



MAGAZINE

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“Israel is no victim, rather it is a perpetrator of apartheid. There can be no exception to global labor solidarity.”

-Sonali Kolhatkar



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To Be Or Not To Be Marxist?

Michael Albert

A recent Jacobin article about how Karl Marx first got radicalized included these two sentences: “Today, many young people are marching leftward in [Marx’s] footsteps from a passion for freedom to a critique of capitalism. But unlike Marx, they have the whole tradition of Marxism to guide them.”

Will taking the “whole tradition of Marxism” as their guide reveal to “young people marching leftward” the critical, essential elements of their circumstances they will need to navigate to best win a better society? Police violence. Abortion denial. Accelerating inequality. Climate collapse. War. Fascism. And more. To react effectively, should we immerse ourselves in Marxist texts?

Weeks, months, years, and decades come and go. Left “scholars” periodically proclaim “Marx said it. Marx knew it. Marx taught it. To win a better world, we should channel Marx’s Collected Works. We should be guided by the whole Marxist tradition.” But is it true that if we don’t seriously study Marx to learn his old answers to our current questions—and if we don’t seriously study Lenin and Trotsky too to learn their answers as well—then our knowledge, preparation, and thinking will not successfully advance our needs and desires?

The bearded big man, the optimistic oracle, the grandest grand teacher, the most famous flag bearer himself wrote “The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.”

Non-Marxologists might think Marx must have been referring to the effect of the tradition of dead generations on reactionaries who wish to return to the past. It turns out, however, that reading further we find that reactionaries weren’t Marx’s target: “And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating

something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time honored disguise and borrowed language.”

So it was revolutionaries, not reactionaries, that Marx was eloquently castigating for borrowing “names, battle slogans, and costumes” from the past in order to present the present in “honored disguise and borrowed language” until we find that over and over, today is costumed as if it was yesterday, and this is done, ironically, by those claiming to seek tomorrow.

Some will say I exaggerate the problem. Perhaps, but then did Marx exaggerate it too? Suppose you think you operate in the tradition of some dead thinker. Should you proclaim it? Should you footnote it? Should you urge your preferred old texts on others? What is a committed comrade to do?

When asked that question, my first observation is that there is no need to display your lineage, much less to trumpet it even if your claimed lineage is brilliant. What matters instead is to make clear what you yourself believe and to show why you believe it using your own words of today. Can’t we agree that there is rarely need to quote dead men’s words and most especially that there is never reason to treat dead men’s words like scripture, as if simply quoting such words provides an argument or evidence. Instead, to convey our own passion on behalf of our own aims while we also attend to the expectations, fears, and experiences of those we address, why not present relevant experiences and logical connections in our own contemporary words as evidenced in our own contemporary times?

Consider a person, probably a guy, who repeatedly quotes Marx and advises reading Marx (or some other long gone icon) to make some point about contemporary relations much less about contemporary means or aims. Imagine hearing or watching him. Doesn't he too often seem more concerned to get his audience to genuflect to Marx or more concerned to demonstrate his own allegiance to Marx than he is concerned to help larger, undecided audiences consider for themselves current observations based on current evidence and reasoning? In short, doesn't to quote from the past often mask contemporary communicative poverty? Doesn't it sometimes appeal to some dead author's authority, which in turn risks a slip-slide toward sectarian conformity?

Why not instead take Marx's own advice and let "dead generations" rest in peace? Why not avoid "nightmarish" mimicry? Why not stop "borrowing" and instead create?

Please note, so far I haven't offered a word of critique of Marxism itself. Not a word. Instead the above observations are about how to communicate substance, not about the merits of the substance to be communicated. But to now assess Marxism's substance, consider the harsh claim that the goal of struggle in every Marxist text that offers a serious economic or societal vision is an economy that elevates about twenty percent of its population to ruling class status and that also retains patriarchy, racism, and political authoritarianism, not to mention continuing to excessively spew pollution. Is that claim true? Consider that when Marxist movements have actually guided revolutions, those revolutions have delivered societies with just those horribly flawed features. Does this aspect of Marxist tradition matter? Do these outcomes exist consistently with and not despite Marxism's concepts?

Many Marxists reply that such implications are nonsense. They say every genuine Marxist's goal is mass working-class participation, democracy, and freedom. And I agree that that is what Marx and most Marxists desire. But then I add that despite those undeniable personal desires, in practice most

Marxists don't pursue institutions consistent with mass working-class participation, democracy, and freedom or with ending patriarchy, racism, and authoritarianism. Again, is that claim about institutional aims false, or is it true?

To decide, suppose we could put every Marxist text about economics and/or society in a pile. To the very limited extent that anything in that pile provides serious institutional vision, won't it most often be only economic and include authoritative decision making, a corporate division of labor, remuneration for output or bargaining power, and markets or central planning, each of which institutions elevate the earlier-mentioned twenty percent. And then if we look at actual Marxist-inspired revolutions, putting them in a pile, so to speak, don't we see just those institutional aims achieved?

Perhaps the cause of Marxism not delivering what most of its advocates have wanted hasn't been bad leaders. Yes, of course Stalin was a bad leader, to put it mildly. But perhaps the real, deeper, and lasting problem has been Marxist movement dynamics that have elevated a thug like Stalin and, going still one step further, perhaps the problem has been the concepts that have elevated or at any rate that did not prevent those Stalin-elevating movement dynamics.

The problem wasn't that everybody in Marxist Leninist parties explicitly wanted to trample workers on the road to ruling them. That is overwhelmingly false. That is nonsense. The problem was that however well meaning their members may have been, some of the core concepts of Marxist parties have inexorably led those parties, when they succeeded, to trample workers. Behind and pushing the leaders, structures. Behind and elevating the structures, concepts.

Become a Marxist revolutionary. Even with the very best motives—the very very best motives—the odds are that you aren't going to make a revolution in our modern world because you won't have sufficiently broad focus and especially, ironically, because you will lack sufficient working class support. But if you



do transcend those problems and you do help make a revolution, the odds are your achievement will elevate what I call the coordinator class to economic rule over the working class, and will leave patriarchy, racism, and authoritarianism modified but intact or even intensified.

Some Marxists find this claim personally insulting. I don't think it should be. It isn't about particular people or motives. It isn't about people's personalities much less people's genetics. It is instead about concepts, methods, and institutional allegiances which, even in the hands of wonderful people foster results that those people never wanted. The target of my comments is nightmarish tradition that weighs down good people. Or, as my bard, who is still living, sang, "I mean no harm nor put fault on anyone who lives in a vault, it's alright ma, if I can't please him."

So let's focus on two substantive issues. Consider first that Marxism's core concepts and associated practices overemphasize economics and underemphasize gender/kinship, community/culture, polity, and ecology.

This claim doesn't imply that all (or even any) Marxists ignore everything other than economics. Nor does it imply that all (or even any) Marxists don't care greatly about other matters. It implies, instead, that when yesterday's Marxists addressed the sex life of teenagers, marriage, the nuclear family, religion, racial identity, cultural commitments, sexual preferences, political organization, police behavior, war, and ecology, they tended to highlight dynamics arising from their understanding of class struggle or that demonstrated implications for class struggle and tended to miss concerns rooted in the

specific features of race, gender, power, and nature. They most often even claimed that this limited accounting was a virtue.

This criticism doesn't say yesterday's Marxism has said nothing useful about race, gender, sex, and power or at least about the economics of each. But this criticism does say that yesterday's Marxist concepts did not sufficiently counter tendencies imposed by then current society, or by then current struggle, or by then current tactical choices that generated racist, sexist, and authoritarian outcomes even against the best moral and social inclinations of most Marxists. Yesterday's Marxism left out too much that matters greatly for it to guide us to tomorrow.

In other words, these claims about Marxism's over-emphasis on economy and insufficient emphasis on other sides of life do not predict mono-mania about economics or even a universal and inviolable pattern of over attention to economics and under attention to everything else. No, instead they predict a harmful pattern of narrowness in how attention is given to extra economic phenomena. Doesn't Marxism instruct us to study such phenomena and to correct ills associated with such phenomena, but to do so with our eyes primarily on what Marxism says are the paramount change-relevant causes and effects, which Marxism says are the economic ones? Doesn't Marxism provide valuable and even essential insights about the economic dimensions of other than economic sides of life, but not so much about their less economic dimensions? By analogy imagine a feminist, anti-racist, or anarchist who says we should pay attention to economic phenomena and seek to correct ills associated with them, but we should do so always with our eyes primarily on what feminism, anti-racism, or anarchism would call the paramount change-relevant causes and effects, which they would say are the intrinsically gender, racial, or political ones. Wouldn't Marxists rightly reply that those other approaches need economic enhancement? But isn't it just as valid for those other approaches to say that the Marxist approach needs gender, racial, and political enhancement?

If so, then doesn't it follow that the fix for Marxism's "economism" would be for Marxists to agree that feminism, anarchism, and anti racism have their own core insights and that just as advocates of each of those perspectives need to take account of class-focused understanding, so too people seeking classlessness should take account of those other source's insights about those other focussed areas of needed change? Won't prioritizing only a one-way causation, whether economics to the rest or some other favored focus to the rest, miss phenomena of crucial importance, especially given the racial, gender, authority, ecology, and class biases and habits that are imbued so prevalently in current societies? But doesn't that make clear that we therefore need concepts that counter and certainly not concepts that accentuate such biases?

The good news is that I think the majority of today's Marxists agree with the need to transcend economism. The bad news is that I think the majority of today's Marxists haven't yet adopted new concepts that equally prioritize those other areas of needed change. Instead the concepts and words of the dead generations that inhabit Marxism's tradition tend to crowd out or sometimes even stamp out such broader insights as soon as momentum for fundamental change builds. So while the majority of today's Marxists see the need to escape economism and while they sincerely seek to do so (often by embracing another perspective so we get socialist feminism, marxist anti racism, anarcho-marxism, and eco-marxism), nonetheless, isn't a lingering obstacle to their success that in times of crisis their allegiance to their whole tradition's core intellectual framework tends to overcome their good intentions? As movement urgency rises, that is, don't desires for enlarged breadth of focus tend to get washed away? That is what we might call Marxism's economism problem.

A second area of concern less noticed and less confronted than its economism, is ironically that regarding Marxism's primarily focused side of life, the economy, Marxism's concepts fall profoundly short. Most Marxist might say, "come on. Whatever limitations or even failings Marxism may have,

surely its economics is powerful.” Well, yes, Marxism rightly argues the intense importance of class conflict and that is excellent. But then Marxism near universally fails to highlight a class that exists between labor and capital. Yesterday’s and also today’s Marxists tend to apriori deny the roots of a third class in how the economy defines and apportionings work. Yesterday’s and also today’s Marxist’s teach, instead, that classes owe their existence only to ownership relations. But isn’t it blindingly evident that this is why Marxism fails to see that the economies that Marxists have either positively called “socialist” or critically called “state capitalist” have elevated neither capitalists nor workers to ruling economic status? Instead, in this system, aren’t capitalists gone but workers still subordinate? Indeed, hasn’t what the Marxist tradition has sought and won beyond capitalism in every case elevated to ruling economic status not workers but instead a coordinator class of planners, managers, and other empowered employees? Hasn’t it been out with the capitalist boss, in with the coordinator boss?

But why does that happen? Is it a revolution hijacked? Or is it that victorious Marxism has most often sought and won public or state ownership of assets, top down decision making, corporate divisions of labor, remuneration for output or power, and markets or central planning for allocation. And hasn’t this all happened, remarkably, even while Marxists simultaneously urged the need for workers control. Yet when Marxists have implemented the former institutions they have not attained the latter goals. Isn’t that because some key Marxist conceptual and institutional commitments have not only permitted but propelled coordinator rule even while they have denied that the coordinator class exists? Perhaps the reason why Marxism isn’t all that popular among working class audiences isn’t solely that those audiences have been misled.

But, please note, this doesn’t say that most (or arguably even any) individual Marxists self-consciously try to advance the interests of managers, lawyers, accountants, engineers, planners, and other empowered actors over and above workers. It says, instead, that certain concepts within Marxism do

little to prevent this elevation of a coordinator class and indeed even propel it. It says that in Marxist practice, coordinator economic dominance tends to emerge even despite and against the sentiments of Marxism’s rank and file.

This may seem peculiar. After all, how could a movement most of whose members want one thing repeatedly wind up implementing something damningly and even diametrically opposite? But actually, this is not uncommon. Social outcomes often diverge from rank and file desires.

For example, sincere and eloquent advocates of workers control who favor privately-owned corporations, whether they do so for personal gain or due to a sincere belief that private ownership is essential for a well functioning economy, do not usher in workers control. Their institutional choice to retain private ownership trumps their worthy ethical desire for workers control. All Marxists understand that outcome because Marxism’s concepts highlight how private ownership precludes workers control.

Similarly, sincere and eloquent advocates of workers self management who favor markets or central planning and who favor the corporate division of labor, whether they do so for personal gain or due to a sincere belief that those choices are essential for a well functioning economy, will not usher in self management. Their institutional choices will trump their worthy ethical desires for self management. Marxists often fail to understand that. Their concepts don’t highlight and even obscure the dynamics at work.

Is it nasty to point out that Marxists ought to easily understand this possibility not least because Marx himself smartly advised that when judging some intellectual framework one should discount what it says about itself (“workers above all”) and instead notice what its concepts obscure (“coordinatorism above workers”)? Is it nasty to urge, like Marx, that an intellectual framework that becomes a tool of an aspiring ruling class will obscure that class’s behavior, hide that class’s roots in social relations, and even deny that class’s existence, all while furthering that class’s rise to dominance?

Look at the theory and ideology of mainstream capitalist economics to see exactly that dynamic. But don't we also discover something quite similar if we apply the same evaluative method to assessing Marxism's relation to the class between labor and capital? That is, when we look to see what the Marxist tradition highlights, obscures, and seeks, don't we see that Marxism's focus on property relations as the only basis for class conflict obscures the importance of the distribution of empowering tasks among economic actors for class conflict? Don't we see that that's why Marxism misses that with owners gone, coordinators can rise to rule workers? Don't we see that Marxism removes from view the rule exerted by about twenty percent of the population (the coordinator class that monopolizes empowering work), over the remaining eighty percent of the population (the working class that does mainly disempowering work) in so-called "twentieth century socialism," which system we really ought to call coordinatorism?

Don't we see, in other words, that despite the sincere and oft-stated aims of so many of its adherents, in practice Marxism's concepts overwhelmingly and predictably elevate the coordinator class to rule over workers even as Marxism's concepts have hidden coordinator's role and even their very existence?

Would Marx call today's Marxism and especially today's Marxism Leninism the ideology of the coordinator class, not the working class? Whether Marx would do so or not, isn't it clear that to argue that we should do so doesn't imply that we think that somehow all Marxists are enemies of classlessness? Isn't it clear that it instead urges that even when Marxists overwhelmingly desire classlessness, their conceptual and institutional allegiances trample those desires?

A question arises. How might today's Marxists seek a better Marxism for tomorrow? How might new Marxists augment, alter, or otherwise transcend faulty current concepts to avoid the two problems we and so many feminists, anti

racists, anarchists, councilists, and others have highlighted?

Regarding "economism," isn't the problem that we need to transcend a conceptual framework that starts from economics and then even while revealing important economic dynamics, primarily examines other realms with the intention of seeing their economic implications but not their intrinsic extra-economic dynamics?

And if we recognize the problem, shouldn't we instead ground our overall perspective on concepts that highlight economics, but also equally highlight polity, kinship, culture, and ecology? Shouldn't we prioritize understanding each of these life sphere's own intrinsic logic and dynamics, and simultaneously prioritize seeing how in actual societies each of these life spheres influences and even limits and defines the others without presupposing that they line up according to some particular hierarchy of importance? For example, as a possible correction to today's economism, tomorrow's Marxist might say,

"I am Marxist but I am also feminist, intercommunalist, anarchist, and green. I recognize that dynamics arising from spheres of life other than the economy are critically important and can even define economic possibilities, just as the reverse can occur. Of course, I still think class struggle is important, but I realize gender, race, religious, ethnic, sexual, and anti-authoritarian struggle are each also important. I realize that just as we need to understand non-class struggle in its relation to class struggle, we also have to understand class struggle in its relation to gender, race, political, and ecological struggle."

So, okay, suppose tomorrow's Marxist does renounce the idea of an economic base which affects an extra-economic superstructure which is in turn only affected. Suppose tomorrow's Marxist denies that societies rise and transform only due to modes of production and instead sees how modes of kinship, culture, and polity are also crucial to how societies rise and transform?

Suppose tomorrow's Marxist still argues the importance of class struggle but no longer sees class struggle as the alone dominant conceptual touchstone for identifying strategic issues. Could the label "Marxist" come to connote what this new "Marxist" believes? I am not sure. Maybe it could, though the Marxist tradition would no doubt resist. Indeed, I think this battle is and has been under way for decades.

In contrast to the above possibility for overcoming Marxism's economism problem, the class-definition problem of yesterday's and also most often of today's Marxism seems to more strongly resist correction. Capitalists are capitalist, Marxists rightly urge, and this is so by virtue of their private ownership of the means of production. To no longer have capitalists above workers requires, Marxists also rightly urge, that we therefore eliminate private ownership of means of production. So far, so good. So essential.

Marxists then say non-capitalists own only their ability to do work which they sell for a wage. Also good. But then Marxists say that all these wage earning employees, by virtue of having the same ownership situation as one another, also have the same class interests. They are all in one class, the working class. This is not good.

The point is, Marxists almost universally fail to recognize that the parts of wage earning employees can have crucially different class interests from other parts due to having different jobs in the corporate division of labor. Suppose in response to this criticism we hypothesize that perhaps there is a class between labor and capital. Is this hypothetical third class real? Is anyone actually in this hypothetical third class? Once we admit that it might exist and we thus admit that something other than ownership relations might generate class difference, if we then look can't we easily see that some employees—managers, lawyers, accountants, engineers, and more are highly empowered by their economic position and in particular by corporate divisions of labor which allot to them a virtual monopoly on empowering

tasks as well as on the levers and requisites of daily decision-making, while in contrast allotting to other employees disempowering tasks that leave them subordinate—so that the former coordinators decide and the latter workers obey?

Doesn't it follow that to no longer have empowered coordinators above disempowered workers, and therefore to attain classlessness, we must replace the offending institutions—markets, central planning, and especially the corporate division of labor? But if so, then why do most Marxist and all Marxist Leninist visions explicitly advocate having a corporate division of labor?

More, doesn't this advocacy explain why Marxists typically do not see that even when private ownership is eliminated, markets, central planning, and corporate divisions of labor will nonetheless elevate a ruling class of structurally empowered coordinators above a subordinate class of structurally disempowered workers?

Marxists often movingly and sincerely describe the justice, equity, and dignity that "socialism" should usher in. But, if we look at texts by Marxists for their proposed vision, don't we find vague rhetoric that lacks institutional substance, or, when there is some institutional substance, don't we find institutions that deny the justice, equity, and dignity that Marxists personally favor?

Similarly, when we look at Marxist practice, which is most often Marxist Leninist practice, don't we find these same coordinatorist structures nearly universally implemented? Could a Marxist today transcend this problem by adopting a three class view that sees beyond only property relations as able to cause class rule, and yet reasonably continue to call him or herself a Marxist?

If a Marxist did follow that path, which indeed some Marxists have at times tried to do, (including myself when I co-authored a book with Robin Hahnel forty six years ago called *Unorthodox Marxism*) I think signs that it had occurred would be obvious. For example, wouldn't such "new Marxists" critique what has been self-labeled

“socialism” by its advocates in various countries around the world, and then not call it capitalism or state capitalism, or even deformed socialism, but instead call it a new mode of production that enshrines a coordinator class above workers? And wouldn’t such new Marxists then offer a vision that would dispense with markets, central planning, and corporate divisions of labor, as well as dispense with modes of remuneration that reward property, power, or output, and of course dispense with private ownership of means of production?

And wouldn’t such new Marxists also propose new defining economic institutions to seek in place of those rejected options? The new institutions that I think might gain support from such new Marxists might be, for example, worker and consumer collectively self-managing councils, remuneration for duration, intensity, and onerousness of socially valued labor, a new division of labor that has jobs balanced for empowerment effects, and participatory planning in place of markets and central planning?

Then, in accord with their altered economic vision, wouldn’t such new Marxists also advocate movement organization, methods, and programs that embody, propel, and actually arrive at their positive aims? Wouldn’t they understand that strategies for social change that embody organizational choices and methods such as employing centrist parties, top down decision-making, and corporate divisions of labor will not eliminate coordinator class rule but entrench it? Wouldn’t they understand that today’s Marxism’s flaws lead to coordinator class rule regardless of the sincere desires of many or even nearly all Marxists to end up someplace much nicer than coordinatorism?

What would be the relation of such “new Marxists” to the Marxist tradition that they previously celebrated? Well, I doubt such new Marxists would call themselves Leninist or Trotskyist, but even if they did, they would certainly disavow huge swaths of associated thought and action.

Instead of persistently quoting Lenin and Trotsky positively, for example, they would aggressively reject Lenin saying: “It is absolutely essential that all authority in the factories should be concentrated in the hands of management.”

And they would reject Lenin saying: “Any direct intervention by the trade unions in the management of enterprises must be regarded as positively harmful and impermissible.”

And they would reject Lenin saying: “Large scale machine industry which is the central productive source and foundation of socialism calls for absolute and strict unity of will... How can strict unity of will be ensured? By thousands subordinating their will to the will of one.”

And they would reject Lenin saying: “A producer’s congress! What precisely does that mean? It is difficult to find words to describe this folly. I keep asking myself can they be joking? Can one really take these people seriously? While production is always necessary, democracy is not. Democracy of production engenders a series of radically false ideas.”

And then they would reject Trotsky saying (about left communists): “They turn democratic principles into a fetish. They put the right of the workers to elect their own representatives above the Party, thus challenging the Party’s right to affirm its own dictatorship, even when this dictatorship comes into conflict with the evanescent mood of the worker’s democracy.”

And they would reject Trotsky saying, “We must bear in mind the historical mission of our Party. The Party is forced to maintain its dictatorship, without stopping for these vacillations, nor even the momentary falterings of the working class. This realization is the mortar which cements our unity. The dictatorship of the proletariat does not always have to conform to formal principles of democracy.”

And they would reject Trotsky saying: “It is a general rule that man will try to get out of work. Man is a lazy animal.”

And they would reject Trotsky saying (with pride): “I consider that if the Civil War had not plundered our economic organs of all that was strongest, most independent, most endowed with initiative, we should undoubtedly have entered the path of one-man management much sooner and much less painfully.”

More, wouldn’t such new Marxists not waste time blaming Lenin or Trotsky’s personal dispositions for the origins of such undeniably horrible utterances and outcomes, but instead look for underlying inadequate concepts they can now transcend?

But, honestly, isn’t all of the above in some sense the fare of “dead generations”? More important than arguing about the past, wouldn’t tomorrow’s “new Marxists” note that utilizing hierarchical structures in economic and/or political or social institutions risks ushering in coordinator rule as well as creating an environment uncongenial to widespread worker involvement, or kinship, racial, political, or ecological advances?

If tomorrow’s Marxists wanted to argue that in some difficult contexts such structures may have to be employed, wouldn’t they urge seeing the structures as temporarily imposed expedients and in all other respects try to pave the way for classless self-managing social relations, now and in the future?

Finally, despite some crucial flaws, is there also great wisdom in Marx and in many subsequent Marxist writers and activists that “tomorrow’s Marxists” would rightly retain? Of course there is. But wouldn’t new Marxists who rightly reject not only capitalist property relations but also markets, central planning, and a coordinatorist division of labor as well as patriarchy, racism, and authoritarianism also want to avoid fulfilling Marx’s own commentary that: “The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.”

That seems like a good back-to-the-beginning place for us to sign off, no?

Well, at the risk of belaboring, I don’t think so. To reject things we have been taught, things we have quoted, things we have taken our identities and battle slogans from, things that we have believed in, and that we have advocated all so that we can get beyond traditions of dead generations is no simple path to navigate, especially when many highly learned, compelling committed, courageous, and accomplished folks repeatedly tell us that to do that would leave us ignorantly ill-suited to winning change. So at the risk of running on, I want to give the issue just a little more attention.

The point of activists becoming familiar and facile with such long-lived frameworks as Marxism or Marxism Leninism (or any other long-lived framework) as they move leftward should of course be to find in such frameworks’ insights and methods that can usefully aid current and future practice.

To decide if to immerse oneself in Marxist (or any other) long-lived tradition is a wise choice, shouldn’t we ask, will that tradition’s proposed concepts and practices not hinder but instead help us to comprehend all main conditions we will encounter when we combat injustice? Shouldn’t they help us try to conceive and attain a desirable new world? If so, we should of course learn from that collection of proposed concepts, albeit using our own words. But if not, shouldn’t we develop better concepts and embark on better practice?

To that end, here are some additional very summary judgements about Marxist tradition to discuss, debate, explore, and hopefully get beyond:

1. Marxist “dialectics” is a substantively empty drain on creativity and range of perception. If you doubt it, okay, ask even a well read Marxist what dialectics means. And especially ask what dialectics helps activists understand which, if they hadn’t learned dialectics, they wouldn’t

understand. Ask what makes dialectics other than useless and pointless rhetoric that only elevates its owners above those who fail to successfully borrow those same habits and slogans from dead generations.

2. “Historical Materialism’s” claims have some validity, but when real existing people utilize the concepts of historical materialism they typically tend to arrive at an economistic and mechanical view of society that systematically under-values and mis-understands social relations of gender, political, cultural, and ecological origin and impact.
3. Marxist “class theory” has obscured the importance of a class between labor and capital, has under-appreciated that class’s antagonisms in capitalist economies with the working class below and with capital above, has long obstructed class analysis of Soviet, Eastern European, and Third World post capitalist economies, and has especially obstructed understanding the failings of tactics and strategies that have consistently attained other than what most activists have wanted to attain.
4. The “Marxist Labor Theory of Value” misunderstands its own subject the determination of wages, prices, and profits in capitalist economies and more broadly turns activists’ thoughts away from a needed social-relations bargaining-power view of capitalist exchange. It also directs its advocates away from seeing that the dynamics of workplaces are largely functions of the differential empowerment effects of work, of bargaining power, and of forms of social control and not solely functions of ownership relations. It suggests all workers will wind up earning the minimum wage they need to reproduce themselves. But then one ought to wonder what the point of seeking higher wages is, and for that matter why wages for different wage earners differ so markedly.
5. Marxist “crisis theory,” in all its variants, often

distorts understanding of capitalist economies and anti-capitalist prospects by seeing intrinsic cataclysmic collapse as inevitable and even imminent where no such prospect exists, and by in that way orienting activists away from the importance of their own sustained vision-guided organizing as a far more promising basis for desirable change.

6. Regarding visions of desirable societies, the Marxist tradition has been particularly obstructive. First there has been Marxism’s general taboo against “utopian” speculation which taboo literally rejects trying to conceive a vision we wish to attain. Second, Marxist causal economism has presumed that if economic relations are made desirable then other social relations will fall into place, making vision for other than economy redundant. Third, Marxism is permanently confused about what constitutes an equitable distribution of income. “From each according to ability and to each according to need” is not a viable economic guide since for each of us to provide society according to our ability would mean we should each work as much as our ability allows which is typically way more than it makes sense for us to work. Likewise, for each of us to receive according to our need would either let us all have anything we say we need or, if not, it would require that someone or something else decides our needs for us. In neither case would it respect or reveal information that indicates how much people want or need any particular thing and not just that they do want/need that particular thing, and that would in turn prevent determining costs and benefits of different possible choices by workplaces. More, the norm that Marxists sometimes propose instead, “from each according to personal choice and to each according to contribution to the social product” is not even a morally worthy maxim since it rewards productivity, including genetic endowment, and not just effort and sacrifice. And fourth, Marxism approves hierarchical relations of production, a corporate division

of labor for workplace organization, and approves command planning or even markets as a means of allocation because while Marxism recognizes the need to eliminate the causes of capitalist economic rule it does not even recognize the existence of much less seek to eliminate the causes of coordinator economic rule.

7. Taken cumulatively Marxism's injunctions regarding economic goals amount to advocating what we call a coordinator mode of production that elevates administrators, planners, and all structurally empowered workers, called coordinators, to ruling class status. This Marxist economic goal then uses the label "socialist" to appeal to all other employees, workers, but it does not structurally implement socialist ideals (just as the political goal of bourgeois movements uses the label "democratic" to rally support from diverse sectors, but does not structurally implement full democratic ideals).
8. Finally, Leninism and Trotskyism are natural outgrowths of Marxism as it is employed by people in capitalist societies, and Marxism Leninism, far from being "theory and strategy for the working class," is, instead, by its focus, concepts, values, methods, and goals, and despite most of its advocates' desires, "theory and strategy for the coordinator class."

So, to get personal about all this, and to add a crucial caveat, since I believe the above claims, albeit my reasons are only summarized here, I hoped the demise of the patriarchal, nationalist, authoritarian, ecologically suicidal Soviet model, would end allegiance to Marxism and Marxism Leninism taken as whole traditions, since those whole traditions aimed in their principles, concepts, thought, and vision (though not in the deepest aspirations of many of their advocates), at that Soviet model.

So, what's the problem? Out with that model, out with the concepts and strategies that led to it. That makes sense, doesn't it? Yes, but—and here

comes the caveat—only to a point. When theories fail to sufficiently explain reality or to successfully guide sought practice, they certainly do need to be refined and corrected or sometimes even jettisoned and replaced. And, in the case of Marxism and Marxism Leninism, the faults briefly discussed here and often also critiqued by feminists, anti-racists, anarchists, councilists and even many Marxists are demonstrably intrinsic to certain Marxist core concepts so that correcting those concepts is not just modestly tinkering with the still intact intellectual framework.

That is, supposing we seriously refine or even dispense with major elements of dialectical materialism, historical materialism, the labor theory of value, Marxism's constricted understanding of class, Leninist strategy, a coordinator elevating economic vision, and Marxism's still insufficient attention to and aspirations for kin, gender, sex, race, ethnic, political, and ecological vision, won't whatever emerges reject enough from the Marxist tradition to also have to find a new name? Maybe, maybe not. But I would suggest that it is time—actually that it is well past time—to get on with something new.

My caveat, however, is that it is also true that when theories fail to sufficiently explain reality or to guide practice, it does not follow that we must jettison every claim they made, every concept they offered, and every analysis they undertook. Quite the contrary, it is more likely that much will be still valid and should be retained (though perhaps recast) in any new and better intellectual framework.

So, in 2024, as crisis looms and momentum for change grows, learning from past traditions can certainly help us, but we should recognize that immersing ourselves in past traditions can also crowd out our need to explore and adopt essential new insights in place of flawed ones we have heretofore borrowed from traditions of dead generations.

Has the White House Gone Green?

Alexandria Shaner

“We are coming together to stop one of the largest fossil fuel buildouts in the world,” said a spokesperson for the #StopLNG Campaign. The fossil fuel industry is planning more than 20 new Liquefied Natural Gas export facilities across the Gulf of Mexico - the cumulative pollution from these projects would equal more than 675 coal fired power plants or the entire European Union.

But this project won’t be going forward - at least not for now.

After decades of organizing from frontline communities across the U.S., especially in the Gulf Coast where a majority of these projects have been concentrated, a large coalition came together to take the fight directly to Washington D.C.

Three days of rallies and large-scale civil disobedience was organized for Feb 6-8 at the Department of Energy to pressure the Biden Administration to stop approving new LNG export facilities, a key strategic component for stopping the buildout. Over 1,000 people participated in NVDA (nonviolent direct action) training and to risk arrest.

But just days before the disruption was due to begin, Biden made headlines by announcing a pause on all LNG export approvals and the beginning of a process for incorporating climate and environmental justice harms into future decision making.

The initial reaction was universal joy, with everyone from giant NGOs, to frontline communities, youth movements, and elders celebrating the announcement. After years of relentless campaigning, petition delivering, and pressure on Congress for precisely this decision, here was a victory that felt well-earned. Climate Defiance,

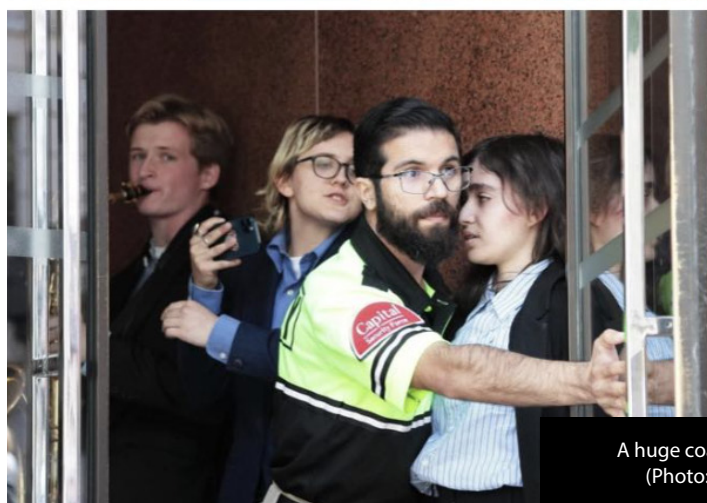
who have been hounding D.C.’s oil-friendly elite, called it “the most significant move any President has ever made on stopping fossil fuels.”

Leading up to Biden’s announcement, a broad climate justice coalition has been winning victories and movement building. Last September, the March to End Fossil Fuels mobilized over 75,000 people into the streets of NYC, combined with 700 smaller simultaneous actions around the world, and hundreds of nonviolent direct action arrests in NYC before and after the mass march. Though this was not a policy victory, it had a political impact and helped solidify the coalition that set its sights on LNG.

Extinction Rebellion DC, who have been engaged in a campaign to Electrify DC, sounded a note of caution, calling the win a “ray of hope” in a long, difficult fight with an industry that has its claws deeply embedded in the country. “There are still 8 LNG export facilities in operation and 10 more already approved, setting the U.S. on a path to double the volume of LNG exported by 2028.”

Speaking to the long term and interconnected nature of the struggle against the fossil fuel industry, Abby Shepard, press spokesperson for XR DC explained, “Here in DC, our work to stop the local gas utility’s \$4.5 billion methane gas pipeline replacement project is intricately connected with the push to stop LNG. Washington Gas uses the same lies to gaslight residents into staying hooked on gas as the Venture Global execs pushing LNG. The more we can be out in our local communities telling the truth about our crisis and the harms of gas, the stronger our collective movement will be to kick methane gas out of our system for good.”

Further scrutiny into industry and political motives behind this potential turning point in



A huge coalition campaigned against LNG. From top left clockwise: Vessel Project (Photo: Jamie Henn), Climate Defiance, Extinction Rebellion DC, and Third Act.

climate policy has revealed both reasons for caution and potential strategies forward. First, it is doubtful that the wildly unpopular Biden Administration's announcement coincides with the start of the Presidential election cycle by accident. Activists have an opportunity to keep the pressure on, demanding that this be the start of a new chapter in climate policy rather than a mere gesture to win youth and climate voters.

Zooming out from this win, there are further complications to the narrative that Biden "gave in" due solely to the efficacy of activism. Over the past months, the climate justice movement has mobilized in close solidarity with the Palestinian Liberation movement - joining mass marches, direct actions, and calls for a ceasefire in Gaza. In this case, the Biden Administration has shown itself to be extremely resistant to public pressure - so what influenced LNG policy yet

did not influence policy on Gaza? At least part of the answer may have more to do with natural limits on resources than with public pressure.

Days before Biden's LNG announcement, data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, a program of the Department of Energy, revealed that the country's gas supply is in terminal decline. Production growth of shale gas, which accounts for 82% of U.S. dry gas production, is slowing. Instead of having an almost infinite amount of natural gas, as many believe, the U.S. may be running out of gas.

Energy consultants stated that plans for seventeen new LNG export terminals "could not come at a worse time," and explicitly advised the Department of Energy to "review and update its evaluations of future gas supply before approving any more export applications". In light of this



information, it is clear that Biden's announcement could very well be an attempt to spin news of hard limits on resources into a popular media stunt.

Whether this dramatic policy shift was spurred more by dogged activism, desperate vote-seeking, or simply resource depletion - it demonstrates weakness in one of the most powerful cogs of the global fossil-capital system. That weakness is worth celebrating, and worth pushing for further gains towards new horizons.

As the climate movement strategizes going forward, there is yet more reason to center frontline communities and to link activism with positive vision for increased wellbeing within planetary bounds. Even under a cloud of sinister motivations, this is a win for LNG impacted communities, for movement building, and for direct action. It is also an invitation to keep going.

Winning Victories and Movement Building

Ted Glick

The recent decision by the Biden Administration to stop the years-long practice by the Department of Energy of rubber stamping proposed methane gas (LNG) export terminals was a definite victory for the planet and its peoples. It's a "pause" for about a year, by no means the halt to ANY new fossil fuel projects called for three years ago by the International Energy Agency. But it is the latest sign of the growing political and organizational power of the US and worldwide movement for climate justice and urgent climate action.

This victory almost certainly would not have happened if that movement had not brought many tens of thousands of people into the streets of mid-town Manhattan in NYC on September 17th. That mass demonstration, combined with 700 or so smaller actions around the world at the same time and hundreds of nonviolent direct action arrests in NYC before and after the 17th, was not a policy victory but was definitely something which had a big political impact.

And there are other victories being won, such as in the state of New Jersey where I live and am politically active. Here, primarily because of the five-plus years of coordinated work by the Empower New Jersey coalition of 130 or so groups statewide, half of the 12 fracked gas infrastructure projects in the works five years ago when we were formed have been defeated, and two others are likely defeats. Only four of those 12 have been or are likely to be built and go into operation.

What do all three of these victories have in common?

- **An EJ analysis:** A very big one is a commitment to consciously working to have a broadly based coalition with an anti-racist, environmental justice lens and participation in decision-making from groups based in people

of color and low-income communities. Sometimes those two things—a broad coalition and an EJ analysis/involvement—are in conflict, which then weakens the overall effort. But when there is success in doing both, experience has shown that there is an energy and a dynamic which yields positive, sometimes very big, results.

- **A healthy internal process:** Fortunately, more and more leaders of the many organizations fighting hard on the climate and other issues appreciate that organized efforts need a healthy, democratic internal process of decision making where the perspectives of frontline groups are given special consideration. Also essential is a commitment to listening to and involving young people, working class people, and LGBTQ+ people. This doesn't mean that there aren't disagreements and conflicts, sometimes pretty intense, but it does mean that when these develop there is a conscious effort to work to resolve them in an honest and upfront way.
- **Multiple tactics:** Over the five plus years of the Empower New Jersey coalition's work there have been a wide range of tactics used, all of which have been necessary to achieve victories: outreach to and building relationships with mass media outlets—visible mass demonstrations—bird dogging those we are pressuring with our demands—nonviolent direct action involving risk of arrest—long distance, visible walks (we did a 50 mile one over five days)—lobbying of relevant elected officials—testifying, in person and online, at meetings of the relevant government bodies and agencies—and probably some more. The targets, the ones who have the power to do the right thing, need to be seeing and feeling us over and over again.

Sometimes, organizing is more like hanging on and refusing to give in despite very bad odds. Sometimes you are wondering much too often if there's really much hope of defeating the bad things you are fighting. But history shows that if we don't give up, little by little strengthen the core group of people taking action, increasingly involve significant numbers of people, and use our intelligence and

creativity as best we collectively can, then yes, organized people really can defeat organized money backed by corrupt power.

And over time we can create a mass movement with the smarts and strength to bring about the systemic, revolutionary change so urgently needed in this troubled but wonderful world.



Photo by Kalea Morgan on Unsplash

U.S. Chooses Genocide Over Diplomacy in the Middle East

Medea Benjamin, Nicolas J. S. Davies

On February 7, 2024, a U.S. drone strike assassinated an Iraqi militia leader, Abu Baqir al-Saadi, in the heart of Baghdad. This was a further U.S. escalation in a major new front in the U.S.-Israeli war on the Middle East, centered on the Israeli genocide in Gaza, but already also including ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, Israeli attacks on Lebanon and Syria, and the U.S. and U.K.'s bombing of Yemen.

This latest U.S. attack followed the U.S. bombing of seven targets on February 2, three in Iraq and four in Syria, with 125 bombs and missiles, killing at least 39 people, which Iran called “a strategic mistake” that would bring “disastrous consequences” for the Middle East.

At the same time, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has been touring the shrinking number of capitals in the region where leaders will still talk to him, playing the United States' traditional role as a dishonest broker between Israel and its neighbors, in reality partnering with Israel to offer the Palestinians impossible, virtually suicidal terms for a ceasefire in Gaza.

What Israel and the United States have proposed, but not made public, appears to be a second temporary ceasefire, during which prisoners or hostages would be exchanged, possibly leading to the release of all the Israeli security prisoners held in Gaza, but in no way leading to the final end of the genocide. If the Palestinians in fact freed all their Israeli hostages as part of a prisoner swap, it would remove the only obstacle to a catastrophic escalation of the genocide.

When Hamas responded with a serious counter-proposal for a full ceasefire and Israeli with-

drawal from Gaza, Biden dismissed it out of hand as “over the top,” and Netanyahu called it “bizarre” and “delusional.”

The position of the United States and Israel today is that ending a massacre that has already killed more than 27,700 people is not a serious option, even after the International Court of Justice has ruled it a plausible case of genocide under the Genocide Convention. Raphael Lemkin, the Polish holocaust survivor who coined the term genocide and drafted the Genocide Convention from his adopted home in New York City, must be turning in his grave in Mount Hebron Cemetery.

The United States' support for Israel's genocidal policies now goes way beyond Palestine, with the U.S. expansion of the war to Iraq, Syria and Yemen to punish other countries and forces in the region for intervening to defend or support the Palestinians. U.S. officials claimed the February 2 attacks were intended to stop Iraqi Resistance attacks on U.S. bases. But the leading Iraqi resistance force had already suspended attacks against U.S. targets on January 30th after they killed three U.S. troops, declaring a truce at the urging of the Iranian and Iraqi governments.

A senior Iraqi military officer told BBC Persian that at least one of the Iraqi military units the U.S. bombed on February 2nd had nothing to do with attacks on U.S. bases. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani negotiated an agreement a year ago to clearly differentiate between Popular Mobilization Force (PMF) units that were part of the “Axis of Resistance” fighting a low-grade war with U.S. occupation forces,



Israeli airstrike on an apartment building in Rafah, the last refuge in southern Gaza. Photo credit: MENAFN

and other PMF units that were not involved in attacks on U.S. bases.

Tragically, because the U.S. failed to coordinate its attacks with the Iraqi government, al-Sudani's agreement failed to prevent the U.S. from attacking the wrong Iraqi forces. It is no wonder that some analysts have dubbed al-Sudani's valiant efforts to prevent all-out war between U.S. forces and the Islamic Resistance in his country as "mission impossible."

Following the elaborately staged but carelessly

misdirected U.S. attacks, Resistance forces in Iraq began launching new strikes on U.S. bases, including a drone attack that killed six Kurdish troops at the largest U.S. base in Syria. So the predictable effect of the U.S. bombing was in fact to rebuff Iran and Iraq's efforts to rein in resistance forces and to escalate a war that U.S. officials keep claiming they want to deter. From experienced journalists and analysts to Middle Eastern governments, voices of caution are warning the United States in increasingly stark language of the dangers of its escalating bombing campaigns. "While the war rages in

Gaza,” the BBC’s Orla Guerin wrote on February 4, “one false move could set the region alight.”

Three days later, Orla would be surrounded by protesters chanting “America is the greatest devil,” as she reported from the site of the U.S. drone assassination of Kataib Hezbollah leader Abu Baqir al-Saadi in Baghdad – which could prove to be exactly the false move she feared.

But what Americans should be asking their government is this: Why are there still 2,500 U.S. troops in Iraq? It is 21 years since the United States invaded Iraq and plunged the nation into seemingly endless violence, chaos and corruption; 12 years since Iraq forced U.S. occupation forces to withdraw from Iraq at the end of 2011; and 7 years since the defeat of ISIS, which served as justification for the United States to send forces back into Iraq in 2014, and then to obliterate most of Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, in 2017.

Successive Iraqi governments and parliaments have asked the United States to withdraw its forces from Iraq, and previously scheduled talks are about to begin. But the Iraqis and Americans have issued contradictory statements about the goal of the negotiations. Prime Minister al-Sudani and most Iraqis hope they will bring about the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces, while U.S. officials insist that U.S. troops may remain for another two to five years, kicking this explosive can further down the road despite the obvious dangers it poses to the lives of U.S. troops and to peace in the region.

Behind these contradictory statements, the real value of Iraqi bases to the U.S. military does not seem to be about ISIS at all but about Iran. Although the United States has more than 40,000 troops stationed in 14 countries across the Middle East, and another 20,000 on warships in the seas surrounding them, the bases it uses in Iraq are its closest bases and airfields to Tehran and much of Iran. If the Pentagon loses these forward operating bases in Iraq, the clos-

est bases from which it can attack Tehran will be Camp Arifjan and five other bases in Kuwait, where 13,500 U.S. troops would be vulnerable to Iranian counter-attacks – unless, of course, the U.S. withdraws them, too.

Toward the end of the Cold War, historian Gabriel Kolko observed in his book *Confronting the Third World* that the United States’ “endemic incapacity to avoid entangling, costly commitments in areas of the world that are of intrinsically secondary importance to [its] priorities has caused U.S. foreign policy and resources to whipsaw virtually arbitrarily from one problem and region to the other. The result has been the United States’ increasing loss of control over its political priorities, budget, military strategy and tactics, and, ultimately, its original economic goals.”

After the end of the Cold War, instead of restoring realistic goals and priorities, the neocons who gained control of U.S. foreign policy fooled themselves into believing that U.S. military and economic power could finally triumph over the frustratingly diverse social and political evolution of hundreds of countries and cultures all over the world. In addition to wreaking pointless mass destruction on country after country, this has turned the United States into the global enemy of the principles of democracy and self-determination that most Americans believe in.

The horror Americans feel at the plight of people in Gaza and the U.S. role in it is a shocking new low in this disconnect between the humanity of ordinary Americans and the insatiable ambitions of their undemocratic leaders.

While working for an end to the U.S. government’s support for Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people, Americans should also be working for the long-overdue withdrawal of U.S. occupying forces from Iraq, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Is the EU a Direct Partner in the Israeli Genocide in Gaza?

Ramzy Baroud

Europe stayed silent when Israel began pounding the besieged Gaza Strip with the kind of ferocity that could only lead to a genocide. In fact, Europe remained silent when the word ‘genocide’ quickly replaced the earlier reference to the ‘Israel-Hamas war’, starting on October 7.

Those familiar with Europe’s political discourse and action regarding Israel and Palestine, must already realize that most European governments have always been on the side of Israel.

However, if this is entirely true, what can we make of the latest comments by the Foreign Policy Chief of the European Union, Josep Borrell, when he seemed to lash out at Israel on January 23, accusing it of “seeding hate for generations”?

During a joint press conference in Brussels with Egypt’s Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry and EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Oliver Varheily, Borrell said that “Israel cannot have the veto right to the self-determination of the Palestinian people.”

But is Borrell being genuine?

Borrell’s frustration with Tel Aviv stems from the realization that Israel does not take Europe seriously. He is right. Tel Aviv never truly saw Brussels as a strong and relevant political actor in comparison to Washington, or even London.

Recent months have further exposed this unequal relationship.

Soon after the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation, European leaders – starting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia

Meloni and French President Emmanuel Macron – flocked to Tel Aviv to, in the words of Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, reiterate that “Israel has every right to defend itself”.

But European support exceeded that of language or political gestures. It also arrived in the form of military and intelligence support.

“As of Nov. 2, the German government has approved the export of close to 303 million euros’ (\$323 million) worth of defense equipment to Israel,” Reuters reported, comparing the large sum to the 32 million euros’ worth of defense exports that were approved by Berlin in all of 2022. This is just one example.

While the Americans did not shy away from assuming the role of partner in the Gaza war, the EU’s position seemed dishonest and, at best, morally inconsistent. For example, an enthusiastic Macron wanted to establish an anti-ISIS-like military coalition to target Hamas, though leaders of Spain and Belgium jointly called for a permanent ceasefire during a press conference at the Egyptian Rafah border on November 24.

Borrell initially approached the genocidal war from an entirely pro-Israeli perspective. “I am not a lawyer,” he said when asked in an interview last November whether Israel is committing war crimes in Gaza. A minute later, he asserted that Hamas’ Al-Aqsa Flood Operation was undoubtedly a war crime.

This is not a simple case of Western double-standards. Israel sees Europe as a lackey, though Europe, collectively, carries significant economic weight, which, only in the case of Israel, it refuses

to translate into political leverage. Until Brussels learns to resolve this dichotomy, it will continue with this kind of bizarre foreign policy.

One reason why Israel sees Europe as an inferior political actor compared to Washington, is because the Europeans have linked much of their foreign policy agenda to the US which, in turn, is motivated by Tel Aviv's agenda and interests.

This is how it works. When Macron joined Biden in unconditionally supporting Israel in the beginning of the war, Netanyahu remarked that he was "highly appreciative" of the French position. But when, on November 11, Macron dared criticize Israel's killing of women and babies in Gaza, Netanyahu immediately lashed out, accusing Macron of making "a serious mistake factually and morally".

Slowly, Europe began developing a somewhat stronger position on Gaza, though certainly not strong enough to demand an end to the war or threaten consequences if the war does not end. On January 22, the EU held a ministerial meeting, inviting Israel's Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz and Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki to attend.

The conference was a feeble European attempt to signal the EU's readiness to assert itself as a relevant political actor in the Middle East. The truth, however, is that the EU was motivated by other factors, including a greenlight from the Biden Administration, which, as of late has grown more frustrated with Netanyahu for refusing to engage in Washington's discourse about future visions and the two-state solution.

Also, the regional instability, whether in the Red Sea or in Lebanon, itself a result of the war, continues to pose a direct risk to Europe's economic and strategic interests in the region.

Europe's relationship with the Middle East is, in some ways, different to that of Washington. While the US is always ready to reinvent its geo-

political priorities, Europe is indefinitely bound by the rules of physical proximity to the Middle East – its vital geography, its resources, and its people.

Europe knows this. Borrell, who devised the maxim that "Europe is a garden", "the rest of the world is a jungle", and the "jungle could invade the garden", also understands that the instability of the Middle East could endanger his precious 'garden', even when the war is over.

This is why Borrell was keen on the EU's ministerial meeting. But instead of engaging in serious talks, the meeting further highlighted Europe's irrelevance, at least in the eyes of Israel.

Katz had come to the meeting to present plans for an artificial island off the coast of Gaza – likely to displace Palestinians from the Strip, "concepts that had nothing to do with the peace talks," Borrell said.

Other top EU "diplomats said the videos were part of (old) ideas presented by Katz in a previous role," and that they "surprised" everyone in the room.

But the EU diplomats should not be surprised, after all their governments are the ones who have empowered Israel and disempowered Palestinians over the years. Even now many of them continue to champion Israel's mass killings in Gaza as Tel Aviv's right to self defense.

If Borrell truly wishes to develop a political backbone, he should fully back international law, and advocate for the use of the EU's massive economic leverage to put pressure on Israel to end its war and military occupation of Palestine.

Failing to do so, gives great credibility to the claim that Brussels, just like Washington, is a direct partner in the Israeli war on the Palestinian people.

The Crimes Driven by the Ideology of Jewish Supremacy

Kristina Božič interviewing Yahav Erez

Yahav Erez is an International Advocacy Coordinator at an Israeli organization Yesh Din. She talks about the apartheid regime, ideologically motivated violence, why West Bank settlers believe they will build settlements in Gaza and why international community has to finally hold Israel to the universal standards of the international law and human rights.

Yesh Din is an Israeli organization documenting Israeli settlers' violent crimes in the occupied West Bank since 2005. In the first nine months of 2023 it recorded 160 settlers' attacks against Palestinians, and then, in just the following two months during the olive harvests and after the war on Gaza started after the 7th October incursion and attacks by Hamas from the besieged Gaza the number of settlers' attacks peaked to 113. 715 olive trees on Palestinian lands have been deliberately destroyed. Yesh Din data shows that in eighteen years of settlers' violence only 6,3 percent of all complaints filed led to an indictment while 81 percent of complaints had never been investigated.

Yesh Din's data shows that 2023 was an especially violent year. However your reports state that the settlers' violence is systematic and state supported. It is nothing new.

Yes, all the governments, at least since 2005 but even prior to that, have endorsed settler violence and Israeli military occupation in the West Bank. All Israeli governments, leftist or right wing, have implemented this same policy. The current government that was sworn in January 2023 has been the worst. It has committed itself in the coalition agreement to advance policies of annexation. Knesset members claim that these, including the expansion

of the settlement enterprise, are favourable for Israel. They are shifting the powers and authority from the military to the civil government. Thus, the authority of the Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has expanded and this is a de facto annexation. Israel is the sovereign and not the occupier over the West Bank. Budgets are moved to expand the settlement enterprise, increase the military force and powers among the Jewish Israeli population in the West Bank. The state is arming the settlers and funding the emergency response teams in the settlements, which is basically a formation of the settler militias in the West Bank.

The move from the military to the civil sphere does not sound menacing to someone looking from afar. Why does this worry you and how does it relate to the conclusions that Israel is enforcing apartheid regime? Is it also connected to the case in front of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where this month there will be a public hearing about the illegality of the Israeli occupation?

All these are undoubtedly connected. The move of the authority from the Israeli military into the civil government is dangerous because of a few reasons. International law does not say that occupation is in itself illegal. However, it is illegal to make it permanent, part of which is annexation. Moreover, the law does not recognize the occupying military as a sovereign on the occupied territory but as a temporary custodian that must, among other duties, protect the population under the occupation and it is to be replaced after the occupation ends. The West Bank was occupied in 1967 and the Israeli military should protect the Palestinians, which it obviously does not. However, the government of the state of Israel has a different role. It protects and



works for only one population's interests – those of Israeli citizens. Military, however, according to the international law, has to protect not only the interests of the citizens of the state it belongs to but in a case of a military occupation also the interests of the occupied people. If authorities move from the military to civil governmental bodies, the responsibilities and duties to take into account the interests of the occupied population disappear.

Yesh Din published and submitted a legal brief to the ICJ on the legal status of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in July. We have also briefed the states, preparing their submissions to the ICJ. We claim that the occupation is illegal because we see that it has become permanent. Part of the permanence is the de facto annexation and enforcing the crime of apartheid. Component of both crimes is the Israeli policy of expanding the settlement enterprise. International law prohibits the occupier to move its citizens into the occupied territory but this is exactly what the settlements are. Israel has established them, continues with their expansion and is retroactively authorizing illegal outposts in the occupied West Bank. It does not hide this at all. And this is the basics of the apartheid regime, because if illegal Israeli settlements did not exist in the occupied West Bank, there would not be two different populations under two legal systems on the occupied territory. The settlement enterprise in itself forms the root of the problem.

One of the cases Yesh Din has shed light on is the West Bank village of Burqa. Israel confiscated the land of its inhabitants in 1978 under the claim of security needs; the illegal settlement Homesh was built there but in 2005 dismantled, although the land remained beyond the reach of the Palestinians since there remained an Israeli outpost. Israeli Supreme Court approved in August last year that a new settlement can be build there. Yesh Din says, this proves that also courts in Israel act in the service of Jewish supremacy, although further complaints have been filed. Why is this case important today and what legal avenues remain to fight for justice and for the rights of the Palestinians?

The illegal Homesh settlement was evacuated in 2005 as part of the Gaza disengagement plan. The disengagement law stated that Israeli citizens were not allowed to be or reside in the areas from where the settlements had been evacuated. However, in the area of Homesh an illegal presence remained since 2005 and military came there to protect it.

This is important today because Homesh for settlers is a symbol. It symbolizes the return to the evacuated illegal settlements and for a while now, much before October last year, the settlers have been emphasizing that Homesh will be the precedent. Once they re-establish it, Gaza settlements will follow. Since 2005 one of their main goals has been to return to Gaza and to the north of the West Bank. The case of Homesh shows their plan has worked and the war on Gaza is now another encourage-

ment. Homesh is also typical of the Israeli policies on the illegal settlements in the West Bank. It shows the level of the Israeli state's unbound support for the settlement enterprise. The leaders of the settlers' movement, including the ministers in the government, have for years been saying, that Homesh would be the first of many to follow.

How can we oppose this legally since the Israeli court system supports the settlement enterprise? International community has to act and intervene. Without a serious international intervention the situation will continue to get worse. In the West Bank it is getting worse daily. 2023 was the most violent year for the Palestinians in the West Bank since Yesh Din has started its work.

We see that the ICJ has issued the provisions to prevent genocide in Gaza in the South African case against Israel. Together with over 20 other Israeli organisations we have just called for a ceasefire. We have called on the international community to unconditionally fulfil its legal obligations to uphold the respect of the international humanitarian law. The ICJ is the hope we are holding on to. And we call on the international community to pressure Israel to respect the ICJ's demands.

The non-obligatory 2004 ICJ Advisory Opinion that found the Israeli apartheid wall on the West Bank to be illegal passed without having any effect on Israel's actions. Yesh Din says, "concerted international action can change the situation on the ground". What would it have to entail since the only concerted international action we see at the moment is to de-fund UNRWA?

De-funding UNRWA only worsens the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe and it should not be happening. The EU and some European states give blind support to Israel's policies and they need to understand that Israel is continuously and repeatedly violating the international law and has been doing so for decades. The settlement enterprise is only one of many examples. We call on these states and on international bodies to finally address the grave situation. It is time.



If Gaza has opened the eyes of the international community to the Israeli atrocities, then the Israeli oppression of the Palestinians and the violations of their rights must not be overlooked. Israeli crimes in the occupied West Bank can be seen very clearly. We are pleading with the international community to finally acknowledge that these violations and the Israeli occupation have to come to an end.

The US has sanctioned four illegal Israeli settlers and similar measures have been promised by some other states. Israeli government has dismissed these sanctions. What effect if any do they have?

These sanctions are definitely not enough. And I do not think they are meant to be enough. I do not think the intention is to stop here. It is an important precedent given the so far firm support of the US for all Israeli policies. There is much more however, that can be done and many other states can follow suit.

Currently it is mostly a symbolic move that communicates to the Israeli government that their denial of settlers' violence fools no one. If the highest figures in the Israeli government claim that settlers' violence does not exist, it is very important that the international community conveys a message to Is-

rael that such a denial and impunity are not acceptable. Israel needs to understand, that if it does not act against the settlers' violence, the international community will. This seems to be the only thing that can deter the Israeli government from ensuring total impunity for the settlers' violence.

The possibility that these sanctions change anything for the sanctioned settlers, their families or communities is little. Maybe the sanctions could deter younger generations from joining the cycle of violence and ideologically motivated crimes. Certain impacts could be felt in the broader Israeli society, which is lied to. When Israeli government denies that it ensures impunity and that there is systematic settlers' violence, blaming a few rotten apples, many believe it. Israel manages a system that benefits from settlers' violence and uses it as a tool to expand the settler enterprise. General Israeli public does not hear that this is a policy – not a bug but a feature of the system.

You have mentioned the ideological drive for the violence. What kind of ideology are you talking about?

It is an ideology of Jewish supremacy and of exclusive sovereignty of Jews in the Jewish state. West Bank is controlled by the settler enterprise no matter that on paper there are the Palestinian Authority and areas A, B, C ... Facts and data show that Israel controls millions of Palestinians in the West Bank in every aspect of their lives. Israeli military does not fulfil its obligation to protect and ensure safety of the occupied population but does the opposite and controls the civil everyday through its military body of civil administration. All of this is encapsulated in the ideology of control by the Jewish state over the lives of Palestinians. In the West Bank we see the most extreme form of the Jewish supremacy and of exclusive control of one people over another. The violent settlers who participate in these ideologically motivated crimes do not act as individuals but as members of a political ideological movement that aims to control more and more areas in the West Bank so that Palestinians are forced into smaller and smaller spaces of life, while Israel con-

trols larger and larger amounts of land in the West Bank.

In the broadest and most direct sense it is the ideology to ensure control over more and more land. Settler violence and land grab are directly connected. More illegal Israeli settlers' violence creates more insecurity for Palestinians and decreases their presence on their lands making it easier for the Israeli to take over.

You have mentioned the formation of militias and we have seen state-sponsored arming of the settlers who attack Palestinians. What does this mean?

It is very dangerous to arm so many civilians who are ideologically driven and who live in an area where an apartheid regime is being actively implemented. The illegal Israeli settlers in the West Bank enjoy privileges and rights Palestinians are denied. With these additional arms they are now the de facto authority and this is very dangerous. The Israeli military in the West Bank already does the opposite from protecting the Palestinians, which is their international legal duty. Palestinians are daily brutalized not only by the Israeli military but also by the state-armed illegal Israeli settlers and the situation is getting worse.

Yesh Din with its work presents the opposite: cooperation and solidarity between Israelis and Palestinians, fighting for the respect of human rights. Does this vision of the Israeli-Palestinian relations stand a chance?

This is not our goal but it is true. Inside our team some of us have more rights and freedoms than others because some of us are Israelis and others are Palestinians. We experience this systemic hierarchy of rights in our day-to-day and we know that an important component of apartheid regime is to divide and separate the two populations with different rights.

Personally I can say that the crime of apartheid and illegal military occupation are much easier if the privileged, occupying population does not even

see the occupied population. The Apartheid Wall physically and mentally separates. Similarly, the illegal Israeli settlers in the West Bank live in the de facto gated Jewish only communities. Therefore, the effects of the Israeli apartheid control over Palestinians are not seen and often not even understood by the Israel's population.

Respecting human rights, including the Palestinian refugees' right of return, would mean that Israel as it is could not continue with its Jewish supremacy and occupation of the Palestinian territories. How important is it to acknowledge these consequences or does it suffice to demand the universal recognition and respect of human rights?

Striving for the rule of law, legality and respect of human rights is the basics. We need to start from here. At Yesh Din we also do not delve into anything beyond that. We work on these basic aspects. From here on many other things can be understood but first of all, all human rights of all human beings must be recognized and respected. As an organization for human rights we do not side with any particular solution. We insist that Israeli occupation and how it violates the rights of Palestinians only pushes any kind of solution further away. Respect for human rights of all is a prerequisite of any solution that will ensure the human rights of all. Whether it is a reconciliation process or a political agreement human rights are the basics. The solution cannot be militaristic. The problem of the military occupation cannot be solved with a military solution – the solution will have to be political. And if we are to reach it, Israel has to start by respecting the human rights of the Palestinians.

Under the present 37th Israeli government the NGOs working in the field of human rights have come under a mounting pressure. Is this a manifestation of strength or weakness of the Israeli ruling class?

Yes, Israeli human rights organizations and civil society are under attack and the space for our work is shrinking. However, if Israel did not have a prob-

lem with the violations of human rights, it would not make such an effort to attack all who shed light on these violations.

So it is a sign of weakness and their reaction confirms there is a problem. It is definitely a sign of moral weakness but in other aspects it is a manifestation that the government and the Israeli system are not very tolerant towards anyone who tries to challenge this decades long power regime. It also signals to the international community what Israel can do.

In this regard it is important to emphasize, that Israel, whenever it is challenged, responds by labelling the criticism as anti-Semitic. And as a Jewish Israeli working in an Israeli organization within the sphere of human rights I can say that it is crucial that people do not take these accusation of anti-Semitism at face value.

Israeli political leaders have even labelled the US sanctions on four illegal violent settlers as anti-Semitic. However, this US policy of banning entry and assets freeze has been implemented against Palestinians engaged in violence against Israeli citizens for years. The only new feature is that now it is directed also against chosen Israeli citizens. Claiming this is anti-Semitic is absurd. And even more absurd has been the statement by Netanyahu who had complained and called for these sanctions to be equally enforced also against Palestinians – now, he is either ignorant or manipulative. In any case he is lying. And this shows how easily everything can be twisted. For me, as a Jewish Israeli who works at an organization that opposes the occupation, it is very important that the European and Western public understand that not everything that is against the Israeli policies is anti-Semitic. If being against annexation, occupation and military control is anti-Semitic, then we need to look at the definition of anti-Semitism much closer and be much more precise with what we are now quick to accept and consume from the Israeli government.

Unions Are Critical in the Fight Against Israeli Apartheid

Sonali Kolhatkar

When United Auto Workers (UAW) President Shawn Fain called for a ceasefire in Israel's assault on Gaza in mid-December, his union was among the nation's largest to do so. It was a bold move, fresh from UAW's victorious high-profile contract negotiations with the Big Three auto manufacturers a few weeks earlier. "[U]nions are the best bridge toward fighting all forms of hatred and phobias," said Fain in his ceasefire speech alongside Congressional lawmakers. He added, "As union members, we know we must fight for all workers and people suffering around the world."

UAW's move is part of a major turning of the tide for American labor unions as a whole, which have historically backed the state of Israel and done so unconditionally—so much so that labor historian Jeff Schuhrke told the *New York Times*, "In many ways, you can argue that U.S. unions helped construct the state of Israel."

But the idea of unions is based on collective power to ensure just outcomes for workers in the face of the financial might of bosses: the powerless versus the powerful, working together to tilt the scales of justice in their favor. While Israel may have successfully hijacked the narrative to cast itself as the victim for decades, that story is unraveling as younger Americans—including union members and leaders—are viewing Palestinians as dispossessed victims of a well-armed apartheid state.

This trend is long overdue. U.S. unions, including UAW, were instrumental in opposing South Africa's apartheid regime. The AFL-CIO led a wave of protests against apartheid South Africa in 1984, with the union federation's secretary-treasurer Thomas R. Donahue being arrested alongside the heads of the Newspaper Guild and the United Steelworkers of America.



A conflict between Starbucks corporation and Starbucks Workers United (SBWU)—the worker union comprising young baristas fighting for unions and contracts at cafes—is symbolic of this trend. In October, SBWU posted a powerful statement of support for Palestinians on its social media account. In response, Starbucks sued SBWU and its parent union for trademark infringement because the barista network's name and logo is similar to that of the corporation. SBWU is countersuing for defamation.

Christian Smalls, the well-known charismatic young organizer who gained fame for his efforts at unionizing Amazon workers, and who has been hailed as "the future of labor," has also backed the Palestinian struggle against Israeli oppression. His organization, the Amazon Labor Union (ALU), together with the subgroup that wants to reform ALU, released a joint statement calling for a ceasefire, and condemning Israel's genocide of Palestinians and U.S. funding of Israeli weaponry.

Palestinian trade unions representing a broad spectrum, from oil workers to teachers, initiated such cross-border worker solidarity. The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions in Gaza released a call for global support a week into Israel's latest attack. "We ask you to speak out and take action in the face of injustice as trade unions have done historically," said the workers. They see the Palestinian struggle for justice as "a lever for the liberation of all dispossessed and exploited people of the world."

But Palestinian workers don't want just lip service. They want—and need—concrete action to stop the carnage. To that end, they have specifically called for "trade unions in relevant industries... [t]o refuse to build weapons destined for Israel." Although UAW has answered the call for solidarity, it has not used all its levers of power. A new formation called UAW Labor for Palestine which has taken credit for pressuring union leadership to adopt a call for a ceasefire last October, wants UAW workers in weapons manufacturing factories to actually stop production.

"UAW has taken no concrete steps to stop the production of weapons used to massacre Palestinians," said UAW Labor for Palestine. The group added, there is "no excuse in the face of a genocide," and lauded organized labor in Europe for going much farther by refusing to handle weapons being sent to Israel.

Among the union workers most militantly putting their money where their mouths are, are longshore workers. The International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU) has a long history of cross-border solidarity organizing going at least as far back as 1962 against South Africa's apartheid regime. The ILWU continued its actions into the 1980s and, unsurprisingly, has supported the call for a ceasefire in Israel's war on Gaza. ILWU members also refused to work on what was believed to be a load of weapons being sent to Israel last November.

Workers in an oppressive capitalist system experience similar power dynamics as residents of settler

colonialism—from Black victims of South African apartheid, to Palestinian residents of Gaza and the West Bank. Palestinian workers have faced a unique set of circumstances, having struggled in an economic system controlled by Israel. Since the war that began last October, Gaza's already fragile economy was, in the words of one Washington Post story, "pounded to dust."

As far back as 2005, Palestinian unions signed on to a call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, and in 2011 formed the Palestinian Trade Union Coalition for BDS. The coalition called on organized labor around the world to "actively show solidarity with the Palestinian people by implementing creative and context-sensitive BDS campaigns as the most effective way to end Israeli impunity."

More than a decade later, major U.S. unions have only just begun to take a strong stand in support of Palestinian workers and unions. The narrative of Israeli victimhood—in the face of so much evidence to the contrary—has been a strong bulwark against global worker solidarity for Palestinians. Take the Portland Association for Teachers, which promoted events examining Israel's war on Palestinians. Denounced for promoting "disturbing" "anti-Israel" content, the union was cowed into pausing its social media activity. Several other teachers' unions from Minneapolis to Chicago, have faced severe backlash for supporting Palestinians and criticizing Israel.

Changing the narrative of who is the oppressor and who is the victim is a critical step in labor solidarity for Palestinian workers. It's fitting that South Africa has led the international call to charge Israel with genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The post-apartheid government has such moral weight in light of South African history that the Israeli government has taken the rare step to formally respond to the charges.

For those unions that backed boycotts of apartheid South Africa, the writing is on the wall: Israel is no victim, rather it is a perpetrator of apartheid. There can be no exception to global labor solidarity.

Why Is Fascism Growing?

How Can We Stop It?

Boaventura de Sousa Santos

To understand the emergence and growth of far-right parties around the world, and especially in Europe, we need to go back to the end of the First World War and analyze the turbulent course of liberal democracy since then. Liberal democracy emerged triumphant from the First World War, but the triumph was short-lived. The strength of the left was fatally hit by the split between socialists and communists; Lenin's dissolution of the Russian constituent assembly in 1918, despite the Bolshevik party being in the minority, put an end to hopes of a non-capitalist democracy (Rosa Luxemburg's great bitterness). By the end of the 1920s, political debates were dominated by the right, a right that since 1918 had always been more anti-communist than democratic. The pre-eminence and divisiveness of the parliaments, political instability and the inability to make the new social rights effective in the face of the dominant liberal economic ideology, the dominance of the big private financiers and the persistent economic crisis all contributed to this. If the real power lay with the bosses and the unions, the popular conclusion was that the parliaments were of little use.

After the great trauma of the war, the population wanted peace, security and improved living conditions; the peasants wanted land reform. But liberal democracy had mainly brought social polarization. Democracy was being deserted, both by those who didn't see it contributing to improving their lives and by those, especially young people, for whom liberalism had lost touch with the contemporary world. In 1934, the Portuguese dictator António Salazar (who retained only a vestige of parliamentarianism) stated that in twenty years' time there would be no liberal legislative assemblies in Europe. Two rival proposals aroused enthusiasm: communism and fascism/nazism (the latter sometimes

combined with a conservative Catholicism whose collectivism consisted of defending the family). Both proposed a "New Order" and a "New Man". But their attraction stemmed above all from the failure of democracy, the weakness of the liberal state and the apparent suicide of capitalism (hyper-inflation, unemployment, the Great Depression). The ultra-liberal (later called neoliberal) proposals of the Austrian economists Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises were very much in the minority and even ridiculed, and would only be rehabilitated forty years later, in Pinochet's Chile (1973), and have since become the dominant economic orthodoxy. In the 1930s, liberalism glorified selfish individualism and neglected community feeling and the demands of a new collectivist era. An authoritarian atmosphere dominated Europe and the era of democracy was said to be over – a recurring theme.

At the end of the Second World War, democracy made a triumphant comeback, although now in a Europe divided, in the context of the Cold War, between the Western capitalist bloc and the Soviet communist bloc. It's worth remembering that denazification was much more effective in the Soviet bloc than in the Western bloc, and that the conservative Western governments were much tougher on the far left (some communist parties were outlawed and all were kept under surveillance) than on the far right (the neo-Nazi parties were outlawed, but many Nazis, especially technicians, were integrated into the new German governments or were hired by US agencies). Meanwhile, democracy was now different: oriented towards the well-being of citizens (Welfare State), with strong state intervention in the economy, high and progressive taxation, collective bargaining, and economic growth and prosperity as key words to make the class struggle go away. The

new consumer society represented a certain Americanization of Europe, but state intervention in the economy and social rights distinguished European capitalism from North American capitalism. Obviously, both were colonialist.

From the 1970s onwards, everything began to change. *Laissez faire*, which had seemed buried in the First World War, and the Hayek-Mises duo came back to stay, the class struggle reignited, but this time as a struggle between the rich and the poor and middle classes. Anti-statism emerged combined with an authoritarian mentality (from the protective state to the repressive state), the right began to dominate public opinion and foster social polarization, and democracy once again went into crisis. This is the context in which we find ourselves.

History never repeats itself. There are many important differences in Europe compared to the world of a hundred years ago and these differences have different repercussions in the global South, especially in the South that is more politically and culturally dependent on the global North.

The end of the communism-fascism/ Nazism alternative

The first difference is that of the two alternatives that excited the youth of the 1920s and 30s – communism and fascism/Nazism – only the second seems to be on the political agenda of desires. This difference has enormous significance. It doesn't mean that there aren't alternatives to capitalism today in the name of democracies that are more transformative than liberal democracy. But such alternatives are not yet capable of synthetic and aggregating formulations, nor are they capable of mobilizing large masses of young people, except perhaps on the ecological theme.

Throughout the 20th century, the far right has always had two distinct versions. In the 1920s and 30s, by far the most important was fascism proper, based on charismatic leaders, nationalist, racist, sometimes combined with conservative Christiani-

ty (the value of the family), driven by a populism of destruction directed against individualism and the weakness of the state, an extreme right that wanted to acquire the dynamics of the mass party. It was a different kind of populism from today's, but one that was just as focused on destruction. Today's versions are, for example, the "anti-system" in the USA, the "anti-immigration" in Spain and other countries of the Global North, the "cleansing" in Portugal, or the "chainsaw" in Argentina. The populism of construction was more abstract and vague – Mussolini's or Hitler's "New Order" imposed by an authoritarian state – just like Trump's "Make America Great Again" or the Vox party's "Make Spain Great Again".

The second version of the far right, although very much a minority in the early decades of the 20th century, proposed replacing the force of the state with the force of the market. It was a hyper-liberal far-right, transcribed from the neoliberal proposals of the Hayek-Mises duo, which saw the state as a cost to be minimized, taxes as theft, and privatization as the solution for everything that can make a profit; it was an internationalist, anti-charismatic, individualist, hyper-modern, elitist far-right, which saw poverty as an individual issue that had nothing to do with impoverishment resulting from economic and social policies. While the first version claimed to be socialist (national socialism) and wanted a strong state, the second, although residual, was there, was hyper-capitalist and wanted to make the market the main regulator of economic and social relations, in other words, it wanted a minimal state focused on maintaining order.

These two versions had the same objective: to use popular discontent at the ineffectiveness of democracy as a strategy for power and the affirmation of capitalism against communism. Traditional fascism used democracy to come to power, but once in power, it neither exercised it democratically nor abandoned it democratically. This is as true of Adolf Hitler as it is of Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil) or Donald Trump (USA). The neoliberal version of the far right admitted the collapse of democracy as collateral damage of its economic policies, the imple-

mentation of which was by far the most important. Hayek, for example, wrote to the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1977 to protest against the paper's unfair criticism of the Pinochet regime in Chile; Hayek considered Pinochet's Chile to be a political and economic miracle and railed against Amnesty International, considering it "a weapon for the defamation of international politics." [1]

Aware of its own interests, big business has always been attracted to both extreme right-wing proposals, and things haven't changed much in the last hundred years. The big difference is that in the 1920s and 30s, the threat of communism was real and the two versions of the far right were both considered effective antidotes to what was then seen as capitalism's suicide in the face of the crisis and social protest that the attraction of communism would boost. Now that communism is not on the political agenda, the far-right forces have to invent it, considering all state intervention to reduce social inequalities to be communism. To do this, they build the ideology of anti-communism based on two pillars: almost complete control of the corporate media and social networks; and conservative political religion, mainly evangelical, but also Catholic and Zionist, which once again builds the apocalypse around communism and turns it into the anti-Christ. This difference from the beginning of the last century makes the future of democracy even more problematic.

The normalization of fascism

The second difference compared to the 1920s and 30s is fascism's ability to normalize itself as a democratic alternative, thus no longer having to resort to coups d'état (as happened with Hitler, Mussolini, Salazar and Franco). The paradigmatic contemporary case is the current Italian government led by Georgia Meloni. President since 2014 of the neo-fascist *Fratelli d'Italia* party, Meloni heads a country whose constitution forbids the apology of fascism. Such an apology, however, was blatantly made during her party's annual conference (Atreju, 2023). Hundreds of black shirts gathered in mili-

tary formation in front of the headquarters of the neo-fascist party that emerged after the war (Italian Social Movement), giving the fascist salute. Meloni prevented any repression of this demonstration. Basically, the normalization stems from the rapprochement between right-wing and far-right policies in Europe. In the case of anti-immigration and anti-minority policies, for example, there are no differences between the positions of Meloni and Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Normalization is sometimes the result of subliminal propaganda. For example, the fundamentally left-wing slogan of "Gay pride" is now used to promote "Italian pride". Normalization presupposes support from the corporate media, which has not been lacking for Meloni, as it had lacked not for Berlusconi (they are the same TV channels) and includes the criminalization of dissident journalists and politicians, without raising any alarm bells. Roberto Saviano, the great fighter against the mafias, has been the target of criminal persecution. Normalization reaches a new level when it goes beyond the political class and becomes part of everyday life, for example when a restaurant prints the Duce's face on the bill.

The Welfare State

The third difference between the two eras seems, on the contrary, to remove the danger of fascism for the time being. In the case of Europe, conditions are now very different and do not seem to favor extremism. The welfare state that was built in Europe after the Second World War, and in Portugal, Spain and Greece after the democratic transitions of the 1970s, has shown a certain robustness despite all its crises and has enjoyed popular support. Margaret Thatcher tried to destroy it in the UK and failed. The welfare state has helped to create broad middle classes that are not prone to extremism. It's no surprise, then, that the far right in Europe is not investing directly against social policies today (only in the US does the far right see these policies as the ghost of communism). It invests against the taxes that finance them and the corruption of the state (sometimes real), hoping in this way to insidiously achieve its goals more easily. To the extent that pro-

gressive political forces consent to the destruction of the welfare state, for example through the privatization of healthcare, education or the pension system, they will be paving the way for 21st century fascism. Even more dangerous are disguised privatizations such as public-private partnerships in healthcare, school vouchers in the case of education or capping in the pension system.

The internet and social networks

The fourth difference between the two eras is more ambivalent when the future of democracy is at stake. I'm talking about social networks and the internet, which didn't exist a hundred years ago. The corporate media are losing control of public opinion to social networks and this loss represents a generational divide. There is now a consensus that conservative forces know how to use social media better than progressive forces, among other reasons because they have large amounts of funding that progressive forces don't have. But social networks create volatile loyalties and don't sustain myths for long. In fact, they can lead to sudden changes of direction, both from left to right (see the case of Brazil in 2013, from the demand for free transportation to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff) and from right to left (in the case of Colombia, from the 2016 plebiscite that the right, using fake news, won against the peace accords, to the student movement and later other social, indigenous, women's and trade union movements that brought Gustavo Petro to power in 2022). Obviously, the two movements don't carry the same weight, given the proprietary (private) nature of the networks and the lack of democratic regulation. See how the change in ownership of twitter immediately determined the change in relation to US presidential candidate Donald Trump. The ambivalence of networks lies in the fact that they are more useful in the assault on power than in sustaining power.

Social movements

The fifth difference vis-à-vis the 1920s-30s is the emergence of post-colonialist (indigenous and

anti-racist), feminist, and environmentalist social movements. This is also an ambivalent difference concerning the future of democracy. Just after the First World War, the workers' movement was a giant political player and the issue of political reform was on the agenda. Liberal democracy, then called bourgeois democracy, was opposed by workers' democracy. Conflicts between socialists and communists and state repression (police and judicial) against supporters of workers' democracy weakened the workers' movement, and what was left of it was destroyed by the dictatorships that followed.

Today's social movements more or less uncritically accept the idea that there is only one type of democracy – liberal democracy – an idea that, until the 1970s, was far from consensual. With this limitation, today's social movements are generally a guarantee of the preservation of democracy and even of its deepening, since they fight for individual and collective rights to be extended and effectively fulfilled. These movements are generally harassed by the far right, but the fight against them has used strategies that can neutralize the democratizing potential of social movements.

In the case of the feminist movement, the far right's strategy has consisted of condoning (sometimes actively supporting) the agendas of white, middle-class feminisms because they don't question the capitalist order. Identitarianism, i.e. gender (or racial) identity conceived as the main and exclusive objective of social struggle, isolates the demands of these movements from the struggles for the redistribution of wealth and social justice. By isolating themselves and not questioning the class content of modern capitalist domination, these movements are neutralized in their transformative potential, and sometimes end up on the same side as the struggles led by the extreme right. Feminisms from the global South (black, indigenous, Arab), when they manifest themselves in the metropolises of the global North through immigrants, sometimes two-generation nationals, they question the capitalist order and are therefore openly harassed, not only by the far right, but also by other conservative political forces.

In the case of anti-racist movements, the far right is openly hostile and sometimes violent. Racism is at the heart of the far-right, even if today it manifests itself in indirect ways, for example in its opposition to immigration, in its highly repressive border control, in the disproportionate punitivism with which it attacks racialized individuals, communities, and publics, in its privileged defense of the demands of the police forces, and in its trivialization of police brutality.

As far as the environmental movement is concerned, the far right's strategy is denialism. The ecological crisis is considered to be an invention of the left to prevent the development of capitalism. The environmental movement, although very diverse, today has the potential to question the triple dimension of modern capitalist domination – class, race and gender – and, in this sense, to make anti-systemic proposals in its multiple dimensions (economic, social, political and cultural). To the extent that they engage in this kind of struggle, they will be defending democracy in its broadest sense, including in the democratization of life the democratization of relations between human and non-human life. They will certainly be harassed, not only by the extreme right, but by all institutional political forces.

To conclude

Fascism is on the rise a) because the social policies of the welfare state have been increasingly underfunded, resulting in growing social inequalities and the social polarization they can give rise to, to which the state only responds with repressive policies; b) because social movements, by failing to question capitalism (social injustice, class struggle), have contributed to normalizing and trivializing the most grotesque social inequalities as if they weren't anti-democratic; c) because fascism disguises itself as a fight for democracy with the support of the corporate media, which are generally favorable to it, in particular by amplifying fascist anti-immigration demands, xenophobia, the promotion of the police, the corruption of the welfare state, and tax cuts;

d) because the other political forces, both right-wing and left-wing, have not been able to counter the neoliberal orthodoxy in force that prevents the expansion of social policies, which will eventually turn democracy into a policy of malaise that does is not worth the enormous cost of keeping it in force; e) because traditional fascism today appears as part of a very broad hyper-conservative family, which includes ultra-conservative religion, especially evangelical, Zionist and Islamist; f) because the lawfare by a conservative judicial system against progressive policies and politicians, by increasing social instability, has been an effective lever (because it is not political in appearance) to promote the extreme right; g) finally, fascism is growing because consumerism and social networks have transferred the concerns of individuals from public to private life; the justification of apathy towards democracy (it's not worth voting because the policies are always the same) is quickly transformed into the enthusiastic justification of the anti-system.

In view of this, halting the advance of fascism – an imperative for all democrats – is a complex and difficult political task, above all because it has to be carried out at various levels and in different spheres of social life and not just in the political sphere. It is, however, possible because nothing is determined in advance. The mother of all conditions is that democracy has a concrete material content, a positive impact on the lives of the working classes (individuals, families and communities) that gives them back hope in the possibility of a more dignified life, a fairer society and more equality with nature. For this to be possible, the short-term precondition is that public social policies are maintained, diversified, expanded and linked to the practices of solidarity, reciprocity and care that exist in society and communities. This is the only way to avoid deepening inequalities and social discrimination in increasingly complex and culturally diverse societies. Given the fascist drift underway, I believe that only broad and pragmatic alliances between the different political forces on the left can guarantee the survival of democracy in the medium term.

The Future of the European Left

Thomas Klikauer, Danny Antonelli

Even though conservatives, the right, right-wing extremists, and outright neofascists are seemingly on the fore-march in Europe, European progressive parties remain a force to be reckoned with. Whether in the Netherlands, in Germany, in Spain, in Greece or elsewhere, Europe's progressives are said to be in crisis.

Perhaps this has been designed to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, because it has been broadcast so frequently by the corporate-owned mainstream media.

Whether progressives are in crisis or not, the European elections, coming up in June 2024, are going to be crucial for the future of Europe's progressives. As it stands now, the troubles for EU progressives are not confined to Germany. This becomes clear when looking at Spain, Greece, Belgium, Italy, Austria, Poland, Denmark, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Germany.

Spain

Recently, things were likely to get even more dramatic for Podemos in Spain. This is not least because of the fact that the progressives in Spain have been in a process of upheaval. Firstly, Podemos experienced a split. After that, the alliance with the Izquierda Unida (the United Left) broke up.

Podemos was still allowed to participate in the recent Spanish parliamentary elections in Spain's Sumar electoral alliance. But the European Parliament elections could herald the political end for the former left-wing hopefuls.

Unfortunately, this might mean not only at the EU level but at home as well. On the other side of the coin, there is still the hope that overall there might be more Spaniards in Europe's left faction.

It all started for the party in 2014 with the surprising victory of electing five members to the European Parliament. And now it all might end, ten years later, with the EU elections set for June 2024.

Founded in January 2014 by a group around a political science professor and talk-show star, Pablo Iglesias, the protest party achieved almost everything it set out to do. Podemos was even on the verge of surpassing the Spain's traditional socialists in 2015, eventually ruling with them as a junior partner from 2019.

Next, Podemos merged with the post-communist United Left to form Unidas Podemos (UP). Its new motto became, "together we can". UP was hoping to outflank Spain's socialist PSOE of today's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez in 2016. It was not to be. It received one million fewer votes compared to the previous election.

Meanwhile, framing progressive politics as "common sense" found broad approval among Spain's crisis-ridden population. But when the same policy was counter-framed by the corporate media as a dangerous left-wing program, the tables were turned.

The attackers swarmed with a virulent media campaign that targeted the UP. No party had ever had to endure such an onslaught of viciousness before. Corruption, illegal financing, personal missteps – in short almost everything – was alleged. Nothing stuck.

All court proceedings have been discontinued. Yet the goal – and this is the important part – was achieved. The damage was done. The UP won the various battles but lost the war.

Meanwhile, the Podemos merger with the UP led to an internal party split. There were those who followed the new progressive course around Iglesias

and those who continued to strive for Latin-America-style left-wing populists.

This led to internal party purges. Iglesias surrounded himself with politicians from one of the numerous factions of the Communist Party. He lost election after election. His people were removed from regional parliaments and local councils.

Today, Podemos is Spain's only progressive party that does not conform to the demands of the capitalist system. In the upcoming European elections it will have to be seen whether Spain's progressives will attract a sufficient amount of voters. If it declines to less than 8% (its result in 2014), it would mean the death of Podemos.

Greece

What appears to be certain is that the Greek Syriza will no longer be represented in the European Parliament with its meager six members. Although it has not yet been determined whether its remnants will then join the Left faction.

Under party leader Alexis Tsipras, Syriza was by far the most successful progressive party in the EU, gaining 23.8% of the vote in the 2019 election.

But things have changed. Today, Syriza can be happy if the party receives half of what it had before. Syriza might even end up behind the post-Stalinist Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Although an outcome like that could be likely, it is still not clear whether it will actually happen.

There has been a radical political shift away from previous Syriza policies which have now been replaced by the neoliberal policies associated with the openly gay charismatic 35-year-old Greek-American businessman Stefanos Kasselakis, who became the party's chairman.

Because of their disagreement with this shift to the right, four of the six parliamentary members of Syriza have since left the party. This includes Dimitrios Papadimoulis, one of the European Parliament's vice-presidents.



Unknown is whether the keepers of the EU progressive tradition around ex-minister of Labour (Effie Achtsioglou) and the ex-minister of finance (Euclid Tsakalotos) will be successful with their own grouping.

Meanwhile, Greece's traditional communists, the KKE, has always been and will remain an autonomous force, particularly since its withdrawal from the EU's Left group in 2014. Tragically, the KKE remains without any ability to connect to anyone.

Under Tsipras the long-lasting Syriza (Alliance of the Radical Left) became a realistic option in the tumultuous and often rather disastrous continuing crisis that is Greece. Under him it became the ruling party at the beginning of 2015. It was also widely respected internationally.

The power of the party peaked in the elections of 2015 when Syriza received 36% of the vote. In 2019 it fell to 31.5%. Those years were the zenith of its popularity. It was the undisputed leading progressive party in Europe.

Then along came Angela Merkel and the EU to impose austerity measures. Yanis Varoufakis, Minister of Finance, resigned from Syriza because he had been undercut and, he felt, betrayed by Tsipras. After that, the radical progressives collapsed to just 18%.

Today, this is an incredible 23% behind the Greek conservative, euphemistically named, “New” Democracy. And then the enthusiasm ignited by the neoliberal savior Stefanos Kasselakis quickly fizzled out. Eleven deputies have left the now neoliberal party in protest against the course being taken by Kasselakis.

Beyond all that, the newly founded Nea Aristera or New Left is yet another competitor for Syriza. Its members grew up in Greece’s progressive party spectrum. Nea Aristera is very fragmented. In recent public polling, Syriza is languishing at around 12%. Meanwhile, PASOK has overtaken Syriza.

If Syriza fails to turn the corner in the European elections, the air for the party could quickly become very thin. Meanwhile, former Greek Prime Minister Tsipras is hoping for a spectacular comeback to the top of the Syriza party.

Belgium

2024 will be a decisive year for the Parti du Travail de Belgique (PTB), or Partij van de Arbeid (PVDA), not to be confused with the Dutch Social Democrats. In addition to European elections, Belgium’s new federal and regional parliaments will also be elected in the multilingual Kingdom of Belgium on June 9th.

Only political parties that are active in the Dutch-speaking north as well as in the French-speaking south can continue to be on an upward trend.

So far the Socialists, with their political catchphrase “people before profits” are represented by just twelve out of 150 members of parliament. Belgium’s monthly polls – as it has become customary in the

country – separate out three regions: Wallonia, Flanders, and Brussels. Wallonia is traditionally dominated by progressives, but these are now down to 14%.

In Bruxelles, Belgium’s capital, with 19%, progressives remain the strongest party. With a pinch of optimism for the future, there has been a jump from 5% to almost 10% for progressives in Flanders, which is traditionally dominated by Belgium’s right.

In Belgium, compared to all other political parties, the progressives (PTB/PVDA) are more committed to the unity of Belgium. The progressives have established themselves throughout Belgium as the party of hope for EU progressive social policies and distributive justice.

The fact that the party actually practices this approach is shown by a network called Medicine for the People. The network has been in existence for 50 years and was created through the initiative of the progressive party.

In addition, members of the PVDA/PTB limit themselves to an average employee salary and assign the rest of their salaries to a fighting fund from which campaigns, rallies, and protests against antisocial measures are financed.

In Belgium’s rather complex political structure, the post-Maoist PVDA/PTB offers a counter-model to the current uninspiring Grand Coalition under neoliberal leadership.

Progressives also challenge the secessionist nationalism of the far-right Vlaams Belang. Currently, the Vlaams Belang is threatening to become the strongest force in Belgium’s Flanders region.

Italy

Once upon a time there were between 100,000 and 200,000 people in the streets every year when Italy’s political party Rifondazione Comunista (PRC) called for a big rally in Rome, Italy’s capital. For that to happen there was no need for a special occasion.

In those days, the streets were filled with a sea of red flags. Those days are long gone. The last mass rally of this kind took place in 2007, seventeen years ago.

At that time, Rifondazione could claim to be one of the most stable communist parties in Western Europe. No wonder. In 1976, Italy's communist party, the PCI, won a stunning 34% in Italy's parliamentary elections. By 1991, it was all over.

The majority of the party had decided to say, "arrivederci comunismo." The party continued as a social-democratic-inspired Democratic Left.

This opened up room for the radical leftists. Many ex-PCI members did not support the swing towards social-democracy. In every election until 2006 it was enough to gain 5%-6% of the vote.

The high point was reached in the years 2006 to 2008: Rifondazione not only appointed the President of the Chamber of Deputies, but also the Minister of Social Solidarity in the cabinet of Romano Prodi. The PRC supported Prodi's centre-left coalition.

This coalition was the beginning of the end for Rifondazione. It was divided between those who were willing to compromise with the more moderate centre-left and the indomitable radical left. Since then, those who sailed under the reform label, have dropped to a pitiful 1.5%.

Today, the PRC no longer appears in public discourse or in the media. Media capitalism operates rather relentlessly and mercilessly against progressives.

On the positive side, things are better for those who remained inside the broad centre-left alliance, which presents itself under ever-changing names: Left, Ecology, Freedom, and Italian Left, the current name.

Sadly, more than a meagre 3% are no longer achiev-

able for them. To a large extent Italy's progressives owe their malaise to the success of the Five Stars Movement.

It ran in national elections in 2013 with the promise that they were "neither right nor left." With crude anti-system posturing the party became attractive to millions of left-wing voters.

Austria

Austria, with its well-known Nazi sympathies and history of right-wing parties, has traditionally been a tough place for progressive parties. The many scandals of the conservative-reactionary Sebastian Kurz era didn't change that.

The most recent crises – corruption, Covid-19, inflation – made the conservative-environmentalist black-green government appear to be the right thing. So far only Austria's right-wing extremist FPÖ – which leads all recent polls – has been benefiting from all this.

Austrian elections will be held in autumn 2024. The environmentalist Greens are currently the most progressive party in the Austrian parliament, although it is not a classical progressive party. As a junior partner in Austria's government, the environmentalists repeatedly got caught under the wheels of the conservative ÖVP.

The current situation of Austria's Social Democrats – who have been weakening for years – is hardly better. Even the more progressive course of the new party chairman Andreas Babler hasn't resulted in a notable improvement so far.

On the side of Austria's Communists, surprisingly, things look a bit more exciting. In the regional state election in not-so-progressive Salzburg, the KPÖ came in with just under 12%. Since the end of 2022, Elke Kahr – a Communist – has been the mayor of Graz.

Kahr, the communist, continues to be incredibly popular. Of course nationwide the KPÖ currently

reaches no more than between 3% and 4% of the people. Still, entry into Austria's federal parliament seems within reach.

One of the main reasons for the success of the KPÖ is that its leading candidates have a close proximity to the people. This is the case with Elke Kahr in Graz, but also for Kay-Michael Dankl in Mozart's home town of Salzburg.

Both have been actively involved in progressive civil society projects for many years, for example with local tenant associations. To this day, both donate a large part of their salaries to people in need. The progressive Beer Party – yes, the alcoholic beverage – clearly missed its entry into Austria's federal parliament in 2019. Today things are different for the Beer Party. There is a real chance for the party to enter Austria's federal parliament.

In Austria's presidential election, Beer Party founder and leading candidate Dominik Wlazny came in at 8%. He sees himself as being half "fun party" advocating for an eternal beer fountain, but also fighting for the rights of children, environmental protection, and social justice.

Poland

For the first time in eighteen years the progressives – Włodzimierz Czarzasty – are participating in a government. Czarzasty heads the Alliance of the New Left. Poland's progressives are rejoicing after the parliamentary elections that were held in mid-October 2023. For Poland's progressives, their political demands are no longer dreams.

Today, Poland is governed by an alliance of three progressive parties. Without the progressives, there cannot be democratic government. Perhaps, the ultimate European progressive, Rosa Luxemburg, was right when she said there is *"no democracy without socialism, but also no socialism without democracy."*

The strongest position within Poland's governing alliance is held by the post-communist leftists of Czarzasty, followed by the Wiosna (Spring) found-

ed in 2019 by Robert Biedron. He is the first politician in Poland who came out of the closet to declare he is gay. He campaigned strongly for the rights of all minorities.

In 2021 Wiosna merged with New Left, which was joined by the Razem party (Left Together). It was founded in 2015. Back in 2015, Razem caused an unprecedented electoral disaster for the progressives in Poland under its chairman Adrian Zandberg.

The small progressive alliance worked with Razem and was very proud to be an independent progressive, if not, individual party. In the end, not a single progressive party entered the Polish parliament – everyone remained below the 5% (party) and 8% threshold for alliances, respectively.

Razem did not repeat this mistake again in the 2019 and 2023 elections. Still, Razem – unlike Nowa Lewica – is not involved in the current centre–progressive government that has just been elected by twelve million citizens.

They dropped out of the coalition talks when it became clear that conservative parties in the new government would struggle on one of the most contentious issues in Poland: the restoration of women's rights. The previous government – the reactionary-nationalist-populist Law and Justice (PiS) – had severely curtailed women's rights.

Razem entered Poland's parliament on a list of the current ruling parties, and today – with just seven parliamentarians – it shares the opposition bench with 194 reactionary-nationalist-populists and the far-right Confederation with 18 seats.

Denmark

In Denmark, the current coalition government led by Social Democrat Mette Frederiksen appears to be on the right track when it comes to migration policy. Beyond that, the Red-Green Alliance (RGA, Enhedslisten) and the Socialistik Folkeparti (environmentalist Green Left) have been in parliament for decades.

However, they have undergone amazing transformations. The Socialistik Folkeparti – which split from the Communist Party in 1959 – propagates a democratic-socialist Denmark.

It is committed to feminism, human, and minority rights. Strangely, their critique of capitalism is on par with its pronounced euro-scepticism. This continued until the early 2000s. In 2006, 66% of the members spoke in favor of participating in the “Yes campaign” as part of a referendum on a European Constitution.

In 2022, the Socialistik Folkeparti was a member of a broad coalition that ended Denmark’s special path in the area of a common EU defense policy. The party has tried out all kind of roles: as an opposition party; as a supporter of a minority government (2019 to 2022 under Frederiksen); and, as a member of the government (2011 to 2014).

In the 2022 election, it received 8.3%. Still, it is Denmark’s largest opposition party. In the European Parliament it is part of the Green Group.

The RGA – which emerged from Marxist groups – advocates a socialist transformation of Denmark, if necessary by means of a revolution.

The party demands a fight against inequality, the expansion of the welfare state and more diversity. The RGA also promotes a withdrawal from NATO, but no longer advocates leaving the EU.

As of 2019, it supported Frederiksen to some extent. This might be one reason for its miserable result in the 2022 election. Although the RGA was the strongest force in the city of Copenhagen with 24.6%, it only received 5.1% nationwide.

The progressive alliance has a chance to get back on its feet by fighting the current government and by offering a credible alternative.

Portugal

Progressive Mariana Mortágua – who is a 36-year-old economist and is known to the Portuguese

mainly through her participation in TV debates, has been the head of the Left Bloc or Bloco de Esquerda since spring of 2023. In 1999, the party emerged from two relative small but progressive organizations: the Democratic People’s Union that is loyal to Albania; and, the Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialist Party.

Today, the Bloco is again in crisis. After a sensationally good performance in 2015 (the Bloco became the third strongest force with 10.2%) the Bloco lost 14 of its 19 parliamentary seats in 2022. Middle-of-the-road pragmatic politics seems to be a problem for Portugal’s progressives. Things aren’t much better with the ruling Socialists. António Costa resigned recently. Back in 2015, the progressives had supported Costa and helped him to form a minority government.

But in 2022, after refusing to support the budget of the socialist minority government, the Bloco’s voter support declined as never before. In the upcoming elections to the European Parliament, the Bloco faces a renewed test run under the experienced Bloco leadership of Mortágua.

Despite its rather unorthodox past, the Bloco did not shut itself off from engaging with other political parties. Furthermore, Portugal’s progressives remained open to new entrants, modernized itself, and understood how to become an alternative for young, urban voters.

In addition to social issues, the Bloco stands for environmental policy, and for the rights of sexual and social minorities.

Mortágua’s Bloco seeks to bring back voters that have migrated to the Socialists. The Bloco focuses on traditional progressive issues. Mortágua is using her progressive tax policy as a signature polity. For example, levies on real estate ownership valued above €500,000 and introduced in 2016, was due to her initiative.

The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), on the other hand, is among the last of its kind in Western

Europe. The more than 100-year-old party is entering the Portuguese Parliament again, election after election.

Strongly orthodox – as nowhere else in Europe – Portugal's Communists are trying to give themselves a more modern image for the next election, which to be held on 10 March 2024.

In this election, the PCP will compete under the name CDU, Coligação Democrática Unitária (Unified Democratic Coalition), banding together with the small environmentalist Greens.

Historically, the great era of the communists were the years after the Carnation Revolution, which moved Portugal away from dictatorship and towards democracy. In 1979, 18.8% voted for the PCP under its historical leader Álvaro Barreirinhas Cunhal.

The PCP was the party of anti-fascist resistance during the long decades of the dictatorship. It was also the determining force in the country's trade union movement.

Despite decreasing to only 4.3% in voter popularity, the communists have even been decisive for a parliamentary majority of the Socialists in recent years.

But it was precisely this rapprochement with the now-departed Prime Minister António Costa that caused the PCP – or rather the CDU, as it is called today – to collapse at the polls. If the new CDU fails to gain voter support during the upcoming European elections it might well mark the beginning of a slow but certain end for the Portuguese communists.

Netherlands

When the members of the newly elected parliament in the Dutch capital of The Hague were sworn in a few weeks ago, the Socialist Party (SP) accounted for just five of the 150 seats.

The seemingly unstoppable decline of the party – with its bright red tomato logo – continued in the

most recent election held at the end of November 2023 in the Netherlands.

While the SP was still the third strongest party back in 2006 with 25 members of parliament, it lost four of its nine seats in November 2023. This marked a low point in the 51-year history of the ex-Maoists.

The SP's decline is accompanied by the steady shrinking of the progressives in the Netherlands. The SP is focused on a social-democratic-left-green cooperation.

Meanwhile, the SP is moving away from this by taking a more energetic course against the harsh neoliberalism of the past few decades. Unlike the SP, neoliberalism was supported by the Labor Party and the environmentalist GroenLinks partly.

GroenLinks, in turn, distanced itself from the SP, which is much more culturally conservative, has more reservations about immigration, and is ready to point out that there have been integration problems for the so-called “guest workers” since the 1980s.

Actually, the profile of the Socialist Party as being close to people with socio-economic problems, as being populist, and as being distant from Brussels (the EU), fits to those topics that are currently seen as important to Dutch voters.

The fact that the SP is being punished, shows that voters are increasingly looking to the right for easy and simple answers to the current social malaise.

In response to the decline, the long-standing group leader Lilian Marijnissen resigned in December 2023, although she enjoys a high popularity outside and inside parliament. Meanwhile, her successor, Jimmy Dijk, wants to make The Netherlands a place where “hardworking people feel represented.”

Germany

The newest members of the European progressive movement are the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance or

BSW, the group of former Die Linke politicians who split from Germany's traditional leftist progressives. BSW is seeking to join the left-wing faction in Strasbourg, the seat of the European parliament. This could very well happen after the European election.

Fabio De Masi is the leading candidate for the European parliament from the newly formed BSW. Strangely, Germany's newest political party doesn't see itself as left-wing in the traditional sense, even though it was born, like Athena, from the head of the Zeus-like Die Linke.

As it is, many people in Germany might argue that the last thing progressives need is a split in their ranks, especially with Germany's Neo-Nazi party, the AfD, on the rise.

The question is whether BSW can be seen as progressive or not in the broadest sense of the word. "The party's platform calls for a ban on immigration and relaxing sanctions against Russia. It also advocates raising the minimum wage to €14 an hour, increasing tax deductions, and significantly boosting taxes on higher incomes and assets."

The raising of the minimum wage and taxes on the rich sound like solid progressive goals, but on migrants and Russia many progressives might disagree with BSW.

It appears as though über-charismatic Wagenknecht and her party – for rather obvious reasons – do not seem to want much to do with their former comrades from Die Linke. Many leading BSW members are "not even sure" whether Germany's traditional Die Linke, will still exist in the next EU parliament.

For the BSW to set up their own group in the European Parliament (EP), Germany's newest progressive party needs to jump over a hurdle which is set rather high.

According to EU rules, a political group must have at least 23 members of parliament coming from at least seven member states to form a group. A group gives a political party real influence. With

(currently) thirty-eight members in the European parliament, coming from 13 out of 27 countries, the European Left is already the smallest group in the EP.

Still, the EU's progressives are set to win enough seats to continue to qualify as a group. But there is no denying that the political parties to the left of Europe's traditional Social Democracy Parties are in a kind of crisis.

Germany is precisely where EU progressives have one of their key strongholds, so the splitting of Germany's progressives does not help.

Die Linke is already fighting for its political survival in Germany. With party leader Martin Schirdewan and the 35-year-old non-party climate activist, ship's captain, and rescue-worker Carola Rackete at the helm, Die Linke hopes that the upcoming EU election will bring a turnaround. However, a dramatic crash into a bottomless pit is also conceivable.

It remains unclear, however, if the BSW will join the progressives in Strasbourg after the European elections.

And in the end...

And in the end, with rising neofascism visible almost everywhere in Europe, European progressives show a mixed picture before what many see as a decisive European Parliament election.

The big distraction in the European political theater is a fringe issue: migration. The issue that will actually dominate the 21st century is: Will humanity survive? Our era will be defined not by migration and refugees but by global warming.

A better way of describing the trend could be "slouching toward" an Uninhabitable Earth. Today, humanity has what Rosa Luxemburg once called the choice between socialism or barbarity. The wrong choice this time around might well end in humanity's final agonizing crawl towards barbarity.

Time Has Come Today – Becoming Revolutionary

Michael Albert

I borrowed the title Time Has Come Today from a Chambers Brothers song, released in 1967. I added to it “Becoming Revolutionary” which sentiment I felt in that 1967 music.

But is now 2024. The blink of an eye later. A billion lifetimes later. And to quote the Chambers Brothers again, “now the time has come.” And here is my 2024 argument for “Becoming Revolutionary” before it is too damn late. The argument is a bit apocalyptic, a bit optimistic, and a bit antagonistic. I convey it just how I feel it: with fear, hope, and a fist.

I look around. I see what I see. I hear what I hear. The NBA season is over half finished. Cable images have no end. Everywhere new platforms offer non stop Taylor Swift news. Trump from every spigot. Novels galore. And of course ubiquitous Youtube. It's infinite entertainment out there. It's binge heaven out there.

But simultaneously gold plated armies unleash holy hell. High water floods cities. Low water drains aquifers. Self-absorbed bigotry cremates life-affirming love. Head in the dirt denial begets horrific hypocrisy. Buoyant cowardice swarms center stage. Starve them, sicken them, shoot them, explode them. It's a genocide parade out there. And can you believe today's U.S. task: I kid you not, design a new nuclear bomb, the first new one in thirty years. And boy do we need that. It's binge hell out there.

These things are beyond words. Beyond pain. Beyond desire. Beyond shame. Beyond feeling. Beyond reason. Beyond beyond.

But hey, no problem. Don't worry. Be happy.

Hooray for my team. Incinerate your team. A selfie for me. A thousand million cuts for you. Slow motion murder becomes mass murder. An occasional lie becomes a shit storm of lies. From TV to concert hall, from kindergarden to funeral home, lying is the new maturity. Take a selfie. Take another. Teach your children. Butterflies scream.

Why do we do what we do? Is it only because it is what we have done and having done it...we do it again lest we realize we were horribly wrong all along? And then we do it again. And again. Unto death. Is it just for power, for money, for sex, for bragging rights? Or is it just to dominate instead of being dominated? But hey, hooray for my team. Incinerate your team. A new toy for me. A thousand million cuts for you. Lions weep.

Science cowers. Respect withers. Lies dominate truth. Truth dies. Is dishonesty our destiny? Is egoism our legacy?

Robotically welcome robots who look human. Robotically welcome robot love. Fuck the robot. Get fucked by the robot. Cap it off, smoke a cigarette. But wait, that's sickly. Cap it off. Watch a video of a violent drone. That's healthy. You can get it all at the mall. Do it for pleasure. Do it for pain. The difference dwindles. Have a cigar. Maybe a joint. Whatever. Dogs whimper.

Violence calls itself virtue. Violence preens. Violence goes viral. Violence is number one with a bullet. Violence is hunger and bombs. Violence is hurricanes and floods. Violence is regimentation and enforcement. Violence is rape. Violence goes viral. Violence is you and me. We cannot deny this shit.



Violence is at the mall. Violence is at school.
Violence is at work. Violence is in the kitchen.
Abort abortions. Shoot at shooting ranges. And
the Mall, too.

Violence screams, "see me everywhere." "I am
great." "Bow down to me." Violence demands,
"on your knees for me." "What's my name?"
"What's my game?" "Grovel or else!" "Hate every-
thing." "Call me Bold. Call me Marauder."

Greed grabs riches. Preachers pray to penthouse
gods. Morons master war. Lunatics lubricate
destruction. Idiots immolate history. Learn hate.
Teach hate. Aim. Shoot. Mourn. Or better yet:
don't mourn, party. The sky is on fire. The sky
weeps. Nowhere is quiet.

But wait just a not so maudlin minute. Yes, that
shit is all out there. We can't miss it. But so is
inspiration out there. Demands for peace. De-
mands for caring. Demands for health. Demands
for knowledge. Demands for sexual healing.
Demands for an end to billionaires profiting.
Demands for an end to billionaires, period.
Demands for an end to bosses bossing. Demands
for an end to bosses period. No more color
coding. No more lives atrophying. No more lives

barely lived. No more lives extinguished.

Demands for dignity. Demands to save the plan-
et. Demands for dignity. Demands to save our-
selves. Demands for dignity. Demands to cease
firing. Cease firing, dammit. Demands prolif-
erate out there. Doves awake. Change is gonna
come.

Demands are nice, but to implement demands
we need careful plans and continuous effort.
And to attain careful plans and continuous effort
we need lots and lots of people. And to align lots
and lots of people, and then more people, and
then still more people, we have to listen well.
And to listen well we need clear voices. We need
inspiring actions. We need ears wide open to
what's written on subway walls and what's rever-
berating in tenement halls.

Deduction: to have lots and lots of people seek
peace, justice, and liberation, we need lots and
lots of people to see hopeful welcoming move-
ment possibilities and to anticipate worthy
movement successes. Beyond woke we need for
many many people to compatibly and caress-
ingly share where they want to go and how they
intend to get there.

We can't deny that our times are in our face.
That our times are undeniably embarrassing.
That our times are off the chart disgusting. That
our times are mindlessly brazen and suicidally
blatant. The devil whoops it up.

But we can't deny that our times are also unde-
niably hopeful. Unions, communities, youth,
couples, loners, parents, and kids smolder. We
stir. We wake. Hell no, we won't go.

At stage right, Nazi apocalypse surges and pro-
liferates. It hollers hatred. At stage left, freedom,
dignity, respect, mutual aid, and a new world
peek out and perk up. Staying alive. Movements
flex. Dignity strides again.

Our times are undeniably wretched. Our times
are undeniably hopeful. Which side is our
friend? Which side are you on? Which side are
we on?

No more nit-picking. No more ghosting. No
more self delusion. No more business as usual.
No more yesterday's papers. No more excuses
for joining the wrong side. No more excuses for
silence. Silence is golden, but only for the rich.
Silence is sustenance, but only for violence. Hey,
what's that sound? People coming round the
bend.

No more accommodating. No more being busy
dying. Better is possible. Better is necessary. Bet-
ter is dignity. Better is life. Time has come today.

There is no way to avoid this boiling confronta-
tion. We will either be living dead and then dead
dead, or we will be born anew over and over.
Liberated.

I hate apocalyptic formulations. I can't stand
them. But here I am. Here we are. Apocalypse
beckons around every corner. We can no longer
deny, fear, ridicule, or play act at fundamental
change. Time has come today. But the abyss is
deep. Its tentacles are strong. We won't win the
world in one gulp. We want the world, yes, but

we can't get it in one sitting. One gulp rhetoric
is gluttonous nonsense. Amassing support takes
time. Amassing support takes reaching out and
welcoming in. Out of the abyss into beauty is not
the work of an hour. History takes time.

To win we must unify many threads. To unify
many threads we must inter weave countless
partial steps that overcome the past and con-
struct the future. Gender steps. Cultural steps.
Legislative steps. Economic steps. Ecological
steps. International steps. Steps we help happen.
Magical mystery steps that go where we want to
arrive. No vanguard, no rearguard, just collectiv-
ity to create a real utopia.

Conclusion: No more denying the obvious. Our
pursuit, our job, our agenda, our profession,
what we admire, what we aspire to, what we
respect, what we celebrate, who we want to be,
who we must be, and who we will be has got to
become patiently, smartly, and unrelentingly
revolutionary. Sail on, sail on, to fundamental
change. We have got to become caring, mature,
sober revolutionaries. No macho nonsense. No
passive reticence. Step by step, we have to engage
ourselves until we civilize ourselves. Until we
civilize the world. Time has come today.

Back when the Chambers Brothers sang their
song, I felt it. So here are their lyrics from 1967.
They are very good. But with the music, if you
give it a listen, they become still better. You may
feel it too, today.

Time has come today

Young hearts can go their way

Can't put it off another day

I don't care what others say

They say we don't listen anyway

Time has come today

(Hey)

Oh The rules have changed today (Hey)

I have no place to stay (Hey)

I'm thinking about the subway (Hey)

My love has flown away (Hey)

My tears have come and gone (Hey)

Oh my Lord, I have to roam (Hey)

I have no home (Hey)

I have no home (Hey)

Now the time has come (Time)

There's no place to run (Time)

I might get burned up by the sun (Time)

But I had my fun (Time)

I've been loved and put aside (Time)

I've been crushed by the tumbling tide (Time)

And my soul has been psychedelized (Time)

Now the time has come (Time)

There are things to realize (Time)

Time has come today (Time)

Time has come today (Time)

I remember hearing that at a concert in of all places, Harvard University's football Stadium in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The audience resonated to the beat. We stamped our feet in time all over the stands. Not football, revolution. Thousands and thousands of criminals in the eyes of America. Together. The whole place shook. Imagine it.

For us, in 1967, Time Had Come Today. But no, it had seemed to, but it hadn't. Just over a half century ago a whole lot of shaking went on but we didn't build enough. We didn't unite enough. We didn't envision enough. We didn't share

enough. We didn't get whole enough. We didn't sufficiently seize the time.

So what about now? What about 2024? What's warranted? What's required? Do you ask yourself that? What is on our minds? A new product at the Mall? Tonight's TV stream? Tomorrow's exam? How to avoid pissing off our school, our boss, the older generation, the next generation, the unborn, the dead?

What is on our minds? Dinner? Getting laid? Paying rent? How to get out of bed? How to get out of bed? How to get out of bed? How to not get drowned? That's not sarcasm. That's all quite reasonable. Certainly it is. Straitjacketed by society's pliers, to make believe we are wholly totally free will accomplish nothing. We have to navigate narrow options and heavy baggage. But what about asking how to turn it all around, how to break imposed chains, how win better?

Are you angry, furious, but also curious about how to exit? If not, why the hell not? After all, Time Has Come Today.

A court pronounces—Well yes, let us ponder it, let us pontificate it, be patient with us—but okay, yes, okay, certainly, yes, we see it, genocide is genocide. Wow! Amazing. After all, until now genocide has been the courageous work done with God on our side. The robes whisper otherwise and so now we know. It is genocide. But now what? Back to school? Back to work? Out of sight, out of mind? Except it isn't out of sight and it will eat our minds until we are hollow.

Scientists say—The floods, blizzards, and draughts are just getting going. They know whereof they speak. So now what? Back to school? Back to work? Out of sight, out of mind? Except, listen, they say, it is just the beginning. So the world goes on suicide watch. But who is watching? More important, who is intervening? Trump? Biden? Of course not. So what about us? Time has come today—hasn't it?

A friend, my age, and whatever I may tell myself, that's teeth-missing, eyes-failing, ears-shot old, recently told me that most everyone he knew, and he knows a lot of people, normal people, good people, have no thoughts for the Mideast, no thoughts for global warming, and no thoughts for onrushing lunatic fascism. Instead, he told me, they may courteously chat for a minute about it, they only seriously think about what's new at the Mall, what's happening on TV. They only think about affecting the most proximate, most individualistic things.

And I get it. Those people aren't crazy. But they have no hope. You wake up, you get out of bed, you drag a comb across your head. You learn to dance, get dressed, try to be a success. Meantime life outside goes on all around you...until it doesn't.

Here are some more lyrics also from back when I stood stamping my feet in unison with so many others, feeling like the whole damn stadium and Harvard too, and every elitest master of the universe thing like Harvard was going to come down, and that we would rebuild the world. It was when the time had come for me and for lots of others, but it was a time that ultimately didn't succeed. We didn't succeed. We were kids. We should have stayed kids. Do better. Be young. Stay young.

From a little later, here is Jackson Browne's song titled The Pretender. His warning is, in the blink of an eye, you may grow up and you may become—a Pretender. So what the hell am I ranting about? Don't become a Pretender. Love, but also fight. Live for today, but also for tomorrow. So Jackson Browne sang:

I'm going to rent myself a house

In the shade of the freeway

Gonna pack my lunch in the morning

And go to work each day

And when the evening rolls around

I'll go on home and lay my body down

And when the morning light comes streaming in

I'll get up and do it again, Amen

Say it again, Amen

I want to know what became of the changes

We waited for love to bring

Were they only the fitful dreams

Of some greater awakening?

I've been aware of the time going by

They say, in the end, it's the wink of an eye

When the morning light comes streaming in

You'll get up and do it again, Amen

Caught between the longing for love

And the struggle for the legal tender

Where the sirens sing and the church bells ring

And the junk man pounds his fender

Where the veterans dream of the fight

Fast asleep at the traffic light

And the children solemnly wait

For the ice cream vendor

Out into the cool of the evening

Strolls the pretender

He knows that all his hopes and dreams

Begin and end there

Ah, the lovers as they run through the night

Leaving nothing but to choose off and fight

And tear at the world with all their might

While the ships bearing their dreams

Sail out of sight

I'm gonna find myself a girl

Who can show me what laughter means

And we'll fill in the missing colors

In each other's paint-by-number dreams

And then we'll put our dark glasses on

And we'll make love until our strength is gone

And when the morning light comes streaming in

We'll get up and do it again

Get it up again

I'm gonna be a happy idiot

And struggle for the legal tender

Where the ads take aim and lay their claim

To the heart and the soul of the spender

And believe in whatever may lie

In those things that money can buy

Where true love could have been a contender

Are you there? Say a prayer for the pretender

*Who started out so young and strong only to surren-
der*

Say a prayer for the pretender

Are you there for the pretender?

Say a prayer for the pretender

Are you there for the pretender?

Are you prepared for the pretender?

My bard sang, back then too. My rant is getting too long so here is just one stanza:

*Advertising signs that con you into thinking you're
the one*

That can do what's never been done,

That can win what's never been won,

Meantime life outside goes on all around you.

And oh well, here is another stanza from the same song:

My eyes collide head-on with stuffed graveyards

False gods, I scuff

At pettiness which plays so rough

Walk upside-down inside handcuffs

Kick my legs to crash it off

Say okay, I have had enough

What else can you show me?

So this is Michael Albert saying our world is not alright which is why our time has come, and why we have to show ourselves the way to ditch struggling for the legal tender and become revolutionary.