

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

THE RISE OF THE FAR RIGHT

The tasks of the revolutionaries



PERMANENT REVOLUTION

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AGAINST THE ZIONIST CRIMINAL LAWSUIT, SOLIDARITY WITH ALEJANDRO BODART



On August 12, the trial begins in Buenos Aires against our comrade Alejandro Bodart, leader of the MST in the FITU and coordinator of the ISL, whom the DAIA (Delegation of Israeli Associations in Argentina) criminally accuses of being “anti-Semitic” for his repudiation of Zionist crimes and his solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Based on the misleading definition of the International

Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the DAIA and the Zionist movement around the world seek to silence any person or organization that criticizes the anti-Palestinian genocide that the State of Israel has been committing.

In the face of this antidemocratic attack, and in defense of the Palestinian cause and the right to freedom of expression we welcome solidarity statements at coordination@isl-lis.org

TO OUR READERS

In this issue we cover a topic of relevance on the international political stage, which generates ongoing debates among activists: the notorious growth of extreme right-wing formations, which are even obtaining governmental power in several countries.

The essential cause of the rise of the extreme right is linked to the deep capitalist crisis and the successive failures of traditional right-wing as well reformist or so-called *progressive* governments. Because so long as they do not break with capitalism, the crisis leaves no room for concessions to the masses and imposes very harsh austerity plans, salary reductions, job insecurity and loss of social rights. Thus, these governments pave the way for the far right, which presents itself as something different to the political order and capitalizes on social unrest.

Following the advance of the far right in the European Parliament elections, some see a “left

counter-wave” in the recent victories of the French New Popular Front and British Labor. Unfortunately that is not the case. Both victories express the democratic reserves of popular sectors that used their vote to stop Le Pen in France or end 14 years of conservative government in Great Britain. But there is no motive to get excited about the winners. They are political forces of the system, which have often governed or integrated capitalist austerity governments that disappointed the popular masses and thus made way for the far right, which is still dynamic. If they repeat their failures in government, they will only further strengthen the right.

In these pages, along with analyzing the complex phenomenon of the far right and several specific examples of countries in America, Asia and Europe, we address the challenges that revolutionary currents are faced with to confront and defeat this great enemy. 🐞



The RISE of the FAR RIGHT and the TASKS of the REVOLUTIONARIES

BY ALEJANDRO BODART



The world is experiencing a polarization of unprecedented characteristics. One of its expressions, which raises the most concern, though it's not the only one, is the rise of the far right. On the other side of the barricade, the mobilizations of the exploited and the oppressed is growing, but without a coherent leadership to guide them towards a revolutionary perspective. This new awakening of a phenomenon that is sufficiently reminiscent of fascism brings us dangerously close to barbarism and presents a challenge to all of us who believe that a socialist world is not only possible, but more urgent and necessary than ever. Understanding the causes of the emergence and rise of these reactionary political expressions is the first step to developing a strategy to confront them, to advance in the regroupment of revolutionaries and in the struggle for workers' governments on a national and global scale.

The growth of the far right began with the new century, but has been accelerating in recent years. According to some academics, this would be the fourth far-right wave since the end of World War II.¹ What makes this one different from all the previous ones is that for the first time they have

gained mass electoral weight, spread internationally and gained governmental power in some of the most important countries in the world.

With Trump and Bolsonaro, they governed in the US and Brazil until a few years ago and, although they lost the following elections, they

maintained a huge influence and Trump is likely to return to power this year. Since the rise of Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi in 2014, they have held government in India, the most populous country on Earth. Recep Erdogan has governed Turkey since that same year. Recently, libertarian Javier Milei became president of Argentina. And the government led by Benjamin Netanyahu in the State of Israel is responsible for the mass murder of the Palestinian people.

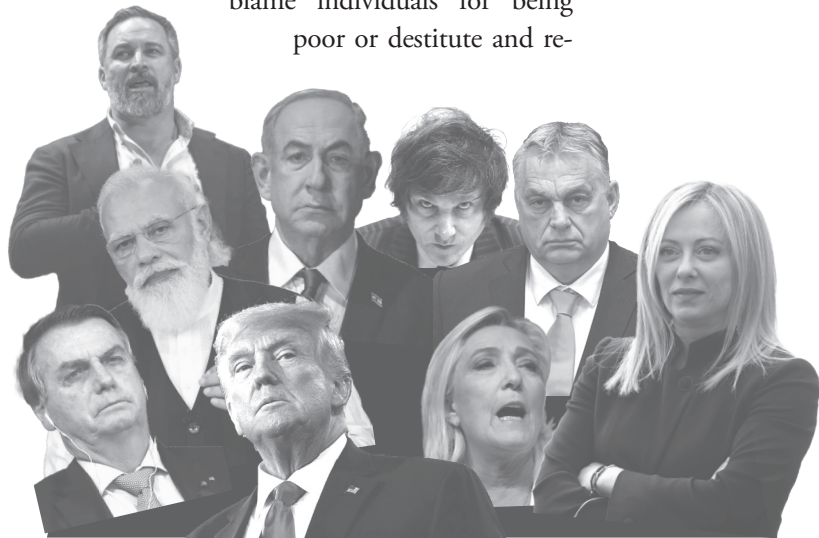
In the recent elections to the European Parliament, the growth of the far right in the main imperialist powers shocked the old continent. In France, Marine Le Pen's party came in first, provoking a political earthquake. Although it was later defeated in the second round of the legislative elections, its growth is undeniable. In Italy, the coalition led by Giorgia Meloni, heir of Mussolini's party, consolidated itself in power. In Germany, the neo-fascists of Alternative for Germany came in second. The far right won in Austria and Belgium and performed well in almost all EU countries. In addition to Meloni in Italy, Viktor Orbán governs Hungary and similar forces are part of coalition governments in Croatia, Slovakia and Finland. Until a few months ago, they also governed in Poland. The Swedish government is sustained by the external support of the far right, and in the Netherlands, the far right won the last parliamentary elections. The European political landscape is looking bleak.

Despite the significant differences between this phenomenon and the fascism of World War II, if it were to consolidate and succeed in inflicting significant defeats on the workers' movement, it could evolve into very similar forms. This does not seem to be the most probable perspective in the immediate future, since the current international situation also presents a widespread rise of struggle by workers, women and the youth, which continues to be dynamic and difficult to dismantle despite its uneven levels. The flip side of the rise of the far right is the revulsion it provokes in the rest of the population, which fuels social mobilization to confront it, as we have just seen in France and in almost every country where it rears its head. Even the genocidal State of Israel, which is the closest thing to a fascist State, is unable to stabilize itself because of the heroic resistance of the Palestinian people and the extraordinary displays of international solidarity, mainly in the center of the American and European empires. But we cannot

minimize a phenomenon that is on the rise and that we must confront with unity in the streets and developing audacious initiatives to strengthen the construction of our parties and regroup revolutionaries at the international level.

SIMILARITIES, DIFFERENCES AND DISPUTES

Although the various far-right populist forces are very heterogeneous, they have a common basis that identifies them. They are xenophobic, racist and misogynist. They openly defend social inequality as a natural phenomenon and fiercely oppose any intervention by the bourgeois state to temper it. They are profoundly individualistic, elitist and meritocratic. They blame individuals for being poor or destitute and re-



fuse to provide them any kind of help with public resources.

Their goal is to end the rights that have been won through decades of struggle, mainly labor rights, and to drastically reduce the social expenditures of states in order to reduce taxes on corporations and thus guarantee them super-profits. They know that they have to defeat the working class to achieve this, and that is why they are trying to impose increasingly authoritarian and repressive regimes, limiting or eliminating democratic freedoms.

They present themselves to society with a series of central ideas and simplistic but effective answers. They propose a ban on **immigration**, which they blame for the deterioration of the standard of living of "native" majorities, mainly in Europe and the U.S. They present themselves as standard-bearers of **security** and propose an iron fist and increased militarization to "bring back

Abascal, Netanyahu, Milei, Orbán, Modi, Bolsonaro, Trump, Le Pen and Meloni

order,” denying any relationship between social marginalization and crime, and attempting to put an end to social protest. Another of their central ideas is **corruption**, which they associate exclusively with the “political class” and some groups that oppose them, avoiding its relation to big business, banks and the networks of regimes which are corrupt down to their foundations. They defend **nationalist** policies or **supposedly sovereign** ideas in imperialist countries, while in backward or semicolonial countries they present themselves as lackeys of imperialism.



Another issue that unites them is **Islamophobia**, which has been encouraged by sectors of power after the 9-11 attacks and is the basis of the argument that leads them to defend the State of Israel and its genocidal policy. In countries with **ethnic minorities** such as India, they are deeply racist towards them. They are linked to an array of **churches** and **religions** and attack what they call *gender ideology* and the gains of the women’s movement and LGBT+ movement, such as the right to abortion and same-sex marriage, which they accuse of “perverting” the minds of young people and destroying the family institution. They also reject **environmental rights** in favor of extractivist business.

However, despite these agreements, the various far right parties and movements have differences among themselves. Although they all declare themselves to be “anti-system” and critical of the bourgeois-democratic or liberal regimes, and, for the time being, vie for power through their mechanisms, there are differences between those who are more “reformist” in their efforts to bring about

the changes they propose, and others who would like to impose everything faster. There are still, however, very few who propose or try to impose other types of regimes by force or openly dedicate themselves to organizing paramilitary groups.

There are also differences between those who align themselves with Ukraine and those who align themselves with Russia in the war that has lasted more than two years. In Europe, although they declare themselves Euroskeptics and sovereigntists, not all of them are considering breaking away from the European Union or NATO. And while most try to discursively separate themselves from the fascism of the 1930s in order to broaden their support base, others refuse to do so. These nuances have led to the emergence of different spaces permanently shifting in the European Parliament. One group gathers around Meloni, who has recently attempted to move closer to the traditional conservative right. Another group that is gaining strength is Patriots for Europe, referenced in the Hungarian Viktor Orbán, who is openly aligned with Putin and sympathizes with Trump. Santiago Abascal of Vox recently joined this group (abandoning Meloni). So has the Dutch far right, Marine Le Pen’s bloc and other forces, including Salvini of the Italian coalition government, making it the strongest block of this ideological spectrum. There are other spaces, with a more openly fascist discourse, such as Alternative for Germany, which is forming its own group.

Under Milei, the discourse of the libertarian tendency has gained momentum. In regions of Asia and the Middle East, religious extremism has been gaining strength for years, and where it governs, it imposes profoundly authoritarian and medieval practices against women and society as a whole.

THE CAUSES

The far right has existed for decades. The important thing to unravel is why they are managing to win the sympathy of broad layers of the masses and become a phenomenon of international scope. Although many factors have converged, the determining one has been the capitalist crisis that has unfolded in the first years of the new century. This crisis, in its magnitude, is comparable to the great crises of capitalism that provoked historical changes, led humanity to two world wars, to the birth of the first workers’

state in Russia or to the rise of fascism in Europe, among others.

Capitalism as a system and bourgeois democracy as a mechanism of domination, which had emerged “victorious” from the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and ruling class ideologues predicted would last forever, began to decline within a few years.

In 2008, the economic crisis that broke out was the most severe one since the Great Depression of the 1930’s. The hardships of the workers and the oppressed deepened to unbearable levels. The despair of mass sectors, in countless semi-colonial countries, caused an unprecedented migratory crisis. Unbridled extractivism produced socio-environmental catastrophes that continue to worsen. Cuts in social spending led to a health crisis, the most tragic outcome of which was a pandemic that forced the world’s population to lockdown for months.

All this made “democracy”, which in the decades of the cold war against the Stalinist bureaucracy was a significant weapon of capitalist propaganda, become an empty shell for the great majority of humanity. Years of applying neoliberal plans and deepening social suffering led the old parties that historically alternated in power into crisis. Thus, the hegemonic discourse that imperialism and the bourgeoisies had managed to impose collapsed. Even the imperialist hegemony of the U.S. began to be questioned.

A SHIFT TO THE LEFT SQUANDERED

At first, this new situation resulted in enormous social conflict and the rise of various left-wing populist expressions internationally. In Latin America, a new petit-bourgeois nationalism developed, not linked to traditional bourgeois sectors, with Chavez in Venezuela as its main referent, and center-left or populist variants came to power in a large part of the continent. The wave reached the US, where the figure of Bernie Sanders grew, and a small organization within the Democratic Party, the DSA, was flooded with young people who defined themselves as socialists joining its ranks. In Europe, Syriza would become an international reference of a new reformist left, with a radical discourse, which began to overcome the old social democracy and had similar expressions across most of the old continent. The programmatic and class limitations of all these leaderships, which had to put their proposal to the test in the midst of an

acute capitalist crisis, meant that instead of taking anti-capitalist measures to counteract it, when they came to government they ended up turning against the mass movement, continuing to apply austerity measures and plans designed by the IMF and the World Bank, which increased the hardships of working people. This led to the failure of all these experiences and provoked a great demoralization. The marginality of the revolutionary left as a whole, plus the sectarianism of some and the opportunism of others, meant that it could not offer an alternative to this course in any country. Although it was at the head of some important initiatives in Brazil, France and Argentina, only the Argentine Left Front for Unity (FITU) managed to maintain a certain degree of representation and to remain faithful to its program.



THE PENDULUM SWINGS TO THE RIGHT

The debacle of the new reformism that gave birth to the 21st century and the weakness of the revolutionary left caused the opportunity to begin to overcome the confusions in consciousness inherited from the collapse of the Soviet Union to be missed. On the contrary, these were worsened. With the old and the new left reformists having failed, the far right began to find fertile ground.

Uncertainty, skepticism and distrust of everything that existed grew even more. The development of alternative media became the channel for the spread of all kinds of crazy ideas and lies, which began to enjoy greater credibility than those coming from the institutions of a degraded democracy, from the parties that governed or had governed, from scientific authorities and from the supposedly “reliable” media, which in turn were

responsible for having transmitted the ideas emanating from a corrupt and decomposed state bureaucracy. The far right was capable of using the networks and alternative media to propagandize its facile discourse and penetrate the masses.

The fact that the majority of the Latin American and European population has not suffered the consequences of the dictatorships of the 1970s or of fascism for decades has made the terrain easier for them. They managed to influence a sector of the youth that has not been able to adapt to the improvements in women's rights. And sectors of an impoverished middle class, informal workers



without any rights and very backward sectors of the working class.

Seeing that they were gaining influence, sectors of the bourgeoisie and imperialism itself, hit by a crisis that seems to have no end, began to finance them, betting on them being able to achieve what other leaderships have not been able to: defeat the working class, put an end to its historic conquests and begin to recover the rates of profit of the past.

The shift to the right of layers of the population has not only strengthened the far right: it has also been accompanied by a greater shift to the right of the traditional political forces, which are thus trying to join the wave of this second moment in the new stage that began with the new century.

WORKERS RESIST

But the growth of these reactionary expressions is not the only phenomenon of this stage. The other one is the fierce struggle of workers against attacks on their standard of living and in defense of their economic, social and dem-

ocratic rights; of rebellions of entire peoples against their oppressors, of great mobilizations of women and the youth. We have seen rebellions, uprisings, general strikes and millions in the streets in a great number of countries on all continents. The latest, in Kenya.

We are witnessing a radically polarized world, where one phenomenon feeds the other. Right-wing expressions generate radicalization and rejection in other sectors of society, which are prepared to fight them in all fields, with whatever means they have at hand to do so. We have seen this recently in the French elections, where the danger of a National Rally victory mobilized millions who managed to reverse the results of the first round. In Germany, millions have mobilized against the threat of the far right Alternative for Germany. In Portugal, the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution was the channel for an extraordinary mobilization in response to the growth of Chega's *fachos*. In Argentina, two general strikes and millions in the streets put up a fight against the *liberfacho* Milei. Similar situations are seen in almost all the countries where the far right is advancing.

Where they govern, the workers' resistance multiplies and, since they do not manage to defeat the working class or solve the problems that brought them to power. So they lose ground and elections, as has already happened in the U.S., Brazil or recently in Poland, although the far right is a phenomenon that is here to stay in all those countries.

THE TASKS OF THE REVOLUTIONARIES

The different political variants of the bourgeoisie and mainly the far right, the extreme right or the radical right, which globally attacks our rights and democratic liberties, must be confronted and defeated in the streets, with the methods of the working class. It is false that we must subordinate mobilization to possible and future electoral victories, as the reformists claim. Even where forces of the classic right or center-left manage to defeat the far right electorally, as has happened in the U.S. with Biden, Brazil with Lula or France with the Popular Front, the far right will not disappear, and it will feed on the new betrayals of the reformists to continue acting and return to power.

In order to promote the most massive mobilization possible and, where conditions exist, the general strike, revolutionaries have to develop the broadest **unity of action and the united front**, without subordinating ourselves in the least to the reformist or bureaucratic leaderships which we call upon to mobilize, nor forgetting to criticize their contradictions. We have to work without any kind of sectarianism and to fraternally engage the rank and file of the rest of the organizations, without falling into the opportunism of adapting to the erroneous positions of their leaders. At the same time, it is fundamental to encourage coordination among the most militant sectors in order to work as a single bloc. Also, where the far right has organized groups that operate, it is fundamental to be at the vanguard of organizing self-defense. Keeping in mind that fascism or its disciples are not to be debated with, they are to be fought until they are defeated.

One of the great weaknesses of the stage, despite the disposition to fight of our class, is the absence of revolutionary leaderships with mass influence. The problem of leadership is not only in the trade unions: it is essentially political. **The most important historical task ahead of us is to build strong revolutionary socialist parties and an international that can become a pole of regroupment.** And it is possible to take steps in this direction if we take advantage of the small and big opportunities that the class struggle offers us. We have to patiently explain to the best activists that they should not allow themselves to be fooled again by the siren songs of the reformists that, faced with the rise of the far right, which they themselves facilitated, propose the same recipes as always: to unite behind fronts without principle, with a program of cosmetic reforms and the refusal to undertake an in-depth struggle against the system, which they never see conditions to undertake.

The capitalist system is in full decomposition and if we do not help to bury it, it will soon lead us to barbarism. The fact that the far right and fascism are once again gaining ground is a clear sign that this process has already begun. Preventing its further advance is crucial not only to guarantee a dignified life for all humanity, but also to avoid new fratricidal wars and the degradation of nature reaching a point of no return.

The only alternative system to capitalist bar-

barism is socialism. However, we are speaking of the socialism of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, not of the bureaucratic caricature into which the Soviet Union degenerated under the reign of Stalin. Nor of the farce of capitalist dictatorships that stain the name of socialism in Venezuela or Nicaragua. Much less of what sectors of the “campist” left try to sell as alternatives to Western imperialism: China or Russia, countries that have become imperialist and whose regimes have nothing to envy to the worst dictatorships.





The socialism worth fighting for is one where workers govern through councils, where everything is decided democratically. Where the wealth of our countries allows the enjoyment of life, the enjoyment of free time and where no one lives off of the labor of others or the oppression of others. A world where countries are free to determine themselves.

To fight for this type of society it is essential to organize nationally and internationally, to regroup the true revolutionaries, to fight until victory. This is the proposal of the International Socialist League, which we invite you to join. 🐜

1. Cas Mudde, a Dutch academic, professor at the University of Georgia and associate of the Center for Research on Extremism at the University of Oslo, is one of the intellectuals who has studied this phenomenon the most.

We present readers two texts by Leon Trotsky:

<p>On the United Front</p> 	<p>The tactics of the United Front</p> 
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ISRAEL, FASCISM in action

BY PABLO VASCO



Born as an imperialist colonial enclave, fascism lies in Israel's DNA. The supremacist, theocratic and hyper-militarized state has committed anti-Palestinian ethnic cleansing and genocide since its creation. Now under the leadership of far-right Benjamin Netanyahu, the Zionist state is the world's main fascist exponent.

At the end of the nineteenth century, several governments in Europe used anti-Semitism to divide the working class. Zionism arose in that situation, as a political current promoted by bourgeois Jewish sectors to prevent Jewish workers and youth from joining revolutionary parties. While the left proposed to integrate and assimilate the Jewish minority in each country, Zionism transmuted a religious affiliation into an identitarian nationalist ideology.

In 1896, Theodor Herzl, founder of the Zionist movement, published the book: *The Jewish State*. To carry it out, he considered Argentina or Palestine, and of the latter said: "For Europe, we would form part of a bulwark against Asia there, we would serve as the advance post of civilization against barbarism."¹ In his Diary he also falsifies history: "All of Palestine talks about our national plan because we are the historical owners of the country."²

This supremacist nationalist ideology, as in *The Serpent's Egg*, Ingmar Bergman's film about the beginning of Nazism, anticipates the fascist creature that would also emerge from the Zionist germ. The first Zionist congresses consolidated the myth of the chosen people and the promised land in order to colonize Palestine by encouraging Jewish immigration.

Its first congress in 1897 resolved to "establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine" and founded the World Zionist Organization. Its second congress created the Jewish Colonial Bank to buy land and settle there. Its third congress reaffirmed this "right" and created the Anglo-Palestinian Economic Development Company in Jaffa.³ The fourth congress, in London, sought British support. The fifth congress created the Israeli National Fund⁴ to administer the land that had been accumulated. The sixth congress debated two options: The Egyptian Sinai or the British Uganda-Kenya offer. In 1905 its seventh congress reaffirmed Palestine was the right choice, with the cynical phrase: *a land without a people for a people without a land*.

In 1917 Palestine passed from Ottoman to British rule. In accordance to Zionist interests, chancellor Arthur Balfour declared: "His Majesty's government welcomes the establishment in Palestine

of a national home for the Jewish people.” Thus, the support of the League of Nations and the United States as world hegemonic imperialism, enabled the genocide that would be committed a few years later. In May 1948, Zionism founded Israel razing 531 Palestinian villages, killing 15,000 and expelling and usurping the lands of 750,000 Palestinians. This was the *Nakba*, or catastrophe, of the Palestinian people.

IMPERIALISM, MILITARISM, RACISM AND TOTALITARIANISM

In 1933 Leon Trotsky described the Nazi regime as follows: “*In order to raise it above history, the nation is given the support of the race... Its tasks are assigned by monopolized capital. The compulsory concentration of all forces and resources of the people in the interests of imperialism—the true historic mission of the fascist dictatorship—means preparation for war; and this task, in its turn, brooks no internal resistance and leads to a further mechanical concentration of power.*”⁵ Just as Nazism called itself National Socialism, Zionism used a “socialist” veneer with the *kibbutzim* and Labor. But it is the fascist attributes that characterize Israel, the only settler-colonial state in the world:

- **Imperialist.** Israel and the United States are loyal allies. Apart from remittances from the powerful local Zionist lobby, Israel receives about 3,200 million non-refundable dollars a year from the White House, almost all of them aimed at the purchase of weapons. Thus, Israel plays the role of imperialist watchdog in the Middle East against the Arab peoples, while America hinders any sanction or vote against Israel in international forums.
- **Militaristic.** Israel is the most militarized state on the planet.⁶ Among 200 countries, Israel is the 10th importer and 9th exporter of weapons. It is 93rd in population, but 17th in firepower⁷ and possesses a nuclear arsenal. Its compulsory military service—key to achieving employment and forbidden to Arabs for “security reasons”—is the longest in the world: almost three years for men and two years for women. Military spending represents 12% of its total spending, with an army of 200 thousand soldiers and 500 thousand reservists (10% of the Jewish population).
- **Racist.** The Law of Return grants residency to Jewish immigrants and denies it to Palestinian



Joe Biden and Benjamin Netanyahu

refugees. The Absence Law allows Israel to confiscate houses from expelled Palestinians and the Land Law prevents Palestinians from renting them. Citizenship is denied to the spouse of an Israeli citizen if they come from Palestinian territory. According to the Nation-State Law, Israel is the Jewish homeland (theocracy), settlements are of national interest and Hebrew is the only official language. For security crimes, Jews are tried in civilian courts and Palestinians in military courts. This implies organic apartheid, ethnic cleansing and an endless anti-Palestinian genocide.

- **Totalitarian.** Israel does not comply with international regulations nor with UN resolutions, including the one that rules Jerusalem be shared with the Palestinian Authority. Israel declared the “whole and unified” city as its capital. Its Arab citizens, Palestinian workers and temporary “guest” staff have fewer rights. Israel only gives civil validation to Jewish marriage and there is no public transport on Saturdays. In addition to armed forces, police and border guards, there are about 700 thousand mostly armed settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, meaning a Zionist paramilitary force. Netanyahu seeks to outlaw Arab parties and subordinate the judicial power to the parliament under his control.

NETANYAHU, GENOCIDE AND REVULSION

Since its foundation in 1948, Israel has not stopped advancing on Palestinian territory and rounding up its people with civil war methods. That’s why the two-state “solution” is absolute fiction. There is no possible peace or coexistence with a serial killer as next-door neighbor. During the last 76 years, the Zionist narrative, unfortunately dominant in Israel, has not changed:

	PAST	PRESENT
Expansionism	"After the formation of a large army in the wake of the establishment of the state, we will abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine." ⁸ (David Ben-Gurion, Labor Zionist leader, 1st Prime Minister).	"I will not compromise on full Israeli security control over all the territory west of the Jordan [River], and this is contrary to a Palestinian state." ⁹ (Netanyahu).
Militarism	"The borders of our state will be defined by the limits of our strength." (Yisrael Galili, Zionist terrorist commander, former Government Minister). "We have the right to decide our borders according to our defensive needs." ¹⁰ (Yigal Alon, general and Labour leader).	"Only Israel will control the Gaza Strip. There will be an all-out war in Rafah until we finish. This won't end without a war in the north [Lebanon], we must enter by land and start fighting there." ¹¹ (Itamar Ben-Gvir, Minister of National Security).
Supremacism	"It is impossible for a Jewish person born from a family of purely Jewish blood to be adopted by the spiritual perspective of a German or a Frenchman." ¹² (Zeev Jabotinsky, leader of revisionism, the most far-right wing). ¹³	"The Jewish race is the most intelligent and has the highest human capital... We were blessed by God, we are the chosen people." ¹⁴ (Miki Zohar, Likud deputy).
Racism	"Palestinians are beasts that walk on two legs." ¹⁵ (Menachem Begin, Zionist paramilitary leader, former Prime Minister).	"We are fighting human animals." ¹⁶ (Yoav Gallant, commander of the Southern Command and Minister of Defense).

For Zionists, Palestinians are *subhuman*, as the Jewish people were for the Nazis. That is why its accusation of *anti-Zionism* as *anti-Semitic* is hypocritical. In recent years, the Israeli state's fascist matrix was compounded with its internal crisis, the international economic crisis since 2008 and the polarization that has an uneven political expression mostly on the right. This combination strengthened the Israeli far right, which has been advancing since 2009. In November 2022, Netanyahu, the head of Likud, won the elections in alliance with six fundamentalist religious parties. The Likud arose from a merger in 1988 with Herut, an ultra-Zionist party created in 1948.

- Even then, Albert Einstein, Hanna Arendt and other progressive Jewish personalities denounced Herut clearly: "*Very similar in its organization, methods, political philosophy and social appeal to the Nazis and fascist parties.*"¹⁷
- In 2018, the renowned Israeli historian Zeev Sternhell, former head of the Department of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, considered Israel has a "*growing fascism and racism similar to the initial Nazism.*"¹⁸
- A few months ago, former Foreign Minister Ben-Ami called Likud "*a sect of believers that is indistinguishable from its allies of 'religious Zionism' and 'a more refined component of the theocratic fascism that dominates Netanyahu's government today.'*"¹⁹

The UN called for a ceasefire and Biden proposes a difficult plan for both sides. Netanyahu, due to his judicial reform and handling of the attack on Gaza and then Rafah, has a strong internal opposition and had to dissolve his war cabinet.²⁰ Nevertheless, he continues his offensive, even in Lebanon. He could lose power otherwise. His criminal strategy against Palestine is revulsive, a boomerang on a global level. Israel was denounced for genocide before the International Criminal Court and several governments and states broke relations with the genocidal state. Likewise, it generated repudiation and massive youth actions in the United States, Europe and other countries in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The wave of protests evokes the great movement for Vietnam in the 70s. On the other hand, while fascism last century was anti-Semitic, the far right is currently pro-Zionist and anti-Palestinian, as shown by Argentine President Milei, among others.

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Just as the USSR in 1948 was the first country to recognize Israel together with the US, the communist parties also capitulated. The same was done by the bourgeoisies of Arab countries "normalizing" their relation with Israel. Even the Palestinian leadership, the PLO, followed suit a few years later. The political-military liberation movement led by Yasser Arafat signed the Oslo accords under American tutelage in 1993, recognizing the Zionist state and abandoning its historical struggle for a free, secular and democratic Palestine from the river to the sea.

This gigantic betrayal paved the way for a new

leadership of the Palestinian resistance in the heat of the intifadas: Islamic fundamentalism, including Hamas and other organizations. Let us not forget that in its initial decade Hamas was financed by Zionism in order to displace the PLO. Fundamentalist Islamism was thus strengthened in Palestine and the entire Middle East, with a pillar in the theocratic regime of the Ayatollahs that has ruled Iran since 1979. Even though Iran confronts Israel, it is not possible to assign any progressive feature to a capitalist and Islamist dictatorship, oppressor of workers, youth, women, LGBT+ people and the Kurdish minority.

With the same supreme leader for 35 years, a Council of Elders that defines the validation of candidacies, a justice system based on *sharia* - the strictest Islamic law - and a "morality police" that punishes women that do not wear the hijab in public, and even murdered the young Mahsa Amini, the political regime of Iranian capitalism is despotic. After the death of its president Ebrahim Raisi, a repressor with thousands of deaths to his name, there is now a struggle between sectors for power.

Iran manipulates the Palestinian cause, supports Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthi rebels in Yemen, where Al Qaeda also operates. Other branches of Islamic fundamentalism are the fanatical Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the jihadist terrorist groups, all of them counter-revolutionary: Boko Haram (Nigeria), Al Shabab (East Africa) and the dwindling ISIS (Afghan-Iranian border and African Sahel).

THE ONLY SOLUTION: SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The two-state "solution", which the UN and some governments and political sectors still propose, has clearly failed, and the option of establishing a single democratic, secular and binational Israeli-Palestinian state within the framework of this capitalist system in crisis is also absolute fantasy. On the other hand, Hamas' political project of a capitalist and Islamic Palestine is not a solution either. Since 2017 it has also accepted the 1967 borders, that is, coexistence with Israel.

The only effective solution is to dismantle the Zionist state as a whole, ensure the right of return for Palestinian refugees, recover the necessary housing and farmland and democratically plan the economy at the service of the majority. As Palestinian Trotskyist Jabra Nicola rightly said: "*The victorious Arab socialist revolution means the defeat of Zionism*

and the overthrowing of the entire Zionist state structure, the liquidation of imperialist domination and influence in the Arab East and the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian Arabs."²¹

These tasks imply confronting the interests of imperialism and the Arab bourgeoisie in the region. That is why our strategy is the struggle for a single, secular, democratic, non-racist and socialist Palestine as part of the revolutionary process for a voluntary federation of socialist republics of the Middle East. Only in that free Palestine will it be possible to solve in a democratic way how to integrate the Jewish minority that is willing to coexist with the Arab majority in peace with equal rights.

As Trotsky put it in 1937: "*A socialist democracy will not resort to compulsory assimilation. It is quite possible that within two or three generations the borders of an independent Jewish republic, like those of many other national regions, will be erased... The same methods of solving the Jewish issue, which under decaying capitalism have a utopian and reactionary character (Zionism), under the regime of a socialist federation will acquire a real and healthy meaning.*"²² 🌸

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2. Idem, page 115.
3. Called Leumi Bank since 1950, the main bank of Israel.
4. It continues to finance illegal Zionist settlements in the West Bank to this day.
5. What is National Socialism? In <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/trotsky/1933/junio/10.html>
6. Global index from www.bicc.de
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15. Begin and the Beasts, in the British Magazine New Statesman, 6/25/82.
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21. Now another crisis is added since the court ordered the conscription of the Haredi ultra-Orthodox, which parties should leave the government.
22. <https://matzpen.org/english/1972-09-14/theses-on-the-revolution-in-the-arab-east-a-said-jabra-nicola/>

EASTERN EUROPE and the RIGHT-WING WAVE: reasons, current situation and RESPONSES FROM THE LEFT

BY OLEG VERNIK



The tendency to strengthen right-wing and far-right forces in Eastern Europe has recently become very popular for both serious studies and countless, often unscrupulous, speculations on the topic. Therefore, it is very important for the socialist reader to delve deeper into this topic, to understand the reasons for the current situation, its course and to find the optimal direction of a left-wing policy. Often, Eastern European leftist forces are simply unable to raise anything in opposition to the right-wing wave, and the global left does not understand how it can help the Eastern European left.

Naturally, the weakness and insufficiency of truly socialist forces in this region of the planet more directly affects the current political balance. And here it is important to point out one of the key theses of our analysis: **the current growth and strengthening of the influence of the right and the far right in Eastern Europe, as well as the extreme weakness of the socialist forces in this region, have common causes and are closely linked and intertwined.** We will try to highlight some of them.

**THE COLLAPSE OF STALINISM CAUSED
A TURN TO THE RIGHT
THE LIBERAL DISCOURSE WAS SUBSTITUTED
BY A RIGHT-WING CONSERVATIVE ONE**

With the end of World War II, almost all of Eastern Europe was covered by the so-called

people's democracies, which to one degree or another copied the economic and political structure of the Soviet Union. Stalin took advantage of the presence of the Soviet army in the countries of Eastern Europe to exert a decisive influence on the outcome of the post-war political struggle in these countries. The Stalinist parties, which enjoyed both the support of broad sections of the working class and the support of the army, defeated the bourgeois parties in the parliamentary elections and established their monopoly of political power. The strict subordination of these parties to Moscow's policies and the course of abandoning the ideas of workers' democracy almost immediately formed a model of "deformed workers' states." It is important to note that, in fact, no "deformation" took place since initially there was no anti-capitalist and workers' revolution there, and the Stalinist models were initially implemented with the bayonets of the army.

It is no secret that **the long presence of the Soviet army and the Stalinist regimes, led the working masses to gradually perceive them as occupiers.** These feelings intensified especially in the countries of the so-called Warsaw Pact (created in 1955 under the control of the USSR in defiance of the Western imperialist NATO bloc), after the destruction of the Hungarian workers' revolution (1956) by the Soviet army and the invasion of Czechoslovakia to restore local control of the Moscow Communist Party (1968).

The bureaucratic model of planned economy, which was a copy of the USSR, did not allow the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe to show any advantage over the rapidly developing capitalist economies in Western Europe. The evident lag in economic development and in the standard of living of the population of the Eastern countries as compared to the Western ones considerably increased already critical feelings towards the Stalinist regimes that maintained power through army bayonets. Of course, it was liberal-bourgeois ideas that were widely spread among the masses at that time. The *perestroika* announced by Mikhail Gorbachev in the USSR in 1985 enabled the masses almost instantly, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to sweep away the authoritarian Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe and initiate the restoration of capitalism.

However, it is important to note that the process in many former Warsaw Pact countries became a bucket of cold water over the hot and aching heads of the masses, and illusions in capitalism quickly evaporated. Often the restoration of capitalism was accompanied by the destruction of entire industries that had previously been oriented to the USSR market. Mass unemployment of the population pushed millions of young workers to seek employment in Western European countries. The increase in social psychological depression and disillusionment with capitalism gradually began to acquire conservative characteristics, the influence of the Church grew, the clericalization of the population increased, and nationalist and far-right sentiments intensified.

The entry of former Warsaw Pact countries into the European Union was also accompanied from the outset by a higher level of illusions and expectations of the residents of Eastern European countries. However, it soon became clear that the rules of the European Union are determined, first and foremost, by the interests of capital in the leading Western European countries. And not all Eastern countries are within the sphere of interests of the leading Western capitals. Once again, the countries of the so-called "young European democracies" found themselves in an extremely difficult economic situation that affected the political sentiments of their voters.

It is important to note here that a healthy political phenomenon of "Euroskepticism" gradually began to transform in the mass consciousness into extreme forms of nationalism, clericalism, conservative security and traditionalism. This, in turn, caused many prominent bourgeois populist politicians in Eastern Europe to move sharply away from liberal to right-wing populist political discourse.

As part of this "turn", the populists brought to the fore objective issues for the broad masses. For example, Hungary's right-wing populist leader **Viktor Orbán** declared war on speculator and representative of global finance capital **George Soros**, who is of Hungarian-Jewish origin. Soros, as a global transcontinental player, came up with the concept of *open society*, which allows putting local governments and capitals under the control of globalized capital. For his part, Orbán deployed the policy

of “Hungary’s independent development” and significantly complicated his relations with the ruling circles of the pan-European EU bureaucracy. However, because the Hungarian working class was disappointed with both the restoration of capitalism and EU membership, it largely supported the right-wing populist policies of Orbán, **who has been Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010.**

During Viktor Orbán’s term of office, the clericalization of the country was actively promoted: a provision was introduced into the Constitution according to which the Hungarian people are united by God and Christianity. This, in turn, became a prerequisite for the subsequent legislative ban on abortion and same-sex marriage. Under Orbán’s government, monuments to **Miklós Horthy**, during whose reign Hungary was an ally of Nazi Germany in World War II, were erected to replace the demolished monuments of Stalinist leaders. The government also passed a series of laws that greatly complicated the lives of the Roma (“gypsy”) minority. Widespread use of firearms (supposedly “for self-defense”) was allowed,



which strengthened informal right-wing extremist militarist organizations, often with a strong anti-Roma orientation.

Orbán’s traditional support for Vladimir Putin’s imperialist foreign policy cannot be explained solely by the high degree of dependence of the Hungarian economy on the energy resources of the Russian Federation. Both leaders are united by right-wing conservative views promoting “traditional values”, “a strong family”, the Church, anti-communism and hatred of LGBT people.

Similar processes of strengthening extremely conservative public and official discourse are also observed in Poland. For decades, one of the main political forces has been the **Law and Justice Party (PiS)** which adheres to a national-conservative ideological orientation with strong elements of clericalism and close ties to the Catholic Church.

The Law and Justice Party won the elections for the first time in **2005**, declaring itself an alternative to the “powerful leftist and liberal elite”. According to its ideologues, Poland must free itself not only from the negative legacy of the “socialist past”, but also from the dubious values of liberal society acquired during the last two decades. In their political practice, they contrast European and Polish values based on Christian traditions. The two presidents representing this party were **Lech Kaczynski and Andrzej Duda**. Under strong pressure from the government, **on October 22, 2020, the Constitutional Tribunal outlawed a woman’s right to abortion** in case of a serious defect or incurable disease in the fetus, which accounts for approximately 98% of the total number of abortions in Poland.

Unlike its Hungarian right-wing conservative partners, Law and Justice traditionally pursues an anti-Russian policy based on cultivating the memory of the defeat of Tukhachevsky’s advancing Red Army in 1920 near Warsaw by Polish troops. As noted above, PiS depends on the strongest Catholic Church in Europe, which during the years of Stalinist rule was perceived by the broad masses as a center of moral resistance to the “communist occupation.”

As noted above, the growing influence of right-wing populist political forces in the countries of Eastern Europe and the weakness of the socialist political camp have a common cause: the counterrevolutionary legacy of Stalinism, which for many years discredited the left alternative in the eyes of the great masses. **“Deformed workers states” were formed in the region, not as a result of proletarian socialist revolutions, but of the control and influence of Moscow and its presence in these countries, in deed, of the Soviet occupying army. The Soviet army was not withdrawn from these countries after the end of World War II in agreement with Western imperial-**

ism and more directly influenced the establishment in power of the pro-Moscow “communist” parties. For the broad masses, these regimes, on the one hand, were perceived as occupiers and, on the other, as anti-working class. Consequently, this fact explains to a large extent why after the disappointment with capitalism and the European Union millions of workers came under the influence of and electorally support conservative right-wing forces, often openly far-right ones, and not left-wing socialist forces.

The weakness of the political left in Eastern Europe is obvious. Although left-wing parties are often represented in parliaments, they fail to present themselves to the working people as a real alternative to both the mainstream of bourgeois power and their radical right-wing opponents. Most parties of the left have transformed into social-democratic leadership and originate precisely in the old parties with Stalinist tradition. Taking advantage of their bureaucratic past, many of them, in the first years of the restoration of hardcore capitalism, managed to accumulate around them the sentiments of protest and to transform them smoothly from the tasks of the struggle for workers’ revolution to parliamentary tasks within the framework of the bourgeois democratic regime. These parties are so strongly integrated and conditioned to official systemic politics as a “left segment” of the regime that they have rightly ceased to be perceived by the working class as a real alternative to the dominant capitalist politics.

This also applies to the **Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD)** party, which has transformed itself into the **Nowa Lewica** parliamentary party and participates in the ruling coalition with the liberals around the current president of Poland, **Donald Tusk**. It also applies to the **Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)**, which has repeatedly participated in government coalitions and has had its own presidents in Bulgaria. The **Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt)** and many other similar political projects have a similar history and tradition. Of course, the German parliamentary party “**The Left**” (**Die Linke; Linkspartei**), which has its electoral base in East Germany (former German Democratic Republic), is no exception.

In the context of these systemic “left-wing” organizations, numerous populist and radical right-wing parties and movements are often perceived as a real alternative to government policy. Right-wing populists transform the righteous hatred of ordinary people towards the EU bureaucracy into isolationist ideas and ideas of a “special path” for their countries. **In Eastern Europe, nationalist rhetoric has intensified and is increasingly actively com-**



ined with right-wing anti-immigrant tendencies.

Faced with difficulties in receiving and integrating new waves of immigrants from the Middle and Central East and North Africa, Western European countries are trying to redistribute a significant part of them to Eastern European countries. Right-wing populists are scoring points by criticizing this policy of EU officials and trying to prevent the entry of migrants. Viktor Orbán, whom we have already discussed several times, **is a fervent and public opponent of immigration**, he is in favor of Hungary introducing quotas for immigrants, but not the European Union. The reason is Hungary’s transit location, from where migrants, especially from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, are transported to Western Europe from a refugee camp in the city of **Debrecen**.

Right-wing populists and radicals lie to their voters, offer imaginary alternatives, propose to solve complex and profound problems by means of extremely simplified, schematic solutions and by trying to pit workers against each other. The issue of migration cannot be addressed by isolating each country and clos-

ing borders. Global migration waves, as a rule, are associated not only with horrible military conflicts in the Near and Middle East countries, but also with the needs for new and cheap labor in the capitalist economies of European countries, which seek to reduce the costs of production by reducing the wages of their workers united in strong trade unions. Immigrants who are forced to work for miserable incomes and are deprived of their full rights are filling the labor markets of Western



Volodimir Zelenski
and Joe Biden

Europe. And Eastern Europe will by no means become a kind of exception to the general rules of capitalist economics.

A truly progressive approach to immigration and to the problems on which the far right speculates will only be possible with a turn to socialist transformation, through the destruction of capitalism, the introduction of a democratically planned economy and workers' governments throughout the world.

UKRAINE, THE STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION AND THE DANGER OF THE RIGHT

Ukraine also belongs territorially to the countries of Eastern Europe, but in the analysis of the political processes taking place in and around it, the category of *post-Soviet space* becomes even more relevant. For more than 30 years, it has gone through the painful processes of separation from the Russian Federation, the realization of its right to self-determination and development of a free and independent life. Here, the legacy of many years of Stalinism most decisively shapes both the extreme-

ly weak left-wing socialist movement and the tendency of strengthening right-wing forces. It is one of the few countries in Eastern Europe in which there is not a single left-wing representative or political party with parliamentary representation.

In other texts, I have pointed out several times that Russian imperialist propagandism deliberately and repeatedly exaggerates the strength and influence of the right and far right in Ukraine, which, all together, did not win more than 2 or 3% of the votes in the parliamentary and presidential elections. When Russian propaganda falsely labels all Ukrainian people resisting the invasion as *Ukrainians*, *Ukrainian fascists* or bandits, it becomes indispensable to understand the real situation and its origins going back to the history of the struggle for national liberation.

In 1938, Stalin expelled the Communist Party of Poland and its component, the Communist Party of Western Ukraine (KPZU) from the Comintern. By then, the Comintern, created in 1921 by Lenin in Moscow, had long since capitulated to the Stalinist counterrevolution and the Soviet bureaucracy. The official basis for this expulsion was, as always, "Trotskyism", which had penetrated deeply into the KPZU and had to be fought against. The leading figures of the KPZU were shot, according to the decision of the Stalinist courts, for being "*collaborators of the Trotskyists and agents of fascism.*" Of course, this was just another episode of the anarchic Stalinist repressions against sincere and devoted working-class communists. In fact, Leon Trotsky's International carried out its active work among the Western Ukrainian Communists and Stalin, who was terrified of losing control over this Comintern party, decided that it was better to destroy the whole organization than to lose decisive control over its assets.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the KPZU was undoubtedly one of the flagships of the national liberation struggle. In the difficult conditions of the Polish occupation of the territory of Western Ukraine, the KPZU, as the main left-wing force in the region, waged a struggle for the reunification of the entire Ukrainian people. In the ranks of this party, from the mid-1930s, elements extremely critical of Stalin's policies in Soviet Ukraine be-

came increasingly prominent. The truth about the famine of 1932-1933 and the problems of forced Russification could not be hidden from the workers of Western Ukraine. The KPZU constituted the left flank of the national liberation movement, and the right flank consisted of numerous nationalist formations, many of which were ideologically oriented towards one or another version of right-wing radicalism, including Italian fascism and German national socialism. **The destruction of the KPZU in 1938-1941 is one of the most serious crimes of Stalinism against the Ukrainian people.**

A well-known Ukrainian proverb says that *“a holy place is never empty”*. And it is quite obvious that after the Stalinist regime destroyed the communists in Western Ukraine, the banner of the Ukrainian people’s national liberation struggle passed to right-wing formations and, above all, to the radical right-wing **Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)**. It was this group’s legacy that became commonplace for many young people after Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, and for the authorities it is part of history subject to official glorification.

Consequently, the whole leftist idea is still associated with Stalinism and its crimes. It was in this political framework that **on April 9, 2015 the Ukrainian parliament adopted a package of laws on de-communization**. At that time Crimea was already occupied and the war in Donbass was in full swing. Despite the fact that these laws on “communism” exclusively signify the ideological legacy of the Soviet period of history, and the package of laws itself was aimed at putting an end to the activities of the **post-Stalinist Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU)**, a situation of serious discomfort and even danger in carrying out political work arose for all left-wing forces, even those distanced from the Stalinism of the USSR era.

It is also important to note here that, in connection with the policy of accession to the European Union set out in the Ukrainian Constitution and the recognition of the priority of “European values”, all successive Ukrainian authorities, without exception, try to protect the LGBT community from far-right street attacks during their pride parades and public events. Many employees of Western embassies in Kyiv are directly involved in LGBT events to make

them safer for Ukrainian participants. LGBT events are protected by reinforced police units, whose total number is many times higher than the total number of right-wing attackers. However, the degree of far-right street violence is still quite significant. It is also interesting to note that, according to official statistics, there has been no trend towards an increase in ethnically and racially motivated crimes in Ukraine for many years. Perhaps these statistics are not entirely accurate, but they still give us some,



albeit extremely cautious, optimism in analyzing current trends in Ukrainian society.

The growth of right-wing populism in Eastern Europe is associated with the global problem of the popularity of this trend. It can manifest itself in various forms: from religious fundamentalist to right-wing nationalist, from right-wing libertarian to neo-Nazi. All versions are intertwined in providing superficial responses to complex social problems - placing local and global agendas - and in open hostility to the working class and its ideology. Right-wing populism seeks to impose an extremely low level of public education, cultivated by global capital for the segregation of the working masses, their mass stupefaction and deception. The arduous task that lies ahead is to transmit to the working class and peoples the need to build true socialist left-wing alternatives, radically opposed to all right-wing and populist versions, with their homophobia, racism, xenophobia and clericalism. *“He who walks shall rule the road!”* 🐜

Europe: the FAR-RIGHT INCUBATES THE VIRUS OF BARBARISM

BY RUBÉN TZANOFF

The far-right phenomenon generates concern. What are the causes of its rise and its characteristics? There is a mobilized pole that goes in the opposite direction. Socialism is the strategic barrier against barbarism.



THE "EUROPEANISTS" HAVE THE MAJORITY

The new 720-seat European Parliament that emerged from the June 6-9 election will be composed as follows: The traditional center-right, Christian Democrats of the European People's Party (EPP) amount to 186 seats. The progressives and social democrats of the Party of European Socialists (S&D) amount to 135. The Liberals of Renew Europe, 79 seats. Thus, the three main European political families remain in the majority. The far-right and conservative groups acquired the following representation: European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) got 73 seats and Identity and Democracy (ID) 58 seats. The Greens/EFA dropped to 53 seats. The institutional left, the GUE/NGL, held on with 36 seats. The rest of the seats will be occupied by non-registered MEPs and other that do not belong to a political group of the outgoing Parliament. The turnout was 51%, which reflects a significant abstention rate.

THE GROWTH OF THE FAR-RIGHT

The most concerning element was the results obtained by the far-right since, in its different variants, it won in France, Italy, Belgium, Hungary and Austria; it obtained second place

in Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and the Czech Republic and, except for Malta and Slovenia, it will have representatives from all the countries of the Bloc. This phenomenon is not homogeneous since it also registered partial setbacks in Hungary, Sweden and Finland.¹

Divided and mutating

During the IX legislature the far right was divided into two groups that are in the process of a complete realignment toward the X legislature. The first group is Identity and Democracy (ID), which includes National Regroupment (RN), Vlaams Belang (Flemish independentists), The League and Alternative for Germany (AfD). Its composition changed when the AfD candidate, Maximilian Krah, defended the Nazi SS in the middle of the campaign and Le Pen and Salvini broke with the group, which meant its liquidation. The second group is European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), which was formed by Meloni's Brothers of Italy, Law and Justice (PiS, Poland) and Vox. But Vox announced their withdrawal from the alliance with Meloni in ECR to join the new Patriots for Europe group, led by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Fidesz), Vladimir Putin's main ally in the EU. They also announced their integration into Le Pen's National Regroupment, which will have the presidency, and Matteo Salvini's League. Alternative for Germany also formed a third group of the far right, called Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN).

POLITICAL EARTHQUAKES IN FRANCE AND GERMANY

In France, Emmanuel Macron lost the European elections to Marine Le Pen's ultranationalist National Grouping (RN), dissolved the National Assembly and called legislative elections. He lost them again, in the first round to RN and in the second round to the New Popular Front (NFP). The far-right grew, but did not obtain the necessary majority to impose their prime minister. In Germany, which was the cornerstone of Nazi barbarism, the ultranationalist and xenophobic Alternative for Germany (AfD) broke out as the second national force, with a lot of influence in the regions of the former German Democratic Republic. In the heart of the European Union, of which both countries are founders and its fundamental pillars, the far-right acquired strong support.

Comparison with fascism

Although throughout European history there have been different waves of reactionary formations with their own characteristics, the most important comparison must be made between original fascism and the current far right. They coincide in the defense of imperialist capitalism, racism and the denial of rights. They differ in that fascists transformed the regimes in a counter-revolutionary way and their violent organizations applied methods of civil war against the working class, while today's far right is adapted to the institutions of bourgeois democracy and lacks shock organizations of sufficient strength to defeat the mobilized working people. It would be a mistake to underestimate the far right. In fact, at a really small scale, some violent Nazi/fascist groups are already operating and we cannot rule out the possibility of parties taking that course in the future, since they are not a result of a circumstantial phenomenon but have come to stay.

The new leadership of the Executive power

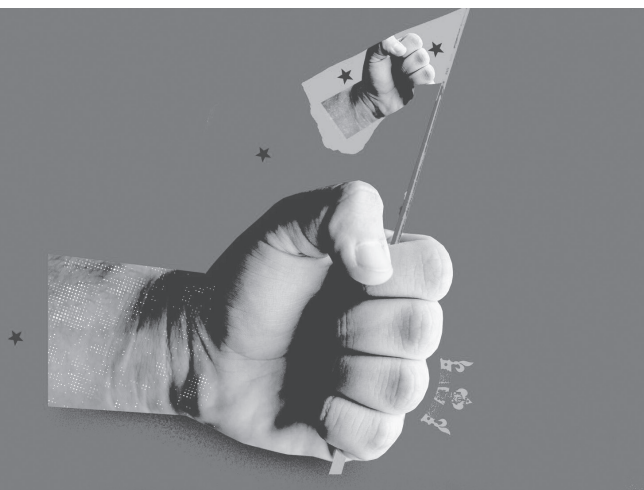
The European Parliament is directly elected by popular vote and shares the legislative function with the Council of the European Union. Once constituted, the legislature elects the President of the European Commission by an absolute majority and approves or rejects the appointment of the College of Commissioners. The 2019-2024 presidency of the European Commission was held by the German Christian Democrat Ursula von der Leyen, grouped in the EPP, who agreed to the renewal of her mandate for another five years based on the appointments negotiated between the Christian Democratic, socialist and liberal groups. The other important positions they agreed on are Portuguese socialist Antonio Costa as president of the European Council, and Estonian liberal Kaja Kallas as high representative for foreign policy of the European Union.

A VICIOUS AND REPEATED CYCLE

Among the causes that account for the rise of the far right we can mention the continuity of the capitalist economic crisis and the EU project; the delegitimization of bourgeois democracy, its mechanisms and parties; the emergence of personalities backed by powerful interests that agitate for solutions as simple as they are false; and the coverage of the mass media and the dissemination through social media as well. However, the determining factor is the role that reformist parties play before and/or after coming to power. Initially, they gather sympathy with promises of radical transformations. Later, they betray them, adapt to the regime, do not solve the pressing needs of the working people, benefit the privileged, disappoint those who trusted them and, thus, facilitate the access of reactionaries to power.

SYRIZA, PRECURSOR OF THE DERAILMENT

The cascade of reformist disasters began in Greece. In 2015, Alexis Tsipras and Syriza came to power positioned against the troika formed by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the IMF. The expectation generated by the "New Left" in the Hellenic and worldwide vanguard was as great as the disappointment caused by the subsequent betrayal of the radical promises. As a result, New Democracy recovered and the neo-fascist Golden Dawn gained prominence.



In Spain, since the 15M 2011, the *indignados* (outraged) were a beacon of transformative hope with the protests from which Pablo Iglesias and Podemos emerged. However, gradually, Podemos adapted to the institutions until it was integrated into the bourgeois government of the PSOE, one of the pillars of the 1978 regime shaped by Francoism. Once again the Social Democrats, center-leftists and the Communist Party left a space for the recovery of the PP, the emergence of the far-right Vox and of “the party is over”.

In Italy, Giorgia Meloni governs the country with the Brothers of Italy party, which has its roots in post-war fascism. Since she came to power, she claims that her movement has changed, but her reactionary anti-immigrant and anti-democratic policies are part of the ideology that she claims to temper. The reformist frustration that paved the way for Matteo Salvini’s League and Meloni lies in the repeated agreements of Communist Refoundation with bourgeois governments.

From the seat of government in Portugal, the Socialist Party, subordinated to capitalism and the dominant institutionality, did not solve any of the structural problems of the working people and thus contributed to the rise of the Democratic Alliance and the neo-fascist Chega. The contribution of the Left Bloc and the Portuguese Communist Party, which did not provide a consistent alternative, cannot be underestimated either.

In Germany, Die Linke did not come to power, but it became the fourth political force in the Bundestag in 2009. Since then, it softened its most radical positions and weakened as an option for change. Along the way, the AfD, which officially classifies as far right and promotes the territorial expulsion of millions of people under the concept of remigration, grew stronger.

PARTICULAR SIGNS

Within the framework of the heterogeneity of the far right, since there are anti-Semites and Islamophobes, pro-Russia and pro-Ukraine sectors, those in favor of the EU and those against it, it can be said, in broad terms, that it is expanding among “native” workers stirring up the false idea that social deficiencies are due to the proliferation of “foreign” immigrants. They target the disillusioned who are looking for “novel” ways to punish the established political order. They are ultranationalists and cultists of the values of the Catholic Church. They

are climate change deniers, enemies of the feminist, LGBTIQ+ and human rights movements. As Islamophobes and racists they defend the worst inhumane measures to hold the walls of “Fortress Europe” against immigration.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE POLARIZATION

Mobilizations and the social and democratic struggles constitute the positive pole of the situation. Strikes in the UK are a symptom of the recovery of the working class. In France, when the Republican Party was preparing to come to power, a sector of the population mobilized and voted, with young people leading the way, for the far right to not win. Anti-fascist actions were also important in Germany for the prohibition of AfD, and in Greece there was a national and international campaign that prevented the realization of a pan-European neo-fascist rally in Athens. Growing polarization is also expressed in the mobilizations of solidarity with Palestine against the genocide carried out by Israel. The reactionary pole gains political representation; the progressive pole does not yet have it, but it is stronger in the streets. It’s a significant unresolved contradiction.

A STRATEGY TO BE BUILT

The support, promotion and coordination of the struggles of the working people for their social and democratic rights constitute the main tasks against the capitalist scourges. Preventing the normalization of the existence of the far right and crushing it in all areas, as they incubate the virus of barbarism, is also a present task. The best antidotes to the counterrevolutionaries wherever they stick their heads out are the broadest unity of action in mobilization and organized self-defense. In short, *Europeanists* and *Euroscptics* are only fighting to decide who is the best administrator of imperialist capitalism. That is why the real solution is not the popular front strategy but the construction of socialist and revolutionary parties with mass influence, towards a Europe governed by workers in a free Federation of European Socialist Republics. 🇺🇸

1. In the early elections of July 4 in Great Britain, the Labor Party displaced the Conservative Party from power, the far-right Reform UK party grew and entered Parliament. In France’s early legislative elections, the far-right National Rally won the first round without



France: an electoral cycle that reveals **GROWING POLITICAL INSTABILITY**

BY TRISTAN KATZ

A GREAT POLITICAL CRISIS

The European elections of June 9th, 2024, caused an initial shock in France. Across the continent, the far right advanced in Austria, Hungary, Belgium and France, where it was in the lead, and made advances in Poland, Netherlands and Germany. But with more than 31%, the National Rally (RN is its French acronym) has become a force to be reckoned with: it is no longer an auxiliary force, but one capable of governing. This plebiscite against Emmanuel Macron was merely the continuation of a long period of defiance in which the 2022 legislative elections secured his re-election but left his government with a parliamentary minority. This had forced the French presidency to further circumvent the parliament with short-circuit devices like the famous 49.3,¹ which allows the imposition of a measure by compromising the responsibility of the government.

Finding himself in a deadlock with three years of his mandate ahead, Macron dissolved the National Assembly that same day, to the general surprise even of his own government and close associates. Aiming to turn the situation around with a blitz-

krieg campaign, after the second round on July 7 he achieved the opposite result: the reformist left² temporarily regrouped in the New Popular Front (NFP) - uniting players who had insulted each other as antisemites on one side and liberals on the other - raised RN to first parliamentary force, dividing the parliament into three almost equal thirds, with the NFP, the ill-named coalition around Renaissance,³ and RN, which managed to divide part of the conservative right-wing apparatus (Republicans) with Éric Ciotti.

AN INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS: DEADLOCK, ILLUSIONS AND GROWING INSTABILITY

As Mark Twain rightly said, there are three kinds of lies: Lies, damned lies, and statistics. Although we do not share the American writer's reservations about the so despised field of mathematics, it must be said that these elections reveal fractures, illusions and a situation of unprecedented deadlock. To highlight a series of partly counter-intuitive results, we must present the facts and figures in the singular context of this rainy French summer. Single-round European elections and two-round legislative elec-

tions generally have a very different scope: the former generally serve as a relief, the latter to ratify or counterbalance the very strong presidential power in France with its institutions of the Fifth Republic. But in this case, their proximity allows a comparison between them.

The number of people registered to vote was 43.3 million, but it must be considered that, although the participation in the legislative elections was the highest since 1981, when the left came to power, there was a high level of abstention among the working classes, often above 50%. There were also 9 million people not registered on the electoral roll and three million foreigners, many of them workers without electoral rights. That said, several important trends emerge from the 28.8 million voters (66.6%). The rejection of Macron is indisputable, with almost 80% of the electorate voting against him; the rise of the far right and above all its reach are indisputable (it came in first in 32,000 of the 35,000 municipalities); the NFP managed to significantly increase its votes, and the revolutionary left managed, in the face of adversity, to gather 360,000 votes thanks to the work of *Lutte Ouvrière* (LO). RN obtained 7.7 million votes in the European elections and 10.1 million in the parliamentary elections, leading the political forces. But the two-round electoral system allows all kinds of maneuvers: for example, the NFP withdrew unconditionally to block the far right in favor of The Republicans and, above all, of Macron's supporters, who made no great gestures in return. Hence the resulting composition of the National Assembly: 182 NFP, 168 Ensemble (Macron), 46 Republicans, 143 RN.

The NFP has saved Macron's supporters, once again, after the deadlock during the Le Pen-Macron duels of 2017 and 2022. *Gérald Darmanin*, the sinister Minister of the Interior, and *Élisabeth Borne*, who trashed the pensions, were able to benefit from the generosity of the left. While the NFP loudly proclaims itself victorious, the situation is much more contrasted. It is an illusion: the NFP, with one third of the chamber, cannot form a stable government, not to mention a Senate that is totally favorable to the conservatives. We can add to this illusion the deadlock situation: the Macronist bloc must make a pact with a part of the NFP or the right-wing, and will still be shy of the 289 deputies necessary for an absolute majority. Instability is

the order of the day, and each fragile coalition will be at the mercy of a vote of censure, which would reveal the blocking power attained by RN.

TEMPORARY IMPASSE AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS

But there is some truth in Twain's mischievous observation: figures do not show the whole picture, even less so when it comes to politics. From the point of view of the French bourgeoisie, the situation is revealing and concerning. The Paris Stock Exchange did not tremble with the electoral crisis, and the CAC 40, which measures the stock prices of the 40 largest capitalist groups, did not suffer in the least. If one looks at things from their class consciousness, half rentist and half financial, things are quite stable as far as the projects defended by the National Assembly are concerned. All the parties represented, from the NFP to the RN, support the single currency and the major orientations of European policy on the economic and even military level. The NFP wants a "French presence" in the world with a modern army, and has advocated not only voting for military budgets, but also increasing them. RN pledged to remain in NATO and distanced itself from its tacit support for Vladimir Putin's policies and his direct financial support for election campaigns.

On another note, the idea of a technical government, a coalition combining social democrats and the right or even the far right, as in Austria and some German districts, illustrates a very European convergence to govern. But these advantages in the current situation are overshadowed by the reality of fragile governments that overexpose the presidency: the "Down with Macron!" demand is not going to disappear in the future.

But if we want to clarify the situation, in order to correctly address the solutions for the working class and the youth, we must move away from the analyses, unfortunately popular on the far left, which evacuate the material foundations of the development of capitalism in the narrow French market. However interesting they may be, analyses centered on reactionary ideas and their spread (the fascistization of society) or on the policies of the bourgeoisie (the crisis of the bourgeois bloc) do not grasp the social dynamics of the vote for Jordan Bardella (RN), the reorganization of capitalism in France... and even less the opportunities for the proletariat and revolutionaries.

Capitalism in the Macron era works well for the bourgeoisie. According to the *Le Figaro* of July 10, the number of millionaires continues to rise, with more than 2.8 million lucky ones. A class of rentists that seems to be taken from Karl Marx's descriptions in *The Class Struggles in France* (1850) or *The 18th Brumaire* (1852). Easy money on the one hand, but 17 straight months of industrial contraction with massive layoffs in sight, especially among automobile subcontractors. And these social imbalances can no longer be hidden. A study by the Bank of France paints a vivid picture of the price of this wealth accumulated at the expense of the rest of society over the last 40 years, which have seen the left and the right alternate in power. In 1983, the richest 1% owned 15.9% of all personal wealth in France, the richest 10% owned 50%, and the poorest 50% owned only 8.9%. By 2022, these inequalities had become even worse. The richest 1% now owned 24% of the country's wealth (an increase of more than 60%), the richest 10% owned 57.7%, and the poorest 50% saw their share of personal wealth fall to only 5.1% (a drop of 48%). Additionally, there are more than 9 million people living below the poverty line and 5.3 million registered unemployed.

French imperialist capitalism is painfully transformed: it is being expelled from Africa, its population is aging and the proletariat is scarce to such an extent that Patrick Martin, the leader of the MEDEF (the employers' organization), declared in January 2024 that three million workers were lacking to cover the needs of the bourgeoisie. That is where the RN vote finds its strength. Racism, which remains a permanent feature of RN's electoral dynamics, was joined in the last decade by the anguish of social decline. The rejection of politicians is not new, but it is increasing and does not explain everything. In addition to these factors, there is the decline of France, the fear of wars approaching from Ukraine, and a European Union that seems impotent: all this feeds a renewed nationalism. Combined with racism, it is a powerful poison for the working class.

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF RN

The illusion raised by the NFP of a stolen victory should not make us forget that millions of workers expressed their rejection of RN's racism. Undoubtedly, the violence between the two electoral rounds and the explosion of hate speeches

in neighborhoods and workplaces are not alien to it. That is why the revolutionaries who ran independently from the left in the first round, with their nuances in favor of LO and the New Anti-Capitalist Party - Revolutionaries (NPA-R), showed solidarity with this vote in the second round in favor of the leftist candidates of the NFP. The key to the situation lies in the unity of the working class (and therefore its struggle against racism and all oppression) but also in the implementation of emergency measures against the social disaster led by Macron, emerged from social democracy or from the vengeful right wing and the lurking RN. So, what can we do?

The situation is difficult for the revolutionary militants who preserved their class independence by running successively in the European and legislative elections in barely a month. Lutte Ouvrière and the NPA-R made this militant and financial effort, with modest results, which are nonetheless a point of support. The 360,000 votes (4/5 obtained by LO) can mean, in fact, that there is a minority that expressed its distrust of the reformist's electoral promises, while supporting revolutionary communist ideas. It is not a question of organizing voters, but of creating a collaboration among revolutionaries so that in the face of the reformist, macronist and neo-fascist poles, a pole of revolutionaries can emerge. It is not about an electoral bloc, nor is it about a unified organization.

The social clashes to come are as important as our responsibilities. We believe collaboration, the progressive coordination of our interventions, with confrontation as well, but above all the fact of presenting ourselves together - with our differences - to the workers and the youth will allow us to pave a road toward a new leadership opposed to the class conciliation of the NFP, of an orientation of breaking away from the trade union centrals for the coming struggles. And time is of the essence. By the way, Bardella saw the prospect of being Prime Minister recede, but he managed to form a new far-right group in the European Parliament, the Patriots of Europe (13 countries, 84 deputies, the third European parliamentary bloc). Not a bad consolation prize. 🍷

1. Constitutional article that allows the government, if the parliament fails to comply with a deadline, to decree a measure.

2. In France, reformists are called leftists and revolutionaries are called far left.

3. Macron's alliance.

REACTIONARY SOVEREIGNTY in Europe

BY PARTITO COMUNISTA DEI LAVORATORI



The relative growth of right-wing and/or far-right expressions in Europe is one of the features of the continental situation. It did not develop consistently, neither regarding its political nature nor its reach. But this trend is real and inseparable from the general context of the EU: all the way from the joint crisis of European capitalism, from bourgeois liberalism, to the workers' movement.

THE DEEP CRISIS OF THE EU

The European Union is going through a deep structural crisis which has unfolded over time. The capitalist crisis of 2008 hit the EU hard. The double continental recession of 2008/2011 and the public debt crisis exposed the contrasts of interests between Germany and the Mediterranean imperialist countries. The imperialist rise of China after 2008 and the global centrality of the inter-imperialist clash between the US and China undermined the weight of the EU on a global scale.

The imperialist growth of Putin's Russia and its power politics, culminating in the invasion of Ukraine, deepened its crisis even further.

Now, the combination of Russian pressure, the crisis of US world hegemony and global competition against the US and China makes European imperialism face new challenges: the need for its own military force integrated into NATO, with the capacity for independent initiative and the demand for a growth of investment in the ecological transition. For this purpose, the main forces of big capital propose to relaunch the process of EU integration based on a new continental indebtedness.

But the same global emergency that pushes for European integration deepens the contradictions that erode it. Each of the national imperialist powers in Europe cultivates its own interests.

German imperialism opposes new European indebtedness, relying on the superiority of its state balance index, with the allocation of 100 billion investment in its military budget.

French imperialism, hit by the fall of its area of influence in Africa, is requesting taking continental debt based on the interests of its military hegemony in Europe.

Italian imperialism joins France in asking for debt from the European banks but, at the same time, plays with US imperialism to obtain recognition of its role in Africa to the detriment of France.

In reality, all European imperialist powers are participating in the global arms race. But the weight of the national state balance sheets, which vary greatly, increases the divergences in the EU.

At the same time, the gap is widening between the EU and its competing powers, the United States and China, which have considerably higher spending and public borrowing capacity and large internal reserves of raw materials. Meanwhile, the expansion of protectionism together with the clash between the imperialist poles weakens the traditional strength of the EU as the first exporting pole.

THE CRISIS OF BOURGEOIS LIBERALISM AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION

The evolution of the world stage is bearing down on the European proletariat. The jump in military investments and the public call for a war economy imply new cuts to social services. The energy crisis and protectionist tendencies translate into rising prices and a new blow to wages. The payment of the public debt, along with the crisis of the state balance sheets, cuts environmental investments for energy conversion. The increasing militarization as an answer to public opinion is a blow to democratic rights as a result of the criminalization of anti-Zionist mobilizations (in particular in Germany and France).

European governments are experiencing an extensive consensus crisis. Except for Baltic countries and those near the Russian border (Poland), the campaign of the ruling circles in favor of a war economy fails to dominate public opinion.

The self-reduction of the announced commitments with the Green Deal, under the pressure of the bosses, along with the influence of the reconversion measures that fall on the backs of the workers, have generated great re-

sistance from broad popular sectors. The crisis of the health and pension systems, added to the inflationary pressure on wages, nourishes the discontent of vast social sectors.

The instability of political balances in Europe is a reflection of the crisis of popular consensus. Political polarization is the dominant trend in Europe.

This polarization bears the sign of the deep crisis of the European left. The old social democracy often supported the course of employers' policies during their governments, sometimes even leading them. Their prolonged identification with austerity plans eroded their power and in some cases determined their collapse. At the same time, the parties of the so-called "European Left", which in the last 20 years sought to place themselves to the left of traditional social democracy, cyclically joined the governments of the bourgeoisie in important EU countries, dissipating their own potential. First Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, then Syriza in Greece, finally Podemos in Spain, symbolized the self-destruction or the decline of left reformism.

GEOGRAPHY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOVEREIGNTIST RIGHT

In this context, the development of the sovereigntist right in multiple European countries (from Germany to France, from Portugal to Romania and from Austria to the Netherlands) is the result of political polarization.

The right-wing camp in Europe is not homogeneous at all. There are two main branches: the Party of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), led by Giorgia Meloni, the post-fascist leader of the Italian government; and Identity and Democracy (ID) which mainly groups Marine Le Pen's RN in France and Matteo Salvini's Lega in Italy. These two, in turn, have numerous divided sectors within, each conditioned by their varying national situations. ECR aims to shift the political axis of Europe to the right, replacing social democracy in the alliance with the European People's Party (EPP). ID is more clearly opposed to the liberals (Macron). On the other hand, RN (Le Pen) is working on her own institutional office, with the possibility of conquering the presidency of the French Republic, which is

why she broke with the German extreme right (Afd). Orban's party, after his expulsion from EPP, is openly competed for by ECR and ID.

Sovereignism, which had been losing momentum in different ways, aims to represent declassed sectors of the petty and middle bourgeoisie, as well as to build a petty/middle bourgeois hegemony over broad popular sectors and wage workers, in the periphery and in the provinces. An attempt to capitalize on the joint crisis of the liberal establishment and the European labor movement from the right. The influence of the sovereigntist right on the industrial working class of key European countries (like France and Italy) is a sign of old social blocs crumbling. The opposition of



“social rights” to civil rights, in the name of the values of tradition, seeks to capitalize on the failure of bourgeois governments and their liberal rhetoric. A confrontation between “the people and the elite”, always with the screen of the reactionary ideological narrative. God-Fatherland-Family are their favorite words.

The European far right, for the most part, cannot be characterized as “fascist.” Fascist elements are present, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the different contexts, but they are not hegemonic.

Paradoxically, the same setback of the class struggle in Europe that favored the development of the far right also contained its properly fascist components (like Golden Dawn in Greece). It's not really about the old traditional right, like the Gaullist Republicans in France, or even Berlusconi's party in the Italy of the 90s and 2000s. It is a new reactionary right, born of the crisis of bipolarity between the old

bourgeois parties, which is nourished by the decomposition of its social blocs. A right-wing child of the great capitalist crisis of 2008.

Europe's great capital does not accept the extreme right as its political representative. It seeks to consolidate the EU as a whole and, more so, to develop elements of integration as far as possible to face its competition with the imperialist poles of the USA and China. Even so, the big bourgeoisie does not rule out the use of the far right in favor of its own class interests: it relies on its action of dividing workers, on its policy of “law and order”, on the endowment that the far right brings it in terms of control of the petty bourgeois and the poor. That explains why the big bourgeoisie accepted Giorgia Meloni's government in Italy. For its part, the far right is attentive to its own relations with big capital. It is no coincidence that, unlike in the past, none of the main forces of the new right is demanding the exit from the European Union and the euro. It is a reflection of the imperialist polarization that is marking the world.

No bourgeois force with an ambition to rule in Europe means to plunge into solitary endeavors, especially after the Brexit experience.

The global inter-imperialist confrontation affects the structures of the European right. This sector of the sovereigntist right combines old militarist nationalism with that of a more “autonomous from the USA” and dialogic with Russia imperialist Europeanism. Russian imperialism found its way into some forces of the European right (like the Italian Lega and the RN in France). The direct entry of Putin's regime into Orban's Hungary and Fico's Slovakia aims to widen this rift. But the war in Ukraine boosted, by reaction, the hyper-Atlanticist orientation of the Nordic right (and of Fratelli d'Italia). The old Visegrad group of the 10s divided into a super-Atlanticist Poland and a Philo-Russian Hungary. Meanwhile, the expansion of NATO in northern Europe with the accession of Sweden and Finland was combined with the entry of the extreme right into their respective governments. The polarization of the inter-imperialist clash between the US and Russia also crosses the field of the right.

The ideological scheme of the European right evokes a “confederal Europe of inde-

pendent nations”, as a **Judeo-Christian power, enemy of immigrants and Muslims.** Their objective is to intercept the “anti-American” pacifist sentiment of European public opinion on a reactionary basis, but without breaking with NATO and the USA. The relationship with US imperialism is a source of contradictions within the right, because it is conditioned by different national interests. The current post-fascist leadership in Italy sought a central agreement based on the interests of Italian imperialism during the Biden administration. So did the Baltic and northern European right, marked by the concern for a secure military umbrella. An eventual Trump victory in the coming American elections could impact the alignments of the European right.

The entire European right wing supports Zionism, being anti-Arab and anti-Muslim. The old arsenal of reactionary anti-Semitism was reaffirmed by its alignment to the State of Israel and its government. The philo-Zionist foreign policy of European governments has the support of the far right, including the criminalization of philo-Palestinian protest movements. At the same time, the support of the majority of European society for Palestine constitutes a contradictory element.

The crusade against immigration is the main card played by the right in the field of popular consensus. The structural dimension of migratory flows driven by the dynamics of wars, environmental catastrophes and demographic differences offers xenophobic campaigns a permanent capacity for appeal in vast popular sectors. The same xenophobic policies of the “liberal” bourgeois governments (expulsion, segregation, limitation of the right of asylum) paved the way for the worst reactionary campaigns.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO REACTION CAN ONLY BE ANTI-CAPITALIST

If the growth of the far right is a result of the crisis of the European workers’ movement, for which its leaders are responsible, only a reactivation of the working class can raise a dam to stop the right. If the new right represents the harvest of the crisis of capitalism, only an anti-capitalist and revolutionary alternative can show the way out, in stark contrast

to both bourgeois liberal Europeanism and to reactionary sovereignism.

Only the working class can unite Europe progressively. In the capitalist and imperialist framework, the old continent is condemned to decadence in the grip of global polarization between old and new imperialist powers. All instances of the proletariat and the progressive movements of the old continent (social, environmental, gender, anti-racist, anti-militarist) demand the need for an anti-capitalist way out, towards a workers’ government, in each country and on a continental scale. It is the prospect of a socialist Europe.



Marie Le Pen and Jordan Bardella

The exhaustion of the reformist sectors under the pressure of the social crisis and the dynamics of war indicates the demand for radical solutions. Either such a solution is imposed by the working class on anti-capitalist terms or there is the risk that it will be imposed by more or less reactionary forces against the workers. The crisis of the traditional forms of liberal alternation and the irruption of great processes of political polarization highlight the proximity of this juncture. The growth of the sovereigntist right in Europe is a measuring stick of the crisis of the workers’ movement for the production of its own solution to the crisis of capitalism. Solving this crisis is therefore a decisive part of the same battle against reaction.

Bringing the workers’ movement into line with the epoch change that is underway, by developing its political consciousness, is the task of revolutionary Marxists in Europe. And not only in Europe.. 🐞

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION in the United States

BY VICENTE GAYNOR

It is very likely that Trump will win the US presidency again in November, this time with a more consolidated social base and the firm support of key sectors of the establishment. It is evident that the right, especially its most reactionary wing, has grown stronger in the four years since Trump lost the White House.



At the same time, during these same four years, there has been a rise in the class struggle, with the most significant strikes in generations and a process of radicalization in a numerous activist sector of the youth, particularly around the Palestine solidarity movement.

UNEQUAL AND COMBINED POLARIZATION

The US reflects the process of social and political polarization seen around the world in the most concentrated form. The global capitalist order that the central imperialist powers established after World War II and believed to have consolidated after the dissolution of the Soviet Union began to collapse when the current capitalist crisis began in 2008.

The political and ideological aspects of this systemic crisis undermined the bourgeois democratic regime and the ideology of the “Washington consensus” that sustained that order. A massive rupture has developed with the nodal ideas of liberal and “Western” democracy and its institutions. The political parties and leaderships that held power over decades lost their legitimacy and the support of millions of people, who went on to seek alternatives outside the

traditional political order. This crisis of representation or collapse of the political “center” led to the emergence of alternatives on the left and the right.

The limitations of the alternatives that emerged on the left, particularly those that came to govern, like Podemos or Syriza, in refusing to break with the capitalist structure, led to bitter failures and disappointments that collaborated with the rise of political *outsider* alternatives of the right.

Today, the general dynamic is dominated by the rise of right and far right political alternatives that have obtained more support from a sector of the bourgeoisie in recent years. But this phenomenon constitutes one pole of the polarization that is combined with a sustained rise in the class struggle, with resistance, strikes, rebellions, revolutions and radicalization to the left on the other pole. It is an unequal polarization because the pole of the working masses in struggle limits what the bourgeois right-wing pole can achieve, but has not materialized a political representation, as the other pole has.

In the US, this process is perhaps more clearly presented than anywhere else. Trump has consolidated the support of his social base and

of the bourgeois establishment, with a coalition that unites the Republican Party apparatus and over one hundred far-right organizations. At the same time, the country's industrial working class has started to fight like it has not done in decades and a significant layer of young radicalized activists emerges in the struggle against the Zionist genocide in Palestine.

THE PIONEER OF THE "ALT-RIGHT"

Trump was the first exponent of the rise of the "alt-right" when he surprised by winning the White House in 2016. It was the same year that Bernie Sanders, openly defending socialism, would have won the Democratic primary if Hillary Clinton's apparatus had not stolen the nomination. Such was the degree of the crisis of representation, that a majority of American voters opted for alternatives opposed to the official candidates of the strongest two-party system in the world.

However, while Sanders went on to support Clinton after losing the Democratic primary, Trump managed to win the Republican nomination, and as a candidate continued to bash the "political establishment," promising simple and clear (though largely impossible) solutions to improve the lives of Americans and "make America great again."

Trump's project did not have the support of the main sectors of the US bourgeoisie and found significant difficulties in its implementation. Although he was unable to carry out his most extravagant proposals, like making Mexico pay for the construction of his border wall, he did advance the conservative agenda significantly in his four years in office.

He imposed one of the largest tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy in history, cut major social programs like *food stamps*, appointed three justices who allowed the Supreme Court to reverse *Roe vs. Wade*, withdrew the US from the Paris Climate Agreement and imprisoned entire families of migrants, separating many children from their parents, to mention some of the most important examples.

In international politics, he interrupted the imperialist geopolitical strategy designed and upheld by Democrats and Republicans alike, breaking the Iran Nuclear Agreement, belittling NATO allies and warming up to Russia, and

intensifying conflict with China, leading to a "trade war" that significantly affected the profits and interests of powerful US capitalists.

The most profound effect of Trump's presidency, however, was that it shifted the center of the political debate significantly to the right. He activated and strengthened the country's most reactionary sectors, expressed in organizations like the Tea Party that began to gain ground within the Republican Party and intervene in a more organized manner in the streets. His openly reactionary positions on the most polarizing issues, like gender, race, religion and immigration, and even his disastrous policy during the Covid-19 pandemic, including the claim that chlorine could be an effective treatment, collaborated in this.



Of course, polarization was also expressed in the opposite direction, leading to Trump's defeat in his 2020 re-election attempt. The rejection of his measures was massive, the women's movement mobilized hundreds of thousands, a national rebellion broke out after the murder of George Floyd, the most extensive wave of strikes in decades and a radicalization of an extensive activist vanguard, especially in the youth, developed.

But, in contrast to the "alt-right", no political expression emerged on the left. On the contrary, the opportunity to do so was squandered, despite having perhaps the most favorable conditions since the socialist campaign of Eugene Debs over a hundred years ago. In 2020, Bernie Sanders did not even seriously contest the Democratic primary as in 2016. His campaign did not intend to offer an alternative but, on the contrary, to con-

tain the most radicalized voters and funnel their votes toward the official candidate: Joe Biden, a conservative establishment Democrat.

The DSA evolved in the same direction. It emerged alongside the 2016 Sanders campaign as a national phenomenon and the main organized expression of that majority of young Americans that *The Economist* reported identified with socialism. In four years, DSA organized more than 50,000 activists and won dozens of legislative seats, including the national Congress seat of Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, at the time the most popular political figure on social media. But they quickly abandoned the orientation of building an independent party and focused their efforts almost exclusively on elections, with a notable absence in the large mobilizations of the period. This alienated, disillusioned and left radicalized activists without a political reference.

The result was a tight electoral victory for Biden in the 2020 presidential elections, which generated zero enthusiasm on the left side of the spectrum, but did mobilize the most radicalized on the right. Encouraged by Trump himself, who did not accept defeat, a few thousand right-wing extremists attacked Congress on January 6, 2021 with the aim of preventing the Senate's vote to confirm the electoral result. Though poorly organized, they managed to break into the building and cause an international scandal that weakened the image of the most powerful country in the world, and strengthened the social base of the far right, demonstrating that it would continue to be a considerable political force.

TRUMP 2.0

The relative strength of the social base of the far right, representing a minority but consolidated one, is evident in the confirmation of Trump as undisputed presidential candidate of the Republican Party in this year's elections. His run was not even questioned after being convicted of 34 cases of bribery and currently standing trial for attempting to reverse the 2020 election results and withholding classified documents. However, the Democrats are primarily responsible for the high probability of a second Trump presidency.

If the disillusionment generated by Obama and the defection of Sanders opened the door

for the first Trump administration, these four years of Biden practically ensured Trump a second term. Biden left Trump's tax cuts in place and furthered cuts in social spending while inflation and the cost of living rose at historic rates. He intensified many anti-immigrant policies, even moving forward with construction of the border wall that Trump did not finish.

The only thing in which Biden differed noticeably from his predecessor was in recovering US imperialist intervention. His unconditional support for Israel's genocide in Gaza has earned him the nickname "Genocide Joe", and the war in Ukraine allows Trump to pose, surreal as it may seem, as the anti-war candidate.

To make matters worse, Biden's health at 81 years old, which was already a weak point in his 2020 run, now shows signs of advanced senility and produced catastrophes like the first presidential debate, during which he completely lost his train of thought several times against a confident and mocking Trump.

In this election, there was not even a left-wing option in the primary. Although the process of struggles, strikes and radicalization has deepened during Biden's term, the only choice that everyone that opposes Trump has is Biden. Most young people probably won't even vote, and all polls give Trump a comfortable lead. Meanwhile, Trump agitates and mobilizes the most reactionary sectors.

The very likely second Trump administration will have a stronger footing than the previous one. Unlike his first term, he would now reach the White House with the institutional support of the Republican Party and a clear plan designed by its most conservative wing in conjunction with a coalition of over one hundred conservative and far-right organizations, "Project 2025". He will also have a conservative Supreme Court from day one. But he will also have to face the opposition of a rising working class and radicalized youth like we haven't seen in decades.

THE OTHER POLE

In parallel with the emergence of Trump, a rise in social struggle has developed in the US. The Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011 was a first expression of the radicalization that began to emerge after the capitalist crisis that began in

2008. The Ferguson uprising and the emergence of Black Lives Matter in 2014 confronted US institutional racism directly for the first time since the 1960s. In 2016, the women's movement also took to the streets again with a massiveness and radicalization not seen in decades, with the Me Too movement and against Trump when he took office.

The same year that Trump became president, the phenomenon of Bernie Sanders, AOC and the DSA emerged, reflecting that a majority of the country's young people identified with socialism. In 2020, the murder of George Floyd sparked a rebellion against racism that spread across the entire country and transcended Black communities, transforming into a general rebellion of youth against institutionalized racism and oppression.

Meanwhile, the working class gradually reactivated, reaching a high point with the 2019 teacher strikes, organized despite the bureaucratic unions and laws that criminalize strikes, mobilizing tens of thousands and achieving the first victories of the workers' struggle in many years.

This process deepened in the last period, with 2023 labeled as "the year of the strike" by the mass media. The participation of workers in strikes increased 280% compared to 2022. But the qualitative aspect lies in the weight of the sectors that took action, in the significance of those actions and in what they achieved.

The actors' and writers' strike that paralyzed many major Hollywood productions produced international headlines for months, gained massive support and achieved some of its central demands.

The most significant strike, however, was carried out by United Auto Workers (UAW), who achieved a historic victory against industrial giants like Ford, Volkswagen and GM. They won wage increases of 25 to 30%, the highest in 22 years, and recovered mechanisms that tie raises to inflation rates that had been lost in 2008, among other gains. More importantly, the US industrial labor movement, among the most powerful in the world, came into action. This impacts the working class in general, as can already be noted with rising labor action and an incipient recovery of union membership.

On the other hand, the Palestine solidarity movement that emerged in the US since Israel unleashed its latest genocide in Gaza last Octo-

ber has generated a more widespread and deeper radicalization among a significant layer of young activists. In dozens of universities, students set up Palestine solidarity camps and defended them from state repression and attacks by Zionist gangs, consolidating a layer of radicalized activists against the US regime as a whole, as they had to confront directly with Biden's unequivocal support for the Zionist genocide, and liberal University administrators' measures of censorship and requests for police repression.

The central weakness of the pole social struggle is that, unlike the right, it has no political reference. Sanders and the DSA collaborated in bringing people that found hope to the left of the status quo back into the Democratic ranks, alienating and demoralizing the most radicalized sectors. Trump, on the contrary, kept his point of support in the most radicalized right, maintaining and feeding his social base in this context of polarization. Thus we arrive at the probability that he will govern again.

The rise of class struggle guarantees that there will be significant resistance. Its challenge is to find a way to constitute a political expression that represents it. The political and social situation in general and this challenge in particular are a source of important debates about revolutionary strategy.

The American revolutionary left has found it difficult to respond to the great changes presented in recent years, and is working its way through a profound crisis. The International Socialist Organization (ISO), which had built a national and dynamic force, was dissolved in 2019. Socialist Alternative, the largest organization in the space since then, is currently facing an internal factional crisis.

However, important debates, regroupings and opportunities also emerge from crisis and dispersion. The Tempest Collective makes a notable effort to bring together an important part of the cadres and activists of the former ISO and other spaces. The left-wing union organization Labor Notes has just held its largest national conference, with the participation of 4,700 union activists. The national conference of the socialist publishing house Haymarket, Socialism 2024, will be a new opportunity to face the strategic debate on how to advance in the construction of the political alternative that is needed. 🌱

MILEI, an X-ray

BY MARIANO ROSA

How did he reach the government? What conditions gave rise to him? What novelty does he represent in the history of the country? What are the coordinates of his orientation? Is there a change in the social relation of forces? How does his project connect with the previous experience of Peronism in power? What perspective does he present and what are the tasks of the left in Argentina? Analysis, hypothesis and a socialist approach to the Milei phenomenon.



In the beginning, it was the anger. Milei's electoral rise expresses the deep social anger with the previous Peronist government and also with the experience of Macrism before that. Both administrations worsened the material living conditions of the social majority and did not offer any improvement. Disappointment and depoliticized anger, especially in sectors of the poor youth, was channeled through an ultra-reactionary figure with a discourse against the "caste" and the "system".

At the same time, another component that gives Milei a base is that he became an agglutinating factor for fascistic sectors that adhere to McCarthyist, anti-gender rights, anti-social movements and privatizing positions in the economic field. This side is emboldened by a climate generated over previous years by two significant causes in the experience and consciousness of the masses:

- On the one hand, a leverage of this very strong outsider figure in the mass media, which shifted the dominant political agenda to the right.
 - Also due to the role of the Peronist trade union bureaucracy, which, although there were important struggles, avoided unifying and centralizing them in a massive outpouring that would tilt the balance in favor of a left-wing solution to the crisis.
- Although there are particular features of this po-

litical emergence in Argentina, at the same time it is in tune with an epochal climate that is projected in more radicalized versions of this new right wing, one of the extremes of the polarization that defines the world situation.

The narrative against traditional political elites, the epic of the anti-socialist or anti-Marxist *cultural battle*, is part of that global ultra-reactionary ecosystem. Even so, the decisive reference points for the fate of this capitalist experiment lie in the internal dynamics of Argentina.

A NEW BOURGEOIS ATTEMPT TO RESET EVERYTHING FROM THE RIGHT

Milei's is the fourth or fifth historical attempt at a capitalist restructuring of the country:

- Already in the mid-1960s, Onganía's dictatorship was a first attempt. Huge provincial rebellions or semi-insurrections in Córdoba, Tucumán and Rosario, in the global context of the French May and Vietnam, buried that project.
- Afterwards, the genocidal dictatorship of 1976 advanced with the neocolonial mechanism of the foreign debt tied to the IMF and an attack on the relative industrial development of the country. The outcome of this fascistoid attempt had a very high cost for the bourgeoisie: the armed for-

ces were removed from the government by mass mobilizations in 1982. Since, military coups as a means of “breaking the tie” of unstable balances have been disabled in the country.

- Then, in 1989, Menemism, with a very harsh “shock therapy” in the midst of exorbitant hyperinflation, dismantled almost all state assets with the privatization of public enterprises and strengthened the interference of the IMF. That adventure ended in 2001 with a social rebellion that sank the traditional two-party regime.
- Macri was the fourth attempt, also unsuccessful. Though he counted on bureaucratic trade unionism and the PJ (Peronist Justice Party) as support for governability, he was also unable to apply his original program of capitalist restructuring from the right. He managed to finish his term because he operated with Peronism, which contained the unrest and diverted it via the elections.

Milei’s originality consists in the fact that he proposes to do, without a military coup (not an option), without parliamentary hegemony (does not have it), without his own trade union support or organic street force, what all other bourgeois attempts failed to do, even with those resources. In the end, the streets will have the last word.

MORE THAN AN ECONOMIC MODEL, A BUSINESS PLAN

Argentina is a capitalist semi-colony, albeit with an uneven and combined industrial development. In fact, it is not equal to the Latin American average in its productive matrix. It has 12 automotive plants, satellite production, iron and steel production. There are still state-owned companies developing nuclear technology, and a flag carrier airline that represents 70% of national and 30% of international flights.¹

Now then: Milei comes to eliminate what is left of local industry or to reduce it to its minimum expression in order to crystallize a stricter agro-mineral-export based model. For this strategic plan there is a point of support in the great agrarian bourgeoisie which presents in the last 40 years a trajectory opposite to that of 1930: it deindustrialized its capital and displaced it to the countryside, valuing it in seedpools and agribusiness.

But the core thesis of all its economic orientation

is to withdraw state intervention in everything that implies ensuring social rights, considered *populist spending*, and to guarantee extraordinary conditions of profitability to large international capital in order to stimulate direct investment:

- Lower labor costs in hiring, exploitation and layoffs.
- Tax exemptions for several decades, with elimination of royalties and taxes on imports of inputs, even if they compete with local production.
- Free availability of dollars from Treasury reserves and no obligation to reinvest in the country.
- Priority in the use of primary inputs such as energy or water, even if there are shortages for the population.

In order to implement this business scheme with ample advantages for corporations, Milei and his alliances have been working since January to pass laws in that sense. Social mobilization, including two general strikes wrested from the union bureaucracy and a massive university march, have conditioned this road map. Likewise, with brutal repression, especially against the left, the government managed to pass a reduced version of its Base Law, which includes the RIGI (Tax Regime for Large Investments) and attacks on labor legislation.

This plan implies a reduction of productive forces, which could increase poverty, as measured by the Observatory of the Catholic University, from almost 60% at present to almost 80% in a very short period of time, and increase unemployment, putting a greater pressure on wages. Therefore, more than an economic model, we are facing a capitalist business plan without concessions.

UNBALANCING THE CLASS STRUGGLE: CULTURAL BATTLE AND REGIME CHANGE

In order to stabilize and achieve a restructuring of capitalism and the political system, Milei’s government requires a key condition: to alter in its favor the social relation of forces. That is the objective of his so-called *cultural battle*, which is an ideological-political war for the common sense of the masses:

- Unbridled repricing by the monopolistic corporations is called *sincere pricing*.

- Altering the patterns of capital accumulation in favor of the richest is *fiscal balance* and *organizing the macroeconomy*.
- Taxing them is a *market distortion that discourages investment*.
- Public policies in education, health, culture and services are *populist privileges, spending*.
- Social movements and popular organizations with soup kitchens in the poorest areas are *clientelism* and *corruption*.

One aspect of the common sense that the libertarian government fights to impose is that to have social rights as a working majority is to live above our means. And that is combined with a repressive and authoritarian offensive against all democratic rights:



- To protest and organize is a *crime*.
- To occupy the streets is to *disrupt order*.
- The left, which confronts the government's austerity, is *sedition* and *terrorist*.

And all this, with initiatives to reform criminal laws, toughen punishments, impose jail and even question the principles of *presumption of innocence* and *due judicial process*. All this with the endorsement of the Judicial Branch as auxiliary executor of this Bonapartist policy, with fabricated criminal cases and infiltration of State intelligence services in protests, to provoke disturbances that justify repression.

This scaffolding faces a social pole of accumulat-

ed strength among the workers, the youth, the social movement, the human rights organizations and the left with a long tradition of struggle and positions conquered in the last decades. The volume of strength that the libertarian project has to overcome explains the scale of its attack. But the acute polarization opens doubts about the dynamics and the outcome of the struggle: how far will the far-right project have the muscle to stabilize and crystallize a new bourgeois hegemony? Will the strength of the mass movement that opposes it be able to overcome the obstacle of political and trade union leaderships that block its full potential? This will be answered by the reality of the class struggle and the political action of the forces in struggle.

PERONISM AS A SENILE WORKERS' DISEASE

The all or nothing bet of the libertarian government connects with a structural weakness of the political regime after the *Argentinazo* of 2001. Little or nothing is left of the two bourgeois coalitions that agglutinated fractions of the parties that had alternated in government over the previous decades.

On the one hand, Milei has absorbed the social base of Macri's PRO, a coalition that imploded and dispersed the UCR into different tribes. He also capitalizes on the once again frustrating experience with the last Peronist government, while Peronism finds itself in a senile phase. And it enjoys a sort of blackmail card, since there is no capitalist political alternative at the moment and labor and political Peronism does not consider leading the social conflict as a viable strategy because an early exit of this government would force it to take over under popular pressure. And that, in a stage of economic crisis, would only be possible by touching minority interests and privileges: not paying the debt to the IMF; taxing big fortunes and other such variants.

Peronism in all its wings is the guarantor of the capitalist status quo. That explains the speculation of its leadership (including Cristina Kirchner, Buenos Aires Governor Kicillof and Juan Grabois' "left wing") that aims for the 2025 legislative elections. They act with the thesis that "what is possible" is the war of wearing down Milei, who, by implementing his program, will deepen the social unrest that will then be expressed in the ballot boxes, not in action in the streets now. The dynamics of the future will be played out between this petty speculation and the limits of mass tolerance to the government's attacks.

LEFT: IDENTITY, HEGEMONY IN DISPUTE AND CHALLENGES

There is social strength and vitality to organize a centralized resistance to the whole Milei plan. These first six months of confrontation showed this and, at the same time, that the union centrals and Peronism have blocked the development of any plan of struggle discussed and voted in rank and file assemblies to centralize the struggle against the government. For that reason, together with denouncing the disastrous role of those leaderships, while continuing to demand that they call for strikes, there are three central tasks that are combined:

1) **Support all struggles, so that they win.** It is key to know that we are heading to a period of very hard battles, with repression as a rule and, therefore, it is necessary to strengthen united front articulation to mobilize, as we have done since the beginning of Milei's government. The Independent Multisectorial Coordination as an articulating pole of the left, militant unionism, social movements, culture, neighborhood assemblies and other sectors is central now in the face of the attack of criminal cases against demonstrators. Also against layoffs and the high cost of living, for wages and other social demands.

2) **To reorient the Left Front Unity toward becoming a real alternative to Peronism.** Argentina has a positive particularity on the left: Trotskyism is hegemonic and has displaced Stalinism and other reformist or center-left variants that are almost marginal. The main parties of that tendency have converged in the FIT Unity, but only as an electoral coalition. Milei, with his measures and narrative sharpens the polarization: he unites his own far-right and fascist hard core, but on the other side he strengthens an anti-capitalist, anti-fascist radicalism that has a broad left sensibility. There is a broad sector of workers, youth and popular activism that distances itself from Peronism and also sympathizers of the FIT-U that in electoral terms oscillates between 800 thousand and a million and a half votes. But to this electoral base and to those in crisis and searching, the FIT-U as of yet only offers itself as an option at the ballot box, not as a militant organization for political, ideological and class action.

Our proposal is that the FIT-U has to urgently call for a big open congress to channel all that potential and discuss there everything from the socialist program of the front, a plan of its own that includes the immediate struggle and also the construction of an alternative to contest power in Argentina. The MST would propose there that the FIT-U advance to become a political movement that functions on the basis of democratic mechanisms and with freedom of tendencies. It would be a turning point that could organize tens of thousands of activists.



3) **To gain a majority influence in the left.** In the revolutionary left there are points of agreement (the FIT-U is one) and also nuances and differences at the national and international level. The main one is perhaps the orientation to overcome Peronism and prepare the conditions to influence the working class and the people, and to contest power. None of the main parties of the FIT-U have hegemony or clear majority. The best thing would be to resolve in favor of the solution we propose. For that, it is crucial to broaden the organic strength, the social insertion, the positions in unions, student unions, neighborhoods and ideological influence of those who think essentially the same for the course of the revolutionary process in the country.

The left has a historic opportunity in Argentina. It is up to us to capitalize it. 🐞

1. Brazil, with a far more significant economic weight in the region, does not have that.

Bolsonaro: THE REFLECTION of LULA and the PT'S DEFRAUDING of the Brazilian masses

BY VERÓNICA O'KELLY

After 13 years of Workers Party (PT) governments in broad fronts with bourgeois sectors, a former military man and parliamentarian for 28 years without much notoriety emerged from the depths of the Brazilian parliament. A character with authoritarian traits who praises the times of the military dictatorship, ironizes social achievements and aligns himself with the leaders of the United States, Israel, Italy and Hungary. Four years later, even after losing the elections, without being reelected, Bolsonarism continues to be a major player in Brazilian politics. Defeating it is a fundamental task in this period; how to do it is the great existing debate.

REALITY IS IMPLACABLE WITH ILLUSIONISTS

To understand Bolsonaro's coming to power, along with the emergence of the Brazilian far right, we need to interpret what happened in the previous period, that is to say, more than a decade of PT governments.

When Lula first became president, the expectations of the masses were immense. But it did not take long for the disappointment of political and social sectors to appear and they began to break away from this government that responded to the demands of the market. Thus, in December 2003, after the refusal to vote in favor of the anti-worker pension reform, the federal representatives who later became known as "radicals" were expelled and, months later, founded the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL).

The fact is that the implacable reality does not understand illusions and no matter how many discursive efforts the self-styled "progressives" make, the working masses get tired of waiting for a better future that never comes. When the world capitalist crisis opened in 2008, Lula and the PT



killed those illusions and rifts grew. When the "Brazilian Miracle", as bourgeois analysts called the period of growth driven by rising commodities, went into decline, the political problems of the PT government, by that time with Dilma Russeff in the presidency, were accentuated.

DILMA, ADMINISTRATOR OF CAPITALIST CHAOS

In June 2013, a movement against the increase in public transport fares emerged in the streets of São Paulo, which was later registered as "June Days". It was a rebellion led mainly by the youth. This revolt of the São Paulo youth spread nationally, transforming into a powerful rise of mobilization against Dilma's government. This was combined with demonstrations denouncing the excessive spending of public funds to build stadiums and structures for the 2014 World Cup, demanding that the level of public services be equal to "FIFA standards". Here too, accusations of corruption in the World Cup mega-projects were growing.

Even with its popularity deteriorated, the Dilma-Temer government was reelected. Pressured by the crisis, already at the beginning of its term, it began to make some changes, such as appointing Joaquim Levy to the Ministry of Finance (a

man of the IMF, the European Central Bank and who at the time was director of Banco Bradesco). The new minister announced an austerity plan aimed at reducing the fiscal deficit. For this he used the bourgeois manual: reduce public spending. At the end of May, the government announced the biggest budget cut in the history of the country. The biggest cuts were in Health, Education, Transportation, city management, among others. Sharp increases in electricity, gas and fuel rates were also applied.

THE FAR RIGHT EMERGES AS A TOOL OF AN EM-BOLDENED BUSINESS SECTOR

In early February 2015, Dilma's popularity fell from 42% to 23%. From there to her impeachment it was a straight path for a sector of the bourgeoisie that, concerned with the social upheavals around the world and the rise that could be expressed again at home, decided to get rid of the PT that was longer capable of managing the social conflict by disciplining the working class with the illusion of class conciliation.

From that point on, business, financial capital and imperialism, in search of options to govern the country, began to pay attention to a congressman who, although he never stood out in his parliamentary work over 28 long years, appeared with a new ally that opened doors for him, especially in the offices of Faria Lima, the famous São Paulo avenue where the financial market is concentrated.

The bourgeois press campaigned reflecting what some called the honeymoon of the market with Bolsonaro, while Guedes promised to put an end to what he called the dysfunctional State, inherited from an interventionist and centralizing model of the military dictatorship that governments have since never reformed. Thus, with promises of anti-popular reforms, cuts in public spending, privatizations and benefits for the financial market and agribusiness, Bolsonaro became the preferred candidate to take over the country's presidency.

IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION TO CREATE THE "MYTH"

Jair Bolsonaro had long been engaged in spreading conservative backwardness. He is misogynist, lgbt-phobic, racist, a defender of evan-

gelical conservatism and military dictatorship and has ties to militias and organized crime in Rio de Janeiro. With the support of a large part of the business community and the financial market, he emerged as a character promising to confront everything that has been done up to now, an "anti-system" candidate, which coincided with the mass frustration with the progressive project of the PT. Also, the absence of a left alternative with influence among the masses, as the PSOL could have been, facilitated the rise of the far right, which capitalized the anger of the Brazilian people.

This is how a mediocre man like Bolsonaro became a "myth" -that is how the radicalized Bolsonaro base calls him- who promises a future of prosperity, rescuing conservative values as a guarantee of success for a society that is unable to get out of the circle of poverty and social marginality.

BOLSONARO LOSES STRENGTH FASTER THAN EXPECTED

The far right in power quickly began to disillusion some sectors. Shortly after taking office, Bolsonaro faced mobilizations of the youth all over the country in defense of the public university, there were *cacerolazos* and mobilizations against the policy of environmental destruction, strikes and struggles in various sectors of workers.

At the same time, in response, the government began to call for support mobilizations. These took on different magnitudes according to the political moment, but they became a tool that the far right uses in the struggle for power. Even today, not in power, it managed to mobilize 200 thousand people on February 2024 in support of Bolsonaro.

The only victory of the government was the pension reform and, as a result of its growing weakness, it ended up voting a mid-term project that frustrated the expectations of the business community. It did not manage to vote the tax reform and much less to advance in the privatization of state-owned companies. Then came the pandemic and that was the final confirmation of the fraud of a president incapable of managing popular demands. Instead of trying to respond to the social catastrophe produced by Covid-19, Bolsonaro brought more problems that caused a further weakening of the

already battered Brazilian bourgeois-democratic regime.

We saw the emergence of massive mobilizations under the slogan “Out with Bolsonaro.” It was a relatively spontaneous process that took on such a magnitude that it exceeded the expectations of the organizers and surprised, certainly, the leaderships linked to the PT and Lula, who were already committed to the 2022 electoral campaign. The PT and its allies took a long time to take control of this mobilization process. There were several months of rising protest that wore down the government and several times threatened to oust Bolsonaro. Unfortunately, during this period no influential leadership emerged to overcome the reformist leaderships and thus the Lula presidential campaign gained ground, channeling the mobilization toward an electoral resolution.

ALTHOUGH HE LOSES THE ELECTIONS, THE BOLSONARO PHENOMENON IS NOT DEFEATED

In 2022, Lula made an agreement and launched his candidacy with the former governor of São Paulo and leader of the traditional Brazilian right-wing Geraldo Alckmin as vice-president. Faria Lima showed his support, which was quickly expressed in the editorial line of the powerful Rede Globo and most of the bourgeois media. It was evident that Bolsonaro no longer had the confidence of the Brazilian bourgeoisie, which backed the Lula-Alckmin campaign.

But the Bolsonarist far right, already recomposed from the mobilization process, raised again the banners that were successful in his coming to power: anti-PT rhetoric, magic recipes for relating with the frustration of the masses towards the PT and Lula. The electoral result of the second round was very narrow, leaving Bolsonaro with an electoral defeat, but without defeating his project that continues to influence large sectors of the masses.

SO, HOW DO WE DEFEAT HIM?

As a result of not having defeated the Bolsonaro government with mobilization, the far right continues to be a major player in Brazil. It governs states - including the largest in the country, São Paulo -, it has parliamentary weight and mobilizes in the streets. This shows that it is not through the electoral route but in the field of the class struggle where we will be able to truly confront this project.

Possibilism defends the illusion of betting on broad fronts with the aim of stopping the growth of Bolsonarism. The thesis holds that it is necessary to support the lesser evil in order to maintain the basic democratic freedoms that are threatened today. Therefore, according to them, it is correct to unite with bourgeois parties, including right-wing ones, as long as they declare themselves in favor of the institutions of the bourgeois democratic regime. They also say that the Lula-Alckmin government must be defended uncritically, because criticizing it means strengthening the far right.

The harsh reality shows that these “democratic” governments are responsible for the growth of the far right because they are incapable of responding to the demands of the masses who, frustrated, stop supporting them and are captured by Bolsonarism. The policy they propose to us does not defeat and will never defeat the growth of the far right. In fact, this mistaken policy strengthens it.

BUILDING A SOCIALIST AND REVOLUTIONARY TOOL IS THE BEST ANTIDOTE

Unfortunately, Brazil did not see the emergence of a leftist, independent and socialist political alternative with sufficient influence to contest the leadership of the masses. The PSOL, today hegemonized by a reformist leadership, adapted to the regime and was assimilated into the government; it degenerated and abandoned the anti-capitalist objectives of its origins. The centrist currents, which oscillate in their positions, do not fight consistently against the majority leadership, and the revolutionary left has been reduced, being today very marginal within the party.

On the other hand, the sectarian left, headed by the PSTU, and the self-proclaimed Stalinists of Unidad Popular and the PCB, hinder any process of unity of the independent left, distancing the possibility of the emergence of a pole to the left of the PT.

We bet on mobilization to defeat Bolsonaro and the far right, no siren song should keep us away from the struggles and the streets, while we advocate to build a leftist, socialist, revolutionary and internationalist political alternative that can not only defeat Bolsonaro, but transform everything and build a system where the working majority decides on the resources, the social wealth and how to democratically organize society and production, that is to say, a socialist system. 🌟



The Bukele experiment: its **ORIGIN,** **PRESENT SITUATION** and **NATURE**

BY ALEJANDRO DREYFUS

El Salvador, in the heart of America, has been going through a process of political and social reorganization for five years. From the Central American revolution of 40 years ago to the crisis of bipartisanship, unable to solve the main problems that directly affect the large majorities of the exploited and impoverished population. The sinking of ARENA and the mass disappointment with Farabundo Martí, the crisis of the neocolonial, corrupt and anti-workers capitalist scheme is leading towards the emergence of the “coolest dictator in the world”. In this article we present our point of view regarding the emerging Nayib Bukele.

During the 1980s, as part of the revolutionary process that shook Central America, a political-guerrilla organization such as the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) gained mass influence in El Salvador. With a direct and organic link with Cuban Castroism, this organization included the Communist Party and even parties of

a social-Christian line. It was the result of unifying all forces opposed to the dictatorial pro-US governments that succeeded each other in the country since 1944.

The Farabundo, with a popular front strategy of class conciliation, raised the dispute for power in our country, but turned to the orientation of Cuba and Sandinismo, which, in the Contadora and Esquipulas agreements, committed itself to contain the ongoing process within the framework of bourgeois democracy and above all, capitalism. They thus prevented the revolutionary fall of the Salvadoran government in the 80s and gave way to a process that led to the so-called Peace Agreements, which paved the way for full integration of Farabundo into the bourgeois-democratic regime and the construction of a bipartisanship that managed capitalist dependency until the emergence of Bukele.

They obviously wasted the historic opportunity that was presented in front of them, along the lines of Cuban Stalinism and its Sandinista partners, to advance an anti-capitalist rupture in the country. At the other pole of the regime, the forces of the pro-White House landowning bourgeoisie formed their own political arm: ARENA. The 1983 Constitution legalized shallow changes on the basis of a pact of impunity for the crimes of the dictatorship and lukewarm measures at the agrarian level.

The essence of the capitalist matrix remained in the frames of subordination to the IMF and imperialism.

The ARENA governments applied privatization policies and dollarized the country, making the workers' raising expenses and eliminating thousands of jobs. Wild austerity. In the 2000s, Farabundo Martí managed to capitalize on the wear and tear of the ruling right and took office promising a radical change towards "socialism of the XXI century" and the democratic revolution. However, the depth of the structural social and economic crisis required fundamental changes based on mass mobilization and not tinkering with the frameworks of bourgeois democracy, which is why, between its own limitations and the boycott of the pro-US right, the FM ended up being just an administrator of transnational interests.

CAPITALIST DECOMPOSITION AND GANGS

The Salvadoran bourgeoisie promised that once "peace" had been achieved with the 1992 agreements, the country would enter the new millennium with hopes of development and reconciliation. However, the policies of the ARENA governments entrusted the economic reconstruction of the country to the market. The privatization wave left thousands of workers on the streets, made life more expensive and offered minimal social support policies to the most impoverished sectors. The duty-free Free Zones for foreign companies generated a massive migration to the new industrial poles, adding the return of those displaced by the armed conflict and the deportation of refugees from the United States.

This generated extreme poverty throughout the country, disorderly growth of informal trade and thousands of young people without access to education, health, basic services or employment, creating a breeding ground for gangs. The Salvadoran gangs emerged in California in the 80s, among marginalized Salvadoran communities, faced with exclusion and the threat of drug trafficking and Mexican gangs. Barrio 18, known as "la 18", and Mara Salvatrucha 13, known as "MS", declared themselves rivals in South Los Angeles and, with mass deportations, settled in slums of El Salvador, growing rapidly.

ARENA's governments implemented heavy-handed plans based on repression, identifying these groups as "youth trends", although always

negotiating with the gang bosses. However, the problem was serious. The gangs offered protection to marginalized youth who lacked opportunities. Selective repression did not solve the problem and the gangs took control of neighborhoods, robberies, assault, extortion, kidnapping and the collection of "la renta": a tax on businesses, transport workers, truck drivers and merchants.

In 2009, Farabundo won the presidential elections promising a radical change, parallel to an upsurge in gang violence. In 2010, La 18 set fire to a bus full of passengers, a terrorist act that shocked the country and led the so-called government of change to militarize public security, following ARENA's recipes and also making an agreement with some gang bosses. The cosmetic measures on the social level were mere patches. Precisely because the gangs are anchored in capitalist decomposition, the lack of perspective for the youth and the structural corruption of the bourgeois state. That is also why Salvadoran progressivism failed in the face of this scourge, which requires structural measures in the economic field and social mobilization to dismantle this marginal business.

ENTER BUKELE: A VEHICLE OF DISAPPOINTMENT AND NEW EXPECTATIONS

In this challenging and violent context, the figure of Nayib Bukele emerges. His father, Armando Bukele, a descendant of Palestinian immigrants and businessman, was a referent of Farabundo, which helped Nayib, an advertising expert, to start his political career. In 2012, he was mayor of Nuevo Cuscatlán, a small town near San Salvador where his political marketing and social projects earned him worker's support, starting his meteoric career. In 2015, the FM nominated him for San Salvador, defeating ARENA and standing out with the "recuperación del centro histórico", a million-dollar project to evict vendors and informal businesses in the heart of San Salvador, a space historically dominated by gangs.

Despite his success, his pragmatic and personalistic character generated conflicts within Farabundo, which expelled him before the 2019 elections. Bukele, without a party, ran using the membership of GANA, ARENA's splinter party accused of corruption and drug trafficking. He won the elections by channeling social discontent and promising education, health and infrastructure projects, with a strong focus on eradicating gangs. The whole "so-

cial” program was postponed and his priority was the fight against the scourge of the gangs. When he took office, homicides decreased abruptly, attributing it to his “Territorial Control Plan”, a secret plan known only to those closest to the president. Without legislative approval for its third phase, in February 2020 it invaded Congress with military forces, attempting a self-coup and declaring to have spoken with God. In 2021, his then New Ideas party won the majority in the Legislature, dismissing the Constitutional Court and the Attorney General.

In March 2022, after attacks and murders by gangs, Congress decreed an emergency regime, suspending constitutional guarantees and granting total power to the president. This regime granted Bukele complete discretion to persecute, imprison and repress gang members, but also opponents, independent press, trade unions and any peasant and social activism that questioned him.

BEYOND POLITICAL MARKETING, THERE IS A CAPITALIST MATRIX

When Bukele ran for Farabundo Martí, he presented himself as a leftist politician, even a socialist. All that electoral narrative of opportunistic napture was completely left behind. Its capitalist economic model has several outstanding features:

- Openness to transnational technology companies is key, foreign investment in the technology sector, targeting mainly North American and Israeli startups. One of his most controversial policies was the approval of bitcoin as legal currency, trying to attract capital at any cost. However, its impact on the workers’ and people’s economy has been non-existent. The majority of Salvadorans still use dollars and remittances from the US, which account for 20% of GDP, for everyday life.
- Another bet of the Bukelista economic model is tourism, promoting sports and entertainment events to present to the world as a developing country, faithful to the 70s dictatorship’s style that sold the concept of El Salvador as “the smiling country” to the world. In this country, the expropriation and privatization of land for the development of foreign hotel and real estate projects is an everyday trend. The presidential clan has even pushed forward hotel projects along the coast with dramatic socio-environmental impacts in the region.

- Real estate speculation, based on tax exemptions for large developers and a precarious and informal labor regime, was another pillar.

But the main thing was the international debt acquiring mechanism and the use of pension funds as a petty cash of the State. During the Bukele period, the debt increased by \$10 billion, more than the last three governments combined, and pension bonds added another \$10 billion for state “current expenses” from workers’ savings.

The economy is weak, tied to the IMF and private banks with austerity policies in health, education and housing. In short, pure and hard pro-imperialist capitalism.

THERE’S A STORM COMING, WHAT ARE OUR TASKS?

The working class and the poorer sectors, after the effect of the war against the gangs, are living a very difficult material experience: inflation and wage freezes. The key to everything is still the flow of remittances. The country’s economic matrix has not changed and the rate of poverty and informality have increased.

With the “recovery of the historic center”, thousands of sellers and informal workers have been pushed into poverty without greater employment options, and the gentrification of the cities has opened the doors to Chinese and American capital businesses almost exclusively. The material reality of Salvadorans remains precarious and the expression of discontent through struggles and protests has only been postponed a little, but it hasn’t ended. It’s just a matter of time.

The decisive factor, as a task for the new generations of activism that is slowly beginning to express itself among the youth, is to build an anti-capitalist and genuinely socialist left perspective, which repudiates all kinship with false versions that identity as such, like Sandinismo, Cuban Stalinism or Chavismo, and recreates a new stage of political accumulation with a Central American and internationalist vision. The militancy of the International Socialist League in this entire region of the world is moving forward with this strategy. Our peoples have reserves of struggle. The key is to build an organic political force with a revolutionary program to intervene in the fights that are sure to come. 🌟

The Far Right and Religious Fundamentalism IN SOUTH ASIA

BY IMRAN KAMYANA



As these lines are being written, Pakistan's mighty and all-powerful military, through its puppet government, is bracing up for another 'operation' against the Islamist insurgency in the North-Western parts of the country. The region, historically the homeland of Pashtuns, was divided in 1893 between what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan through the 2,640-kilometer-long Durand Line by British colonialism in the context of the Great Game (the rivalry between the British Empire and Tsarist Russia) and its other designs of loot and plunder of South Asia.

The idea of another military operation, which would be the eighteenth of its kind in about two decades, has sent shock waves not only among the common masses, particularly in the tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (the Pashtun population-dominated province in the North-West), but also among the various sections of the bourgeoisie having recent-

ly fallen out of the state's favor or historically having a troubled relation with it—including Imran Khan's PTI and certain nationalist parties. While these sections of the political elite are reasonably afraid that the operation would be used as a tool of further political repression and engineering, the masses have more serious concerns of their own, as the previous operations have caused far more damage to the common people than the terrorist groups they were targeting, resulting in an endless series of enforced disappearances, gigantic internal displacements, extrajudicial killings, destruction of homes and livelihoods, and other forms of 'collateral damage'.

This state oppression, violence and the resulting mayhem has been one of the fundamental triggers of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM), a nationalist movement having popular support among the Pashtun population, mainly in the tribal areas. Among other

things, the PTM, along with the various regional movements inspired from it, demand an accountability for the military personnel involved in the crimes against the common people, retrieval of the thousands of ‘missing persons’, and an end to the policy of the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ Taliban—respectively, the Taliban groups sponsored by the Pakistani state and working under its control, and the ones operating against it, mostly at the behest of rival imperialist powers, including India.

The efforts of the Pakistani state, in line with the official policy of ‘strategic depth’, to establish a ‘friendly’ (read puppet) regime in Kabul have mostly been dashed after the defeat and disgraceful withdrawal of NATO forces. After the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the policy of the Pakistan primarily consisted of a double game in which the rogue elements within the military establishment continued to support the Taliban insurgency, while in official terms the country remained a ‘partner’ in the so-called US ‘war on terror’. This rift within the Pakistani deep state has been one of the core factors contributing to a civil war like situation in the country during the last two decades or so. More than 70,000 people, mostly civilians but also security personnel, have been killed so far in this unending mayhem of bloodshed and terrorism. The crimes committed during this imperialist war in Afghanistan both by the NATO forces and the Taliban are no less gruesome with countless fatalities of the common people, and most of an already war-torn country literally turning into rubble. Nevertheless, after coming into power for the second time, the Taliban regime has done next to nothing to bring into line their allied groups involved in terror activities within Pakistan (the so-called Pakistani Taliban, generally referred to as the TTP) including deadly attacks on the security forces.

In recent months, the bilateral relations of the two countries have deteriorated to the extent that Pakistan had to conduct airstrikes within Afghanistan (resulting in the retaliatory firing by the Taliban across the border) and go to the United Nations to force the Taliban to tackle the issue of the TTP, while officials of the Taliban regime have been mocking, humiliating and at times straightaway threatening Pakistan on Twitter and elsewhere. In this regard, the Pa-

kistanis have also tried to exert pressure on the Taliban through China—the biggest investor in Afghanistan, a close ally of the Taliban and the only country in the world recognizing them as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. No doubt, there must still be pro-Pakistan factions within the ‘Taliban’, which is basically an umbrella term for various allied armed fundamentalist groups with a delicate balance of power, at times resulting even in an open infighting.

However, what can be assessed without a doubt is that Pakistan is unable to influence or control them as it used to do in a not-too-distant past. They are not as dependent on Pakistan for arms, money and strategic support as they used to be prior to the withdrawal of the NATO forces. Moreover, after coming to power they have found a far richer and more powerful regional ally in China, which has been in-



vesting heavily to exploit the enormous mineral reserves in the unfortunate land being ruled by them. They may also be using groups like the TTP as bargaining chips in dealing not only with Pakistan but also China. In the latter case, certain jihadist groups under the influence of the Taliban may cause headaches for the Chinese regime in its already troublesome Muslim majority regions. Apart from all this, it would simply be problematic for the Taliban to take action against the TTP as it may lead to deeper rifts and disintegration within them. But then the ties of at least some of the groups within the TTP to various factions of the Pakistani deep state owing to common economic and strategic interests have also been an undisputed fact, resulting in the aforementioned categorization of the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ Taliban.

All this reflects how, thanks to the criminal policies and interventions of US imperialism, especially since 1979, this part of the world has been desperately mired in the bloody marsh of war, terrorism and an associated multi-billion-dollar black economy of narcotics and crime, a primary source of funding for the Taliban and similar terrorist groups, but also having a deep penetration in the Pakistani state, society and politics, fraying the whole social fabric of the country.

Although Islamic fundamentalism is not a new phenomenon, in recent times it has attained a particularly poisonous and reactionary character. With the downfall of the Islamic world and its subsequent occupation by the Western imperialist powers, some newly emerging Islamic revivalist movements offered resistance to colonialism. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 provided a new world outlook and program to the most advanced and genuine elements within these movements. Many of these people were present at the Congress of the Peoples of the East organized by Bolsheviks in Baku in 1920. However, as is the case of the Indian subcontinent, even in those times the colonial masters orchestrated the birth of new Hindu and Islamist sects suitable to their social and political interests. Such reactionary religious tendencies were used to sow the seeds of religious divides and prejudices, to pacify the local populace through diverting their focus and attention to the afterlife, and to disorient the movements against colonialism.

In the post-World War II world, it was the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who devised the policy of using modern Islamic fundamentalism in order to sabotage left-leaning movements and regimes in the Muslim world capable of posing a threat to imperialism. In the decades immediately after the War, strong left-wing currents emerged in these countries, and the social discontent seeping into respective armed forces resulted in coups leading to overthrows of lackey bourgeois governments and formation of regimes which can broadly be described as proletarian Bonapartist or deformed workers' states (Syria, Yemen, Somalia,

Ethiopia, etc.). Likewise, Jamal Abdul Nasir and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came into power riding the waves of left-wing populism in Egypt and Pakistan respectively, initiating a process of nationalization, while the biggest communist party outside the Warsaw Pact countries emerged in Indonesia.

Similar developments in many other Muslim countries sent tremors to imperialist centers in the West. Their response was to nurture and sponsor Islamist groups, whether armed or otherwise, all across the Muslim world as a tool of reaction and counter-revolution, in order to safeguard the imperialist world order. Examples include Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen in Egypt and other Arab countries (later turning into Hamas in Palestine), Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, and Sarekat-e-Islam in Indonesia. Layers of lumpen proletariat and unemployed youth, backwards sections of the working classes and petty bourgeoisie, including small business owners and traders, have been the traditional social base of these currents, which do not hesitate to resort to the most barbaric and fascist methods against their opponents whenever possible. Yet, Islamic fundamentalism has not been able to develop a mass social base and exert itself decisively in most of the Muslim countries, including Pakistan.

In a similar vein, in order to counter the Saur Revolution of April 1978 in Afghanistan, the CIA initiated its Operation Cyclone in June 1979, about six months before any of the Russian troops had entered the country. The revolutionary regime of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) had very audaciously undertaken the historic task of bringing Afghanistan out of centuries of backwardness and destitution through measures that included abolition of extremely exploitative, usurious loans on the poor peasants; land reforms; elimination of reactionary norms, traditions and laws that treated women worse than animals; separation of the state from religion; emergency literacy programs; plans for free provision of healthcare and education; fair distribution of water; and the initiation of building an industrial base. These devel-

opments set alarm bells ringing in the imperialist centers from Islamabad to Riyadh and from Brussels to Washington.

Operation Cyclone basically consisted of propping up armed Islamic fundamentalist groups against the revolutionary government in Kabul, primarily through the Pakistani and Saudi states. Among other jihadists from Arab countries and elsewhere, Osama bin Laden was also recruited in the same process out of which Al-Qaeda and the Taliban emerged later on. At that time, US President Ronald Reagan described these so called ‘mujahedeen’ as the “moral equals of the founding fathers of the USA”.

The CIA established a vast network of drug manufacture and distribution in the region in order to finance these jihadists. The enterprise only expanded in the following decades, generating massive amounts of black money, which continues to fuel Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the region. Keeping this in view, these terrorist groups, including the Taliban, may be deemed somewhat similar to the drug cartels of Mexico and Columbia in terms of their economy, methods and interaction with the state.

Similarly, the US supported the military dictatorship of Zia-ul-Haq—which had come to power by overthrowing the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s government, after the latter had lost much of its credibility among the working masses in a failed experiment of left-reformism. Zia’s regime established thousands of “madrassahs” (religious seminaries) throughout the 1980s all over Pakistan, especially in the aforementioned Pashtun region bordering Afghanistan, in order to provide children and youth of the poor families as foot soldiers for the counter-revolutionary imperialist war being waged in Afghanistan. The syllabus for these seminaries was designed and printed by the CIA in the US, and basic math in these books was explained by numbers of guns, bullets, grenades, and the communist soldiers killed! This was also the case with grammar, and alphabets were taught as “A for Allah”, “J for Jihad”, etc. Interestingly, the term Taliban literally means “students”, referring to the pupils at these seminaries—which, once again, turning into a profitable enterprise, continue to expand in size and numbers to this day. According to one estimate, there are about 40,000

madrassahs currently in operation only in Pakistan, manufacturing religious extremism, fundamentalism and hatred on an industrial scale. There were only a few hundreds of these when Zia had taken over!

After coming to power in 1978 and hanging Bhutto in 1979 in a sham trial, the US-sponsored Zia regime also initiated a gigantic program of mass oppression and Islamization of Pakistani society in order to curb any class resistance and make sure that the revolutionary events of 1968-69—which, as a tragic result of the stagist policies of the Stalinist parties and an absence of a genuine Marxist party, had put Bhutto into power—did not repeat themselves. Public lashings of progressive journalists and political workers became a norm; military tribunals were initiated in order to jail,



torture and at times hang the more radical left activists; students’ unions were banned (and remain illegal to this day); private media was heavily censored while the state media turned into a lethal tool of conservative and Islamist propaganda; the constitution was amended to include reactionary clauses, and laws discriminating against minorities and women were introduced; critical thinking was discouraged at every level and in all spheres of social life; more radical and reactionary Islamic sects, particularly the variants of Salafi/Wahhabi Islam imported from Saudi Arabia, were promoted with a full-fledged state backing; politics and political activities were loathed officially; blasphemy laws from the British colonial era were amended to introduce the sentences ranging



from life imprisonment to death; curriculums were heavily revised in order to foster a more conservative, non-scientific mindset among the youth; and people with a fundamentalist outlook were recruited en masse into the state machinery.

Throughout the process, the major Islamist political party of the time, the Jamat-e-Islami, along with its students' organization, played the role of a B-team to the draconian regime. The Zia dictatorship, in short, entailed everything that a counter-revolution usually does. The jihad it backed in Afghanistan very soon spilled over into Pakistan, poisoning the country with widespread lumpenization, Kalashnikovs, sectarian violence and drug use, suffocating the whole of the society and pulverizing the progressive values in art and culture.

It was also the time when a sizeable part of the countless petrodollars coming from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies to fund the so-called Afghan jihad started finding its ways into the Pakistani military establishment, including the chief spy force of the country, the ISI, which, in a few years, became one of the most powerful and well-funded intelligence agencies in the world. This enormous cash was very soon to be supplemented with an unending supply of black money from the enterprises mentioned earlier, giving ISI a rel-

ative financial independence even from the Pakistani state and its military. A portion of this booty also found its way to the pockets of jihadist mullahs, moving them from rags to riches almost overnight, considerably raising their social status and influence. Ironically, whether it be the 'mujahedeen' or the ISI, the US imperialism was laying the grounds of its own nemesis in Afghanistan in the not-too-distant future.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Dr. Najibullah's government, a crisis-ridden continuation of the PDPA regime, fell in 1992 as Boris Yeltsin's government in Moscow stopped the supply of fuel and weapons to it—but also because of the betrayal of its important Stalinist commanders, who started jumping off the sinking ship, deserting and joining forces with the enemy. This led to a new phase of the civil war in which a bitter infighting ensued between formerly allied mujahedeen groups. Involvement of various imperialist powers other than Pakistan through backing different armed groups further complicated the situation. Attempts of mediation by the Pakistani state at the behest of its bosses in Washington and Riyadh failed miserably one after the other. Whatever infrastructure was built during the PDPA years was destroyed in this vicious struggle for power, and the constant barrage of

rockets turned Kabul, once known as the Paris of the East, into ruins. In these circumstances, Pakistan decided to raise the Taliban as a new force to put an end to the anarchy and instability in its neighbor once and for all. But it was not that simple, as explained by Lal Khan in one of his many insightful writings on Afghanistan and Islamic fundamentalism,

In 1996 the capture of Kabul was made possible after a secret deal between the US Secretary of State for South Asia, Robin Raphael, the Taliban and the military faction of the former Stalinist general Shahnawaz Tanai. This deal was fostered by the ISI... Ironically, it was patronized in Islamabad by Benazir Bhutto (Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's daughter). This sheds some light on her credentials as a "progressive". The money for this operation to capture Kabul was provided by the US oil giant Unocal. It is not accidental that the former US Secretary of State Robert Oakley is an employee of Unocal.

After taking over Kabul, one of the first atrocities committed by the Taliban was the gruesome murder of Dr. Najibullah along with his brother. The two had taken refuge in a local UN compound. Their dead bodies were left hanging on a traffic light pole for days to terrify the local population. Among other things, the draconian regime implemented by the Taliban included a total ban on girls' education; episodic public lashings and at times stoning people to death; requiring women to wear head-to-toe coverings such as the 'burqa' and discouraging them from leaving their homes; arbitrary 'justice' through the courts headed by horrible mullahs; massacres of the Shia minority population; the prohibition of shaving beards for men; and a complete ban on western-style clothing, music and every other form of art. In other words, once in power they ensured everything conceivable to send the society to the stone age, or maybe even worse. Things have not changed much after they came to power for the second time.

However, relations between the Taliban and the US deteriorated very soon. Zalmay Khalilzad, who had served as a State Department official under Ronald Reagan and later remained the US ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq and the United Nations, was also working as a consultant for Unocal at the time, and publicly praised the Taliban while they were

wreaking havoc on the Afghan people. In an article for Washington Post in 1996 he explicitly wrote,

Taliban does not practice the anti-US style of fundamentalism practiced by Iran... it is closer to the Saudi model... The group upholds a mix of traditional Pashtun values and an orthodox interpretation of Islam.

Initially, the Taliban and Unocal were planning to build a \$4.5 billion pipeline network to transport oil and gas from the Caspian Sea through Afghanistan to South Asia. However, Unocal managers later found out that the Taliban were double-crossing them—and beside sending a delegation to Unocal's head office in Texas, they had sent another one to Buenos Aires to the headquarters of Argentinean oil conglomerate BRIDAS to negotiate an even more profitable deal. At the same time, Al-Qaeda bombed two US embassies in Africa kill-



ing 224 people. By then, the terrorist group led by once US favorite Osama bin Laden had moved from Sudan to Afghanistan, where it was offered refuge by the Taliban. All this led to the Taliban falling out of favor with the US, and, as is commonly said, the rest is history.

As the last of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan were crossing the Oxus River in 1988 after Geneva Accords, Zia-ul-Haq died under suspicious circumstances in a plane crash, but continued to live in the policies of the subsequent democratic and military governments, including the ones under Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which uninterruptedly continued to shift to the right—to the extent of becoming a coalition partner with its historic rival,

the traditional right-wing party of Nawaz Sharif, who was nurtured and introduced into politics by none other than Zia-ul-Haq! Like much of the rest of the world, the public anger and discontent against the two-party system paved the way for a third political force, in this case the right-wing populism of Imran Khan, which shares startling similarities with the phenomena of Trump, Bolsonaro and Milei. As can be imagined, Imran Khan and his party—the so-called Movement for Justice (PTI), mostly having its support base in the educated, white collar sections of the urban petty bourgeoisie—is conservative and reactionary to the degree that many consider it a ‘clean shave’ version of Jamaat-e-Islami.



The unabated introduction and ruthless execution of neo-liberal policies since the late 1980s at the behest of the IMF and World Bank has only exacerbated the historic crisis of Pakistani capitalism, further deteriorating the conditions of an already impoverished population. The miserable failure of the military establishment’s project around Imran Khan—first backing and putting him into power, and then ousting and subsequently incarcerating him after he proved to be a headache by attempting to become more and more independent with his typical arrogant and carefree attitude—has deepened the rifts within the state and further intensified the political chaos. The economy is plagued with historic deficits and debts, and the situation has reached a point where nothing much has been left to privatize. Even the left-over state assets put on sale at

discounted prices are unable to fetch any reasonable investment from abroad. Now, the airport and public parks and highways are being mortgaged to get additional loans. Despite the long painful hours of power outages becoming a routine even in the relatively developed urban centers, electricity prices have increased manifold during the last few years.

The new dummy government under Nawaz Sharif’s younger brother, Shehbaz Sharif, is devoid of any public support and credibility. Its handlers are even more unpopular. Uncertainty and mass discontent is the order of the day. The victorious mass movement in Kashmir demanding affordable electricity has further alarmed the policy makers. In these conditions the regime has turned even more oppressive, conservative and religious. The circumstances reflect a state suffering from an existential crisis, and a society on the verge of collapse in case the belated, crisis-ridden and historically obsolete capitalism is not uprooted in a revolutionary upsurge of the exploited. However, in the present conditions marked with social lull and decay, betrayals of the traditional trade union and party leaderships, and political indifference and numbness among the toiling masses with no respite in sight, it is usual for the common people, particularly the petty bourgeoisie and the backward layers of proletariat, to try to seek solace in reactionary prejudices of the past, religious tales and narratives, and the idea of an afterlife. All of these contribute to religiosity engulfing large sections of the society, expressing itself in the dressing, getup, language, habits and other aspects of social life, but being as superficial as the thin layer of fungus that forms on dead waters.

In the times marked with an inertia in the class struggle and labor movement, religious sects and fundamentalist groups may swell to an extent, and the new ones with more reactionary outlooks may continue to emerge, but because of their utter inability to present a viable program of emancipation for the masses, they are mostly unable to acquire sustainable social and political bases in the vast majority of the population, and, in most cases, are very soon lost into oblivion. In the moments of an apparent domination of reaction and religiosity, the progressive social and political currents

may seem to be hopelessly dying down but can come to the fore very quickly under the whip of extraordinary events. In this regard, to the extent the crisis of the state is deepening, and the contradictions of Pakistani capitalism are sharpening, the possibility of an unforeseen social explosion, radically transforming the whole situation overnight, cannot be ruled out.

The Durand Line is just one of the artificial divides in the region drawn by British imperialism and its local lackeys in order to segregate and perpetuate their exploitative rule over the local populations having a common history over thousands of years. The others are the Redcliff Line and the Line of Control (LoC), which respectively split Punjab (and Bengal) and Kashmir in between India and Pakistan, the two rival atomic powers in South Asia emerging out of the bloody partition of 1947—in which 20 million people were uprooted from their ancestral homes while at least a million perished in the resulting religious frenzy of rape and murder. The trauma of the partition still continues to haunt the cultural and social life of the people, and fuels religious bigotry and fundamentalism in both countries, obviously propped up not only by the state and ruling classes of Pakistan—a country apparently founded in the name of Islam—but also the supposedly secular India. Here, once again, it was the British imperialists who, for the obvious reasons, while leaving in 1947 made sure that they didn't leave behind a united India.

In times of severe internal crises, inevitably resulting from the historically belated and grafted capitalism, the two neighboring states do not refrain from going to the extent of beating the drums of war and taking the war hysteria imbued in the toxic mixture of nationalism and religious fanaticism to the extremes. However, the limited resources and potential consequences—including the possibility of a war getting out of hand and a total annihilation in case of a nuclear conflict—forces restraint upon their policy makers, and sooner or later the arbitration of imperialism for the same reasons helps diffuse the situation leading to

another phase of 'normality' and 'peace', in which the process of dialogue for the sake of dialogue begins. The full-blown wars in 1947, 1965 and 1971—and various limited border conflicts continuing to this day, mostly around the dispute over Kashmir—along with the intermediate durations of peace talks show that the ruling classes of India and Pakistan can neither fight a decisive war nor can they, contrary to the liberal and left-reformist illusions, maintain a long-lasting and durable peace and friendship. Since their inception, the powerful sections within the states and ruling classes of both the countries, taking lesson of 'divide and rule' from their British masters, have adopted the policy of nurturing and sponsoring religious extremism and fundamentalism in order to diffuse the class struggle and perpetuate their crisis-ridden rule. In this context, Hindu and Islamic fundamentalisms can be considered two aspects of the same phenomenon and feed upon each other.

The rise and coming to power of Bhartiya Jannata Party (BJP) in an officially secular state once again proves that a truly secular and democratic society cannot be built upon the basis of a historically belated and crisis-ridden capitalism unable to offer a prosperous life for the vast majority of the population. The BJP may be considered the electoral wing of the hard-line extremist Hindu nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which—in the conditions of national, regional, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity of India, where tens of thousands of Hindu deities are worshiped, and where a sizeable Muslim minority along with the Christians and Sikhs also reside—strives to construct a unified Hindu religion and a nationalism based on it in the fashion of Italian and German fascism.

Historically speaking, RSS and the organizations spawning from it, collectively called the "RSS Family", have not been able to achieve any major success in the electoral field. Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the party preceding the BJP, in its lifespan at the most garnered 9.31% of the total vote (in the general elections of 1967). In the general elections of 1984, the BJP was able to secure only two seats in Lok



Sabha, the Indian parliament. However, it was the onslaught of ruthless capitalist policies by the consecutive Congress governments—particularly after taking a sharp turn towards economic openness and neoliberalism in 1990s in the backdrop of the collapse of Soviet Union—along with the use of erstwhile British policy of manipulating the communal divisions of society for power and prestige which provided the BJP with the social base that it did not take long to translate into electoral victories. But more than Congress, it was the inability of the Stalinist leaderships, including the various Communist Parties, to arm the gigantic Indian proletariat with a Marxist program and illuminate a revolutionary way out of the quagmire of capitalism that ultimately cleared the path for the forces of Hindutva. Like much of the rest of the world, having lost their path in the mazes of class conciliations, two-stageism, nationalism, parliamentarianism and reformism, the CPs—once having a considerable mass base, support and presence in the parliament—are now struggling for their very survival.

As highlighted by Haris Qadeer in one of his recent writings on India, during the last ten years of power, the BJP has become so strong not only in terms of numbers but also in terms of socio-cultural influence that any other political force or even all of the rival political parties combined are virtually unable to offer a serious resistance against it. Like similar phenomena elsewhere, most of its support base is comprised of the professional and mercantile petty bourgeoisie, lumpenized layers of the

proletariat and unemployed youth, and, quite curiously, the Indian diaspora in the West. According to a conservative estimate, the BJP now has more than 180 million members. Additionally, its inactive members or close sympathizers also number in the tens of millions. More than 800 NGOs affiliated to the party are active in various spheres. It has 36 wings including the country's largest trade union federation and students' federation. Apart from a large women's wing, the party also controls the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and various arrangements for monitoring cultural and religious affairs at home and abroad. It is estimated that RSS alone has around five million members, and a large number of them are full-timers. It has more than 60 thousand branches across India.

Additionally, like many other recently emerging currents of the populist/far right, including Imran Khan's PTI in Pakistan, the BJP operates a gigantic social media network through its IT cell employing tens of thousands of people. The cell functions through countless pages and accounts with the names of famous personalities, states, tourist destinations and cities, religious festivals, etc., and uses them for deceptive and malicious propaganda in accordance with the party objectives, which also include portraying a picture of India progressing under BJP rule in front of the world. Many of these accounts or pages even have Muslim names or titles. Through these means, any voices of dissent or opposition are relentlessly trolled and declared as being

treacherous, anti-national, pro-Pakistan, etc.

In its essence, the BJP—or for that matter the socio-political project of Hindutva in general—represents an unprecedented onslaught of the dominant sections of India's bourgeoisie against the toiling masses. It includes severely limiting or altogether abolishing their democratic and civil liberties, including the right to unionize, free political association and freedom of speech. But all that is a preliminary to its prime objective, which consists of a ferocious implementation of the neo-liberal agenda, namely wholesale privatization, union busting, limiting real wages to a bare minimum, austerity, deregulation and downsizing. Once again, it is not a matter of policy choice but that of the essential conditions required to ensure corporate profits or even the very existence of the Indian bourgeoisie. In the final analysis, the BJP and the program it contains can reasonably be deemed as part and parcel of a system in the period of its historic rot and decay.

When it comes to the consequences of the policies implemented by the BJP during the last ten years or so, the situation on the ground bears little resemblance to the rosy picture of a rising and 'shining' India painted by the apologists of neo-liberal capitalism inside and outside the country, including the imperialist think tanks and financial institutions like the IMF. Official figures of GDP growth can be regarded as outright fudged or inflated at best. In any case, it is mostly a joyless growth for the vast majority of the population, widening the gulf between the rich and the poor to the extent that seven million Indian citizens from the uppermost strata can be included among the richest people in the world, while 700 million from the lowest strata are among the most impoverished on the planet. Accordingly, the rich-poor divide in India is worse now than during British colonial rule, with the richest 1 percent cornering up to 73 percent of the national income and holding more than four times the wealth held by 953 million people who make up for the bottom 70 percent of the country's population. Moreover, it would take a female domestic worker 22,277 years to earn what a top CEO of a technology company makes in one year!

The Indian state and society under the BJP is going through a process of reactionary transfor-

mation akin to the one initiated by Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan in 1980s. However, the situation has not yet been totally lost. Despite a brutal crackdown on the opposition and an unprecedented control of the media in the backdrop of recent general elections, the BJP has suffered from an unexpected electoral setback, and the hopes of Narendra Modi to win a majority required for the constitutional amendments to turn India into a Hindutva dictatorship have been dashed. It reflects a seething mass discontent under the surface. The BJP will now have to rule through a coalition and consequently as a relatively weak government. It doesn't necessarily mean that, in the face of a stronger opposition, it would tone down its fundamentalist rhetoric. On the contrary, it would be compelled to adopt a more bigoted approach in an attempt to reassert itself onto the society, further enflaming the majoritarian religious nationalist sentiments



not only against a sizeable Muslim minority but also against the historic external foe, Pakistan. At any rate, with the developments in the recent past, it has become exceedingly difficult, if not entirely impossible, to defeat and overthrow the BJP through electoral means alone. Ultimately, the Indian proletariat, in alliance with other exploited and oppressed layers of society, would have to resort to revolutionary methods not only to get rid of the menace of all forms of Hindu fundamentalism but also the system of class oppression and exploitation that is the origin of all such vices.

In conclusion, the roots of religious fundamentalism with all its forms, formations and faces in South Asia should be looked for in



the historic evolution of these societies under colonialism, imperialism and subsequently the independent rule of a lackey bourgeoisie. With the uneven and combined pattern of development, the noxious amalgamation of impoverishment, religious prejudices and superstitions of the foregone times, partial modernity, socio-cultural remnants of feudalism and tribalism, finance capital and black money has only complicated the evolution of these countries. The grafted capitalism and its comprador bourgeoisie has not been able to accomplish any of their historic tasks, namely the creation of a truly secular state with a healthy parliamentary democracy; stable and far-reaching industrialization; a solution to the burning national question; formation of a healthy, educated and skilled labor force with a decent work ethic; an end to the economic and cultural remnants of feudalism; and a viable social and material infrastructure upon which a modern bourgeois society could be built. As the historic crisis of capitalism on the global scale has deepened, the conditions in this part of the world have only got more and more bleak. In these times of capitalist decay, when the semi-fascist, far-right tendencies are reemerging even in the most developed and modern societies in the West, it becomes criminal to even imagine fighting and defeating religious fundamentalism here with a program confined in the boundaries of capitalism. Consequently, liberalism and left reformism cannot offer any

serious resistance to far right, whether it be in the form of religious fundamentalism, racism or any other. On the contrary, in a desperate attempt to solve the crisis of capitalism with the policies of austerity, privatization and deregulation, they ultimately pave the way for far right. Only the proletariat, taking the lead of all other oppressed sections of society and armed with a revolutionary socialist program, can fight this peril by eliminating the root cause of all such horrors. In the glorious words of the late Comrade Lal Khan,

Once the working class starts to move... fundamentalism will vanish as a drop of water vanishes from the surface of red hot iron. But if the basic contradictions and crisis of society are not eliminated, it will come back again and again in new periods of reaction. It will keep on ravaging and raping society and human civilization until it is eradicated and the basic cause of its existence, deprivation, is uprooted. It is a peculiar manifestation of the death agony of capitalism. To get rid of this plague will only be possible when the system on which it festers is abolished. This is only possible through a socialist revolution. 🌟

1. Lal Khan (1956-2020), founder and life long leader of The Struggle, ISL section in Pakistan.
2. Indian National Congress, the traditional political party of Indian nationalism.
3. Political ideology of Indian nationalism that seeks to impose Hindu cultural and religious hegemony.

ROSA LUXEMBURG
SOCIALISM
OR BARBARISM

