetic. Logically, Germany is a key country in this scenario, as its economic vulnerability and energy dependence on Russia is enormous. Biden threatens never-before-seen sanctions, such as expelling Russia from the global SWIFT payments system or cutting the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, to which Putin responds by saying that this would mean the “complete severance of relations” with the US. If Russia, which has been deliberately raising the price of its gas exports to Europe as a geopolitical pressure measure for months, were to decide either to further escalate the price or to cut off supplies directly, we are talking about a drastic reduction in industrial activity and the supply of electricity and heating to much of Central Europe with its consequent socio-economic impact, which would undoubtedly be dramatic. On the other hand, if Russia were to be expelled from the SWIFT system, the $56 billion in Western financial assets and 310 billion euros placed in Russian companies would most likely be severely jeopardized by an immediate targeting of the Russian response (in fact, even some Western officials also state that this is not realistic). There is no doubt that an energy, financial and trade war of this calibre would be lethal for a global economy dragging with it two years of pandemic and all the accumulated destabilizing effects of forty years of long wave of recession, financialization and neoliberal deregulation and, last but not least, it would favour further geo-economic and geopolitical rapprochement between Russia and China, the

biggest nightmare imaginable for Washington strategists.

Uncertainties of the situation

US and British authorities are ordering their citizens to leave Ukraine, citing the danger of a Russian invasion of the country. These actions help to create a war psychosis and further strain the situation. However, Germany has vetoed the delivery of former GDR (East Germany) arms to Ukraine that some Baltic republics were seeking. British military flights carrying arms to Ukraine these days avoid flying over German territory. Paradoxically, the few sensible comments on the current situation come not from politicians or journalists, but from some military personnel: “The media are adding fuel to the fire of a conflict, I have the impression that nobody realizes what a war really means,” says General Harald Kujat, a former Bundeswehr inspector general. “It can’t be that we only talk about war instead of how to prevent war”.

The Russian political situation and Putin’s intentions

Russia, with a military budget equivalent to 3% of world military spending (let us not forget that we are talking about the world’s second largest conventional army, land forces on a par with those of the US and a nuclear arsenal almost equivalent to that of the US), is playing a very dangerous destabilizing game in a context of strategic division and internal crisis in NATO, which could provoke a very aggressive reaction from that military alliance. Contrary to the claims of the Cold War nostalgic left-wing campists who confuse Putin’s neo-Tsarist, oligarchic and nationalist policies – which have contributed to crushing genuine rebellions and popular revolutions in Syria, Belarus and Kazakhstan and to muzzle, repress and intimidate the democratic opposition and popular forces in the Russian Federation – with the

revolutionary, proletarian and internationalist policies of Lenin, Russia's foreign policy is undoubtedly reactionary.

Nowadays Russian society suffers massive poverty and inequality (even higher than the US). In fact, the "new architecture of the world" that Russia advocates is the old-style imperialism of the early 20th century, where the world is divided into "spheres of interests" of big powers and small countries are denied any right to control their own destiny. Russia's main claim to America from this perspective is that it has built a "one sovereign" world (in Putin's famous phrase) and is unwilling to share it with the rest of the global players.

However, for most of the Western media Putin and the "fearsome" Lavrov are the only villains in the film. But the truth is that, in the words of someone as unsuspicious of Bolshevik radicalism as Oskar Lafontaine, "there are many gangs of murderers in the world, but if we count the deaths they cause, Washington's criminal gang is the worst". What the Russian people needs is détente, a chance to develop a democratic and popular opposition capable of fracturing the fragile alliance between post-Stalinist bureaucracy and mafia oligarchy that forms the basis of the authoritarian regime embodied by Putin, of defusing the nationalist hysteria that binds this reactionary bloc together, and of relaunching the demands of youth, women and the toiling classes in an internationalist key.

What can we expect?

That Russia is going to "invade Ukraine", occupying the whole country, is completely out of the question. In the streets of Budapest, traces of the Soviet occupation of 1956 can still be seen today. What happened then in Hungary would be child's play compared to what would happen in Ukraine today.

What is much more likely is that Putin will install "tactical"

nuclear missiles in Belarus, Kaliningrad and other nearby territories. Nor can the possibility of an annexation of the Donbass be excluded. The current rising oil and gas prices, and the expectation that they will continue to rise, could allow the Kremlin to cover the economic costs of such operations. And, although less likely and much riskier – and certainly much bloodier – a Russian military operation to seize the area south of Donbass (Mariupol) in order to organize a security belt in a south-westerly direction and connect two rebel areas with the Crimean peninsula cannot be ruled out either.

The tasks of revolutionary, pacifist and democratic forces in Europe and the world

The current developments are serious and extremely dangerous for peace in Europe. As we know, in situations of maximum tension no actor has absolute control over events and any accident can trigger uncontrollable situations. An international mobilization is urgently needed to lay the foundations for a global anti-militarist and anti-nuclear offensive. Tensions in the Asia-Pacific area are also linked to the ongoing escalation in Ukraine and imperialist temptations in times of economic, social and institutional crisis of the great powers are particularly dangerous. For all these reasons, we call on political, social, associative, national, regional and international organizations to seek major international mobilization occasions to link up again with the internationalist and solidarity impulse of the left.

Let’s organize the mobilization for de-escalation, peace, the dissolution of the blocs and the self-determination of the peoples!

Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

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See also: **Ukraine: for peace and de-escalation – Statement of the Russian Socialist Movement** **30 January 2022** [The Russian Socialist Movement (RSD) is an organization of the radical left in which members of the Fourth International in Russia are active.]



Denmark: Red-Green Alliance win in Copenhagen

The radical left wing political party the Red-Green Alliance won the largest number of votes in the local elections in the Danish capital Copenhagen in November's local elections to emerge as the largest political party in the city.

Across the country, the Red-Green Alliance, or Enhedslisten ("Unity List", EL) as it is also known, won 114 council seats, an increase of 12 on its previous results.

The Red-Green Alliance was formed 32 years ago as a new broad left party contesting elections by an alliance of left wing parties, including the Danish section of the Fourth International, SAP. It now has significant representation in

the Danish Parliament, where it has 13 out of the 179 seats and is widely regarded as one of the most successful ecosocialist parties in Europe. The Red-Green Alliance is also part of the European Left Party.

Below we publish an interview with Eva Milsted Enoksen of the Copenhagen Red-Green Alliance by Andreas Thomsen of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation that has been widely published. You can also find coverage of the election here, from the US radical magazine Jacobin.

Scottish local elections take place in May 2022. Sadly, we don't have a political party in Scotland comparable to the Red-Green Alliance … yet … "unity" appears to be in short supply among the Scottish left, but through its links with the Fourth International, ecosocialist.scot is proud to be associated with the Red-Green Alliance's success and looks forward to the building of such a party in a future independent Scotland.

Danish municipal elections: Red-Green Alliance strongest party in Copenhagen

Interview with Eva Milsted Enoksen, Copenhagen by Andreas Thomsen

Nov 18th, 2021
Eva Milsted Enoksen

Andreas Thomsen: *The red- green Alliance achieved a very good result in Copenhagen with 24.6 per cent and 1st place. Can you briefly describe the political situation? What were the*

reasons for this success from your point of view?

Eva Milsted Enoksen: The Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten, EL) had the best election in our 32-year long history. With 24,6 % of the votes we are now by far the largest party in Copenhagen, the second largest being the Social Democrats (SD) who had a catastrophic election and only got 17,3 %. This is the culmination of a trend of more than 10 years. It is the first time in over 100 years that the Social Democrats are not the largest party in the capital.

There are a few reasons worth mentioning. First, there is the controversy of urban development in Copenhagen, where housing prices are exploding. Social Democrats, together with the right wing, the Social Liberal (RV) and Socialist People's Party are planning to build an artificial island at the entrance to Copenhagen harbor with housing for 35.000 people. Their argument is the crisis of affordable housing. However, the residential building planned on the island are to a large extent going to be sold on the free real estate marked, meaning very expensive flats that no ordinary worker, let alone student or unemployed person, will be able to afford. The real reason behind the project is that the city is in debt and needs money to pay for a costly metro system. Secondly, there a severe climate and environmental impacts of the project. Many are against the growth logic behind the it; more (expensive) housing calls for more investments in infrastructure (including for cars), which needs to be paid by selling off more building plots to build more (expensive) housing, needing more infrastructure etc. There has also been a huge environmentalist movement organizing against urban development in one of the very few nature areas in Copenhagen.

Also, voters are now more concerned about the climate emergency. Here EL has an advantage over S, being traditionally both red and green and having a very strong support from the young voters. Finally, the Social Democrats did not field a well-known top candidate. The former Lord

Mayor from S (Frank Jensen) was forced to leave politics last year after a series of sexual harassment cases and the new Social Democrat candidate is much less known in Copenhagen.

Andreas Thomsen: *How does the municipal system work in Copenhagen? Will we see a red-green lord mayor of Copenhagen now?*

Being the largest party does not necessarily translate into getting the lord mayor post in Copenhagen. The system is such that you need to form a majority of the 55 seats in the city council in order to become lord mayor. Copenhagen has one lord mayor and six deputy mayors, each with certain administrative autonomy. After elections, parties form loose alliances in order to form majority or minority groups who can then claim (deputy) mayor posts according to their size. A minimum of seven seats is required to name a deputy mayor, and 28 seats is required to name the lord mayor. The majority group gets to choose posts first. After this election, the Social Democrats quickly formed a group with three small far-right parties, the Conservatives, the Liberals and the Social Liberals. This was not a major surprise as all these parties had previously declared that they would not tolerate a lord mayor from the far left. This majority group (32 seats) claimed the lord mayor post for the Social Democrat's Sophie Hæstorp Andersen and three deputy mayor posts for the largest right-wing parties. Enhedslisten together with the Socialist People's Party and the Alternative formed a minority group (23 seats) and claimed two deputy mayors for Enhedslisten and one for the Socialist People's Party.

However, the election leaves EL in a stronger position. The party´s two deputy mayors are in charge of urban development, housing, energy and environment, as well as social affairs. It is yet to be seen if this will mean a substantial change in the development and priorities in Copenhagen such as many voters seem to have wanted. If the Social Democrats will choose to work exclusively with the right wing in the next

four years, it will leave EL in a difficult position with a strong election result but difficulties delivering major results. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the Social Democratic power position in Copenhagen is weakened, and EL might succeed in including the decisive Social Liberals in forming alternative majorities on specific issues such as environment or climate mitigation.

Andreas Thomsen: *The agendas of progressive urban policy are similar in many larger cities, especially in the area of housing – what do you think can be achieved in the next few years? Do you follow the debates in Berlin on this issue? Is there cooperation?*

Eva Milsted Enoksen: Many in Enhedslisten have followed the successful referendum on remunicipalisation of housing in Berlin. That's a great inspiration. The model we propose as a radical alternative to the current market-based development in Copenhagen is partly inspired by Vienna. We are campaigning for a rent cap. We propose that the municipality shall provide low-interest loans to non-profit housing. And we want to create a municipal fund for housing construction and urban renewal. All in all, we want 75 per cent of new construction to be affordable housing.

Andreas Thomsen: *You are explicitly a red AND green party, an organisation that is committed to ecological transformation as well as socialist class politics. doesn't that create contradictions? How do you deal with them?*

Eva Milsted Enoksen: Actually, I don't' think there is a contradiction. The green transition is acutely necessary, and it is at the same time a unique opportunity to change the capitalist logics and the growth ideology defining most societies today.

Most parties in Denmark are painting themselves green. But solutions are quite different. While the right wing has just

recently accepted that there is in fact a genuine crisis which is man-made, Social Democrats have long been vocal about the need to act. However, it has not been a priority in their politics, neither in Copenhagen nor in the national parliament. To a large extent, their strategy is the same as the right wing; we should invest in better technology and that way we don't need to change our society or the way we live and consume. This is also seen as a good business case for Denmark which is already strong in green export technologies such as windmills, waste-to-energy etc.

EL is not against having a focus on new technologies but is also saying out loud, that we need to fundamentally change the way we have organized our societies. In the city we don't need more parking spaces for private cars, we need more space for cyclists and pedestrians and better and cheaper busses and trains. Off course, not all workers who depend on a car for their daily commute agree with us on this point but here we choose the green focus over the (traditionally) red one.

In general, our green policies aim to benefit ordinary people not elites. The wealthiest countries, multinational enterprises and the extremely rich are also the ones with the largest carbon footprints. We need to make sure that they are also the ones paying the largest part of the bill for the transition.

Eva Milsted Enoksen is a long time member of Red Green Alliance living in Copenhagen, Candidate for national parliament and former member of the Copenhagen party leadership.

Andreas Thomsen is the former Head of Office of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in Brussels and is now the deputy head of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation's national work in Berlin.

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