

# Report from the Fourth International's Revolutionary Youth Camp

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

***This summer, younger comrades met to foster international solidarity across the socialist movement. Becky Brown reports.***

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

The first FI youth camp was held in 1984, making this the 38th camp (accounting for a two-year gap over Covid). It holds

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

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

## **Programme**

The programme was centred on a different theme per day, these themes having been elected on by a meeting of delegates in Amsterdam during Easter. This is nicely indicative of the way in which the camp is developed mainly by the participants themselves, both before and during the camp, in a way that consciously aims for openness and internal democracy. These

themes were selected as key sites of struggle in the present moment, as we face up to a system of ecocidal global capitalism that has led rise to the most recent onslaught of floods, fires, droughts across the world as well as spiralling cost-of-living crises. Likewise, the present growth of reactionary policies and movements has emphasised how questions of anti-racism, feminism and LGBTI+ liberation must also be placed centrally in the revolutionary movements, in acknowledgment of the central role they play in capitalism's reproduction and social-reproduction.

Each day began with a session known as an 'educational', delivering an in-depth analysis of how each of these themes – eco-socialism, anti-racism, feminism, LGBTI+ liberation, social movements, and party and strategy – is situated within the contemporary landscape. The educationals showed how the Marxist method of analysis could be applied to each topic, foregrounding the question of how ruling classes materially benefit from perpetuating a system that is racist, ecocidal, etc. The camp participants ranged from the ages of 15 to 30 and therefore they encompassed a wide range of experiences and prior exposure to this method of analysis. Considering this, it was useful to keep returning to this material analysis, ensuring that all camp participants were developing their critiques on the shared understanding that, for example, racism is not simply a moral position but that it serves as a useful tool for the benefit of capitalist ruling classes. LGBTI+ oppression was therefore analysed through the framework of the hetero-patriarchal family, using social reproduction theory. It was shown how LGBTI+ identities pose a challenge to the way capitalism has organised the labour force in the public and private spheres, exemplifying how matters of our supposed 'private life' and of identities are not divisible from the economic system we live under.

The camp recognised that people have had different experiences regarding how capitalism has intersected with their

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

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

The themes of accountability and internal democracy emerged in a variety of discussions over the week, somewhat in continuation of these questions surrounding the internal organisation of left groups and the concurrent intersection with identity-based oppression. It seemed that the youth wings

of political groups/parties were keen to foreground accountability procedures as a way of fighting against oppressive systems that have marred their groups in the past. It was recognised as worthy of serious consideration and as necessary of consideration as external struggles, something that is not traditionally foregrounded in left wing strategic discussions. The importance of this is painfully clear though from experiences that each delegation brought to the camp. For example, the Swiss party Solidarité recently experienced an elected cohort of older men who broke away and stole significant finances from the Solidarité, following disputes about their refusal to maintain accountable to the party.

## **Workshops**

Another key part of the camp programme were daily workshops and inter-delegation meetings. Workshops were led by youth participants from each delegation, who would introduce a prominent issue from their national context (strikes, social movements, policy changes etc) and then open this up to the rest of the group for discussion and comparison with correlate issues from their own contexts. Topics included fights against Airbnb; union struggles; resisting Denmark's deeply racist 'ghetto-isation' laws; Frontex and fortress Europe; undocumented migrants and refugee struggles; LGBTI+ struggle; French resistance against pension reform; Switzerland's compulsory conscription, amongst many others. There were also practical workshops on how to build a tripod, feminist self-defence and building defensive frontlines against security services.

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

Members of the French delegation delivered a workshop on Soulevement de la Terre and the fight against mega-basins. It gave an overview of why the mega-basins were selected as a target, given that they appear to be less harmful than major fossil fuel infrastructure that is typically targeted by climate groups across Europe. It progressed onto discussing the movement's strategies and the subsequent police repression. It was clear that mega-basins are both ecologically damaging and part of an extractivist agribusiness economy, making them deeply unpopular with the 95% of local farmers who are outside of the agribusiness economy. This shared opposition allowed a strong alliance to form between the local farmers union and the climate movement, building a resistance movement that numbered 30,000 people. It led to conversations about how these lessons of mobilisation could be applied to our own climate movements and fed into a conversation about the fight in Denmark against the building of a new island near Copenhagen, an unjustifiable vanity project that is going to have major impacts on flooding in the future and yet has no public opposition to currently tap into.

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

## **Interdelegation meetings**

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

I came away with a greater sense of how comparable many of the struggles are and it felt good to be faced with the reminder of how our respective states are acting on similar interests in the protection of capital – meaning that providing space for discussions like these can be invaluable for comparing our experiences of fighting back and sharing strategies. In practice, the workshops actually provided a better platform for comparing tactics, as in the workshops the conversations remained focused on a single struggle and therefore allowed more time for them to be fully explored. The inter-delegation meetings were only an hour long, meaning that they were typically more of a Q&A session where individuals from each delegation would ask about areas they were interested in. Few of us knew much about the political landscape of the other countries, so the inter-delegation meetings were a good opportunity to ask someone with similar politics for their perspective on their country's political situation and the role/strength of organised struggles. It felt important to learn these things, but meant that the inter-delegation meetings' supposed aim was not necessarily achieved – maybe if the camp was two weeks long rather than one!

## **Conclusions**

In all, the camp was an impressive experience where many ideas

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

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Photo: The Scotland delegation of the Fourth International Youth Camp 2023 (RS21)

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

This September marks the 50th anniversary of the US backed coup by Pinochet in Chile. It was one of the heaviest and bloodiest defeats ever suffered by the left and progressive movement in Latin America. There are a number of events being organised in Britain, [including in Scotland](#) (full details also



below), this year to remember and discuss the Chilean process and coup and links are provided below. (The introductory note is compiled by Dave Kellaway of [Anti\\*Capitalist Resistance in England & Wales](#).)

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

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

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

Perhaps we should begin by recalling that the 11 September coup, in 1973, and not that of 2001 Twin Towers terrorist attack, was first and foremost an emotional shock. We were transfixed by the news that arrived on the radio from the

headquarters of the Presidential Palace, La Moneda, and then by the announcements that gradually came in about the success of the coup d'état. At first we hoped it would not succeed, since another coup d'état had failed in June three months before, but then we got the news of Allende's death.

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

So, why was it so important for Europe?

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

Argentina, for example.

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

I believe there are still lessons for us about what happened in Chile.

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

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

two limits set from the outset by the dominant classes, by the institutions , for accepting Allende's investiture.

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

This obviously gave greater legitimacy to developing the process. So we had an electoral victory, a radicalization, but also a polarization that was initially internal to Chile, which gradually translated into a mobilization of the right, including action on the streets. The landmark date was the lorry drivers' strike in October 1972. But it should not be thought that it was employee led: it was the employers who organised it. Chile's long geographical configuration meant that road transport was strategic. So there was this truckers' strike, therefore, supported by what were called *cacerolazos (people banging empty pans)* , i.e. protest movements, particularly by middle-class consumers in Santiago. Santiago makes up more than half of the country in terms of population. It constituted a first attempt at destabilization in the autumn of 1972.

At that point, there was finally a debate on the way forward for the Chilean process, which opened up two possibilities in response to the destabilization of the right. The latter was also strongly supported by the United States. We know today with the disclosures of the Condor plan how much and for how long the United States had been involved in the preparation of the coup d'état, through the multinationals but also through American military advisers. So in early 1973, after the warning of the lorry drivers' strike, there were several options. Either a radicalization of the process, with increased incursions into the private property sector, with

radical redistribution measures, wage increases, and so on. All of which were debated. Or on the contrary, and this was the thesis that prevailed, put forward by Vukovik, Minister of Economy and Finance, a member of the Communist Party. The government had to reassure the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes by definitively delimiting the area of public property or social property, and by giving additional guarantees to the military.

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

I believe that this was the crucial moment. For example, it was the moment when the MIR, which was a small organisation of a few thousand very dynamic militants – we must not overestimate its size, but for Chile it was significant – proposed joining the government, but under certain conditions. After the failure of the first coup d'état, the question arose of forming a government whose centre of gravity would shift to the left, which would take measures to punish or disarm the conspiring military. But what was done was exactly the opposite.

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

So there was a momentum shift, and Miguel Enriquez, the secretary general of the MIR who was assassinated in October 1974, a year later, wrote a text, in this intermediate period

between the dry run and the coup d'état, which was called "**When were we the strongest?** ». I think he was extremely lucid: until August 1973 there were demonstrations by 700,000 demonstrators in Santiago, supporting Allende and responding to the coup d'état. That was indeed the moment when a counteroffensive by the popular movement was possible . On the contrary, the response was a shift to the right of the government alliances and additional pledges given to the military and ruling classes, which in reality meant in the end encouraging the coup d'état.

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

In the movement of solidarity with Chile, which was very important in the years that followed, 1973, 1974 and 1975, I would say that we were, somewhat sectarian about Allende, who was made into someone responsible for the disaster. That does not change the political problem. It implies respect for the individual, but there is still a conundrum: during the first hours of the coup d'état, he still had national radio, it was still possible to call for a general strike, whereas a call was made in the end for static resistance in the workplaces, and so on. Perhaps it was not possible. Even an organisation like the MIR, which was supposed to be prepared militarily, was caught off guard by the coup. We see this today in Carmen Castillo's book, ***An October Day in Santiago*** or in his film, ***Santa Fe Street***, 2007. They were caught off guard, perhaps in my opinion because they did not imagine such a brutal and massive coup d'état. They imagined the possibility of a coup d'état, but one that would be, in a way, half-baked that would usher in a new period of virtual civil war, with hotbeds of armed resistance in the countryside. Hence the importance they had given – and this is related to the other

aspect of the question – to working among the peasants of the Mapuche minority, particularly in the south of the country.

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

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

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

I believe that the coup d'état in Chile was the epilogue of

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

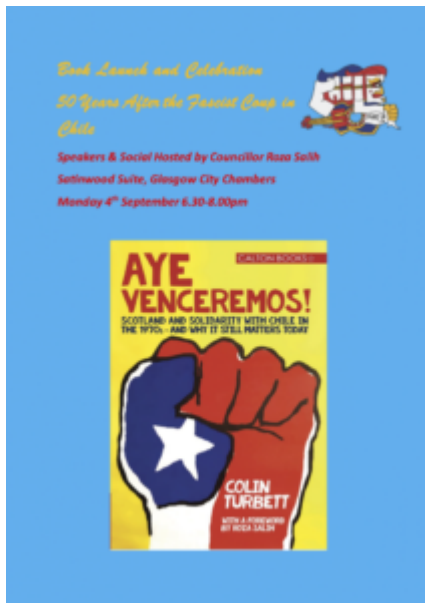
Republished from Anti\*Capitalist Resistance, 29 August 2023:  
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/remembering-september-11-1973-the-us-backed-pinochet-coup-in-chile/>

## **Forthcoming events in Scotland**

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

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





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

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

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

**SCOTLAND – COLLECTIVE MEMORIES OF A**

# FASCIST COUP

Monday 4 September – Thursday 21 September

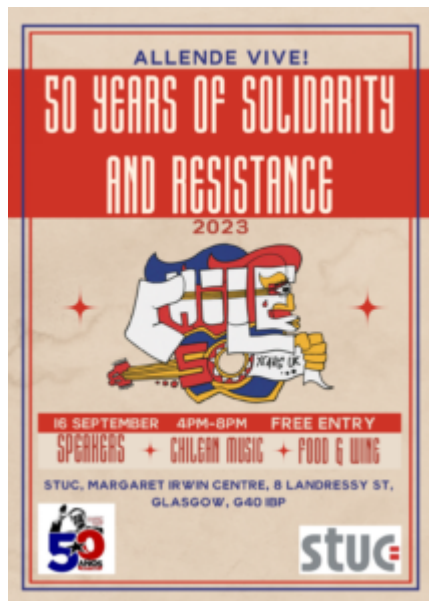
A series of cultural and political events - music, poetry, talks, films and exhibitions to mark the 50th anniversary of the bloody coup d'état of 11 September 1973.



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

*For further information email [labufa.charles50@gmail.com](mailto:labufa.charles50@gmail.com)*

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



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

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

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

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

# polluter

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

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

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

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

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

A report on Climate Camp Scotland by RS21 members is here: <https://www.ecosocialist.scot/?p=1898>

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# Building International Solidarity for Ukraine: Three Perspectives

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

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

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

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

I have always believed that support for people resisting imperialist violence is central to socialism. It was the US war in Vietnam that first moved me to political action, when I was a teenager. Supporting Ukrainian resistance to Russian imperialism is consistent with supporting Vietnamese resistance then, and supporting Palestinian resistance to Israeli apartheid. For me, the difference is that Ukraine is closer, in the sense that I have been travelling there, and to Russia, for the last thirty years. (I worked in both countries as a journalist and doing academic research.)

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

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

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

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

Confederation of Independent Unions of Ukraine (KVPU).

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

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

In my view, in the UK there are two problems that we face, in building a broad Ukraine solidarity campaign. The first is that, for reasons we all understand about inter-imperialist rivalries, the UK government has steadfastly supported Ukraine militarily, e.g. with weapons supplies. This has given the most right-wing UK government in decades the opportunity to pose as lovers of freedom. And this has its effect on society: the media reports Ukraine sympathetically; president Zelensky appears smiling for the cameras with our ministers, who to people here represent austerity and racism. The hypocrisy of

the British ruling class, who for so long prevailed over an empire that dripped with blood (and who have spent the last thirty years gearing its financial system to the benefit of Russian kleptocrats), is obvious – especially to migrant communities whose suffering has been shaped by British and other western imperialism.

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

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

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



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

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

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

## **Zofia Malisz [Poland], Razem International Office**

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

that the Ukrainian people needed to defend themselves.

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

We took part in countless meetings, live and remote in 2022, with the global left, to challenge Russian propaganda regarding the invasion and Ukrainian statehood. We confronted falsehoods embedded on the left, particularly within the Western “peace” movement. We did our best to explain the complexities of our regional situation that many were disappointingly ignorant about or chose to ignore – despite decades-long relationships. As a consequence of such unwillingness to engage with the challenges facing the Eastern European left and to support Ukrainian sovereignty, we decided [to leave Progressive International and Diem25](#) shortly after the invasion.

We do feel the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian opposition left movements have unique contributions to make to the global left. Our traditions and the challenges we face, be it

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

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

Razem also [wants to offer](#) to millions of Ukrainian refugees in Poland [our vision](#) of a safe, environmentally sustainable welfare state for everyone. A vision that we believe we can realise together both in Poland and in Ukraine. We want to show that Ukraine, in order to rebuild itself, needs its workers to return to stable working conditions with expanded labour rights. It needs its veterans to heal and to receive support from a well funded public services sector. Its children need to be able to grow up with the prospect of a planet that is not only livable, but thriving. We need Ukrainian victory for that, as well as a great deal of left cooperation and campaigning together for social Ukraine. We continue paving the way for that with our partners, both within the Central-Eastern European Green-Left Alliance organisation including Ukrainian partners that we have been building (that is launching at the moment). We also work with partners on the Western left who are willing to engage and to

develop concrete proposals of rebuilding plans that challenge the liberal plans (e.g. many activists in the UK and some Labour politicians).

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

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

## **co-chairs Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign**

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

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

Here in the United States, Trump used Islamic fundamentalism

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

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

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

As a result of this, a small group of us founded the Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign shortly after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine started. (In reality, Putin's military invasion of Ukraine started in 2014!). We base ourselves on [several points of unity](#), including the demand that in order to fight the invaders Ukraine should receive all the weapons it needs and with no strings attached. That means we criticize Biden not because he is sending arms to Ukraine but, on the contrary, because he is too hesitant and putting too many handcuffs on Ukraine, on how it may use these arms. That is an unusual position for socialists to take, but it is not unprecedented.

During the Spanish Civil War, US socialists called on the US to send arms to the Spanish republicans who were fighting fascism, and during WWII no socialist in the U.S. would have opposed the US's sending arms to the Soviet Union to fight the Nazis.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 August 2023



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## Yes to Life, Yes to Yasuní!

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

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

### Winning support

In a week of meetings and events in Madrid, Brussels, Paris, London, Oxford, Glasgow and Grangemouth, Leonidas Iza and his co-authors, Andres Tapia and Andres Madrid, won support from



MEPs, British MPs, trade unionists, peasants, climate justice activists, academics, migrants and many others, for a Yes vote in Ecuador's August referendum.

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



Iza was a central figure in the Indigenous-led uprising of October 2019, triggered by the removal of fuel subsidies and therefore a sharp rise in the cost of living. He was then elected President of [CONAIE, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador](#), the most powerful movement of its kind in Latin America. In that role, he led the follow-up national stoppage, or *paro*, of June last year. That closed down the country for even longer, 17 days in all, and expanded the list of demands. Alongside opposition to a broader range of neo-liberal policies, mandated by the International Monetary Fund, the Indigenous movement and its allies put at the centre of their struggle the need to halt oil drilling and mining on protected, sensitive and Indigenous land. On both occasions, they forced the government to negotiate and won significant concessions, but not enough.

This August's referendum, which includes the question on stopping oil drilling in three oil fields known as Block 43, in the Yasuni, and another on limiting mining near the capital, Quito, is in effect a continuation of the 2019 and 2022 struggles. It brings together environmental campaigners

with the Indigenous communities and other social movements that staged those insurrections, in a National Anti-mining Front. This combination is itself a significant, if tentative, achievement. The relationship of the Indigenous leaders and mass movement that led the insurrections, with the NGO left that has tended to dominate the environmental movement, has sometimes been difficult in recent years.

## **Biodiversity hotspot**

As Iza and his colleagues repeated many times on their European tour, the campaign for Yasuní is not just about saving one of the most biodiverse spots on the planet. Of course, it is that too. The Yasuni National Park comprises 9,823 sq. kms of rainforest (almost half the size of Wales) in the Ecuadorean Amazon, just 200 kms from Quito and bordering the eastern range of the Andes. Perhaps because it was one of the few places that never froze over during the last ice age, it is one of the most biodiverse areas in the world, possibly *the* most biodiverse. Botanists have recorded 685 species of tree in one hectare of the Yasuni. That is more than in all of the United States and Canada. The same hectare also contains about 100,000 species of insects, again similar to the total number for North America. The Yasuni National Park is also home to Ecuador's two Indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation, the Tagaeri and the Taromenane. The pressure from oil companies operating on the edges of their territory has already resulted in three massacres, putting their survival in jeopardy.

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

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

## **A novel initiative for mitigation**

At the same time, the campaign for a Yes in the referendum has a broader international significance, because it revives one of the world's most original proposals for mitigating climate change. The Yasuni ITT Initiative was launched by the progressive government of Rafael Correa in 2007, during its early, more radical phase. It was based on proposals coming from Indigenous communities in Ecuadorean Amazonia and some environmental NGOs. It proposed leaving in the ground the 20 percent of Ecuador's oil reserves that had been identified in the Ishpingo, Tambococho and Tiputini oil fields, known as ITT or Block 43, most of which lay beneath the Yasuni National Park. In return, the rich countries would pay Ecuador for *not* exploiting those reserves. US\$3.6 billion over 13 years was what the Correa government was asking for, in public and private sector contributions, when it took the Yasuni ITT initiative to the UN General Assembly in 2007, and to COP15 in Copenhagen two years later, where it formed a central plank of the proposals put forward by the ALBA alliance led by Bolivia, Cuba and Venezuela. That amount was calculated as 50 percent of the money the country would make if it did exploit those reserves. This was emphatically not conceived as compensation or as any kind of offset, nor was the money to be obtained through any sort of carbon market, as Alberto Acosta, Correa's first energy minister and an architect of the Initiative, repeatedly insisted. The idea was not to leave the oil in the ground beneath the Yasuni National Park in exchange for some northern polluters being allowed to continue their business as usual; on the contrary, the rich countries should pay as part of their responsibility to cut global emissions.

## **Towards a global just transition**

As the ecosocialist theorist, Michael Lowy, suggests in his foreword to the English edition of Iza's *Uprising*, the Yasuni

ITT Initiative could have been an unparalleled example to other countries – an inspiration for how the global south and the global north, both producers and consumers of fossil fuels, could have engaged together in a just transition away from the carbon economy, in a way that would be fair for communities across the planet.

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

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

## **The Yasuni returns**

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

For the last decade or more, the left and progressive forces in Ecuador have been riven by a bitter, debilitating division. The supporters of former president Rafael Correa and his Citizen Revolution movement have been ranged against much of the Indigenous and women's movements (the country's two most important social movements) and most of the trade unions (much weakened from their high point of the 1980s), as well many environmental NGOs and a number of small far-left groups and currents.

## **Yasuni, elections and beyond**

This split is playing out once again in the presidential election on 20 August. But whether as tragedy or as farce, it may be for the last time. On one side, the favourite to become Ecuador's next president, possibly in the first round but more likely in a second round in October, is Luisa Gonzalez, the

candidate of the Citizen Revolution movement. She has avoided taking a very explicit position on the Yasuni referendum, and her party has said its members will be free to vote as they choose. But like Correa himself, she has left little doubt about her opposition to leaving the oil in the ground. Both insist the country needs the money to build schools and hospitals. Most of the half a dozen candidates vying to represent a discredited right have maintained a similar ambiguity, and used the same arguments.

On the other side, Yaku Perez, who was the candidate of the Indigenous movement's party, Pachakutik, in the 2021 election and came third, is the only presidential candidate this time to support openly a Yes vote in the Yasuni referendum. He still has the support of the old, right-leaning leadership of Pachakutik and some environmental NGOs, as well as parts of the anti-Correa left and centre-left. But this bloc has lost much of its credibility. In particular, the Pachakutik leaders who engineered his candidacy last time and who led the large group of Pachakutik members in the now-dissolved National Assembly, revealed an extraordinary capacity for opportunism. Putting their virulent anti-Correa stance above loyalty to any particular ideology or policy, they struck a series of deals with Guillermo Lasso's right-wing government, in exchange for favours and positions. As a result, last April's national conference of Pachakutik voted them out and elected a new leadership aligned with the positions and priorities of CONAIE itself. They appealed against their removal, and since the National Electoral Council had still not ruled on the dispute, Pachakutik was not allowed to give formal endorsement to any candidates at a national level in this election.

7 August 2023



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

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

Sunday, 6 August 2023

7:00pm - 11:00pm

Classic Grand

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

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

## Information

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

This gig is part of our larger crowdfunding campaign to support the workers left destitute by the closure of The 13th

Note. Classic Grand has kindly agreed to waive hire fee so all money made on ticket sales will go directly to supporting the workers and their goal of rescuing The 13th Note from neglectful, money-hungry owners who are blindly ignorant of the vast importance of this most cherished cultural institution.

Performing on the night will be:

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

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



# **SAVE THE 13TH NOTE!**

**CLASSIC GRAND  
06/08  
DOORS 7PM  
8ADV/10OTD**

**VOS ROUGH      SIANNEN  
CALUM BAIRD      +1 TBC**

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Russia invaded**

Why did Russia invade Ukraine?

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

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

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

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



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

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

## **Euromaidan**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **NATO enlargement**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Weapons for Ukraine**

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

## **US goals and actions**

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

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

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

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

### **Minsk agreements**

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

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

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

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

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

## **The divisions of the left**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

True pacifists, unlike campists who hide behind calls for

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

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

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

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

### **Appendix: Ever heavier weapons**

*Le Quotidien* (March 30, 2023)

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

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

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

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



## **The armor arrives**

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

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

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

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

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**Murray Smith Sunday 16 July 2023**

Republished

from:

<https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article67205>

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

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

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## **Aye Venceremos – Book Launch & Anniversary Celebration, Glasgow Monday 4 September**

**“Aye Venceremos” describes the history of Scots 1970s solidarity with Chile. The 50th anniversary event involves speakers and celebration.**

Hosted by Glasgow City Councillor Roza Salih – herself a refugee from Kurdistan – the launch of *Aye Venceremos* celebrates the story of Scottish solidarity with the people of Chile following the fascist coup in September 1973 – exactly fifty years ago. This is a story of action – no better demonstrated than by the workers of Rolls Royce East Kilbride, whose boycott of engine work effectively grounded the Chilean Air Force. It is also a story of refugees, political exiles many of whom had suffered torture and imprisonment, who found themselves in Scotland where they were welcomed by the labour and trade union movement and helped to

settle.

The event – organised by the publisher Calton Books and the author Colin Turbett , will feature short contributions from Chilean representatives, trade unionists and others. Details will be added here once confirmed.

This is a FREE event but tickets are limited to 50.

Monday 4 Sep 2023 18:30 – 20:00

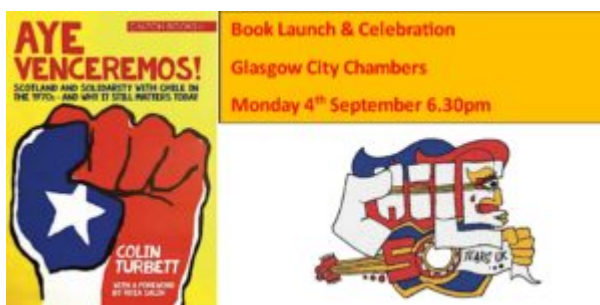
Location: Glasgow City Chambers 82 George Square Glasgow G2 1DU

Register here:

[Aye Venceremos – Book Launch & Anniversary Celebration – Glasgow 4th Sept. Tickets, Mon 4 Sep 2023 at 18:30 | Eventbrite](#)

***Aye Venceremos – Scotland and Solidarity with Chile in the 1970s – and why it still matters today*** is published by Calton Books, Glasgow at £10. It can be purchased here :

<https://www.calton-books.co.uk/books/ayе-venceremos-scotland-and-solidarity-with-chile-in-the-1970s-and-why-it-still-matters-today/>



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# Scottish TUC President and Glasgow Councillor Roza Salih join European Civil Society call for EU to act for Öcalan

After 28 months with no contact with Öcalan, and in the wake of claims about poison threats, representatives from European civil society gathered outside the European Parliament in Brussels last week to demand that the EU and other European institutions abide by the principles that they claim to stand by – of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law – and put pressure on Turkey to comply with international law in their treatment of Abdullah Öcalan. They demanded, too, that he be given freedom and the opportunity to negotiate a peaceful solution to the Kurdish Question, and they spoke of his importance as a thinker and how his ideas have inspired their own organisations. You can watch the whole event here:

After a welcome from Xanum Ayu from Rojava, the first speaker was Simon Dubbins, co-convenor of the Trade Union Freedom for Öcalan campaign in the UK, who demanded to know what is happening to Öcalan. He pointed out that no other prisoner is kept in such conditions and that Öcalan holds the key to peace.

Antonio Amoroso spoke on behalf of the CUB, the Confederazione Unitaria di Base, which is part of the Italian tradition of grassroots trade unionism. He explained that his union applies Öcalan's principles of democratic confederalism, and that these ideas could help the European institutions too.

Michela Arricale, an Italian human rights lawyer, demonstrated

how passion can be combined with legal detail as she explained how the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) are ignoring a vital paragraph in their own rules when they claim that they can't divulge information on their visit to Öcalan's prison. The CPT are the only people outside the Turkish authorities to have visited İmralı prison since 2019.

Amedeo Ciaccheri is president of the Municipality of Rome VIII. He made clear that his message continued the tradition of support for Öcalan shown by the Italian people when Öcalan tried to claim asylum in Italy – though Ciaccheri himself was only young at that time. Italian cities, he explained, see the freedom of Abdullah Öcalan as their freedom.

(The organisers also received messages of support from the former mayor of Naples, where Öcalan was made an honorary citizen in 2016, and the mayor of Fossalto – also in Italy – where Öcalan was made an honorary citizen in 2020.)

Laura de Bonfils brought the support of her comrades in the ARCI – Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana, a million-member Italian cultural and social association – and the ARCI's demand for respect for Öcalan's human rights.

Txente Rekondo spoke on behalf of the Basque trade union, LAB, Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak or Nationalist Workers' Committees. He stressed the importance of a strong leader in a peace process; and he stated that the Basque trade unions support freedom for Öcalan and for all Kurdish political prisoners, and call for the Kurds to be free to decide their own future.

**Mike Arnott is President of the Scottish Trade Union Congress, and brought solidarity from the Scottish trade union movement. He stressed that**

**the people of Europe demand that the European Union stand with the oppressed and not with the oppressor.**

**Roza Salih came to Scotland as a refugee from Iraq when she was a child, and is now a councillor in Glasgow City Council. She spoke of Scotland's history of international solidarity – including giving an honorary life membership of Strathclyde University to Abdullah Öcalan, 'a leader and philosopher and great thinker'.**

Before a final word from Hakim Abdul Karim from Başur (the Kurdistan Region of Iraq), Jürgen Klute spoke as a former member of the European Parliament. He reminded the European Union of the need to increase pressure on the Turkish government to stop their war against the Kurds inside Turkey and beyond the border, to make peace with the Kurds, and to release Abdullah Öcalan.

Sarah Glynn, compering the event on behalf of the Permanent Vigil for Öcalan, observed that politicians are bombarded with different issues, but what had been discussed is a simple concrete campaign that can make a big difference.

(You can find the event briefing paper with a list of recommendations [here](#).)

Republished from Vigil for Öcalan:  
<https://ocalanvigil.net/2023/08/01/european-civil-society-tells-eu-to-act-for-ocalan/>

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# Friends of the Earth Scotland video brilliantly exposes Carbon Capture greenwashing

*How the oil industry is pushing Carbon Capture greenwashing*  
[pic.twitter.com/bSR8oilicy](https://pic.twitter.com/bSR8oilicy)

– Friends of the Earth Scotland ☐ (@FoEScot) [July 31, 2023](#)

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## Trade unions oppose Glasgow's drastic cuts in museums services

Glasgow City Council Unison's branch has launched a campaign against the SNP leadership of the Council's proposed cuts in museum services. Rallies are being held at the Burrell Collection gallery and the Gallery of Modern Art in the city centre (Saturday 5th August 12 noon). The rally at the Burrell Collection was addressed by Unison workers in conservation and collections whose jobs are at risk and also by representatives of the Unite and GMB unions at the Council. Below we publish the leaflet issued by the Unison branch – please support the campaign.

# ***Shredding Services quicker than a Banksy Auction!***

*Banksy's Cut and Run exhibition, Mary Quant at Kelvingrove and the Burrell Collection winning the prestigious award of Art Fund Museum of the Year. These are just some of the successes Glasgow Museums have delivered this summer.*

*So visitors and tourists to Glasgow's Museums will be shocked to know that the city's Museums and Collections department, run by Glasgow Life, will see nearly a third of jobs cut with 37 posts from a total of 128 to be lost this year to save £1.5M.*

*The jobs cull affects the behind the scenes staff across Glasgow Museums and the City Archives and Special Collections staff at the Mitchell Library. Posts to go include Curators, Conservators, Technicians, Outreach and Learning Assistants, Collections staff, and staff from Photography, Editorial and Design.*

*The Museum Conservation department is being reduced by 40%. Curatorial staff and Collections Management are facing heavy cuts. Savaging cuts to the professional teams will result in a loss of skills, knowledge, creativity and essential care of Glasgow's world-renowned museum collections. Public programmes, displays, exhibitions and online content will be vastly reduced as a result. Losing the technical and specialist staff who prepare objects and loans, manage and move the collections, design and build the displays and temporary exhibitions will result in diminished public experiences, empty exhibition spaces and stagnant galleries.*

*A move towards the privatisation of technical and specialist skills is expensive and diminishes both the public offer and public purse.*

*Cuts to Glasgow Life's Open Museum and Learning and Access*



provision will see a reduction in services to marginalized communities in Glasgow. Activities such as free facilitated weekend activities for families will be greatly reduced. Successful initiatives such as dementia and autism friendly programmes are much less likely to happen in the future. The cuts risk shifting a dynamic museum services towards spaces of elite privilege.

[UNISON](#) demands Glasgow Councillors stand up for Glasgow Life services, not pass on the funding attacks from the Scottish and UK governments.

We call on Glasgow City Councillors to reverse these devastating cuts to our Museums and Collections.

**Our Museums and Collections are world renowned and internationally lauded. They need to be protected and cherished.**

## **Want to vent a little?**

We suggest you contact:

Councillor Susan Aitken (Leader of Glasgow City Council)

[Susan.Aitken@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:Susan.Aitken@glasgow.gov.uk)

Councillor Annette Christie (Chair of Glasgow Life)

[Annette.Christie@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:Annette.Christie@glasgow.gov.uk)

Leaflet published by Unison, 84 Bell Street

Glasgow, G1 1LQ Tel: 0141 552 7069



*Photos of protest rally at The Burrell Collection by M Picken for ecosocialist.scot*



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## **Climate Camp Scotland 2023 – report by RS21 members**

*This year, Climate Camp Scotland set up on the doorstep of INEOS, Scotland's biggest polluter. rs21 members participated and here they report on the camp and lessons learned.*

From 12 to 17 July, the oil town of Grangemouth experienced a new sight. Tents were pitched, people wandered about with camping gear, and dog-walkers were making new friends. Climate and social justice activists from across Britain had come to

the town for the third Scotland Climate Camp.

## Why Grangemouth?

Grangemouth is host to one of Europe's largest petrochemical facilities and ports, producing plastics, refined oil, and various other products. Much of the facility is run by INEOS, owned by British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe. One of Britain's richest men, he is estimated to avoid around £4bn of taxes through 'residing' in Monaco. From 2013 onwards, Grangemouth workers have been [repeatedly victimised](#) by this management. This creates a site of near-cartoonish evil, that climate and worker organisers decided to focus upon.

On several occasions at the camp, local residents and workers spoke of the impacts of the port and industrial site. Workers are exploited, the community is made ever sicker by the port, and the wider planet is destroyed. On an evening walk to the nearby bay, those at the camp saw thousands of plastic pieces washed upon the shore, released by the facility.

It is for the above reasons that Climate Camp Scotland decided to focus on Grangemouth. The camps are structured to have several days of political discussion and training, and then a mass direct action at the close. In this way, people get to learn from each other, both technical skills and political analyses, as well as, in the end, taking action together. As opposed to actions done by a small group of activists, the aim is to get something akin to a 'mass' character – a space where community members, workers and environmentalists have all got to know each other and engage in resistance together for the first time.

## The program

The camp this year began with an address from [Ecuadorian activist Leonidas Iza](#), leader of the country's biggest indigenous group. Iza led the 2019 and 2022 protests against the Ecuadorian government's austerity measures and rising fuel

prices, which disproportionately impacted the country's poorest.

His speech brought the urgency of internationalism to the camp. We must not only unite workers and environmentalists against facilities like Grangemouth's, but also be able to mobilise in solidarity with those globally facing the violence of capitalism.

The workshops were interesting and varied. They included a discussion with the Scottish histories of resistance project, which highlighted the importance of learning from past struggle and explored how our climate movement could be understood in a historical context. Fuel Poverty Action ran a workshop on their [Energy For All campaign](#), and how a shift to renewables could combat overpriced heating bills. A workshop on anti-fascism dug into how liberal discourse can be hacked by fascists to swing mainstream ideas on climate to the right.

In addition, an important workshop on the history of energy transitions looked at first-hand accounts from workers who experienced the move from coal to oil. The discussion explored what we would need to bring about a 'just transition' to renewables led by rank-and-file workers.

The artistic side of the camp was quite wonderful – a climate cabaret took place one evening, and another there was an impressive open mic. A band performed fantastic songs against police, billionaires and queerphobia. There was also an arts tent where people could make banners and masks of INEOS-mogul Jim Ratcliffe. The chance to meet other activists and swap stories was also an invaluable part of the week.

## **The action days**

On Saturday the 15th, the camp geared up for action. Early in the morning, around 100 activists began the march from the site to the facility. As they attempted to exit the forest and walk towards the facility, police officers appeared en-masse

to block their passage.

This tells us something crucial about the role the police force has today. The police do not protect INEOS workers facing victimisation, they do not take on the billionaire owner who's avoiding an estimated £4bn in tax, they don't do anything for the Grangemouth community who are being poisoned. Rather, the police mobilise with force to protect the polluters.

What resulted was a pitched struggle where the marchers attempted on several occasions to pass police lines, with 5 being arrested for attempting to merely try and find ways to walk past the police. The march ended when police ruined the entire road system around Grangemouth, so they could kettle a series of people marching along the pavement.

Not all was lost. In all their excitement to harass and attack the protesters from the camp, Scotland's finest had foolishly left their flank wide-open. Having sent a significant number of officers to that end of the facility, they were not prepared for [another crew of activists](#) from the camp, who succeeded in entering the site unopposed by private security or the police.

Having succeeded in entering the site, these activists proceeded to occupy the roof of the facility's power station for seven hours, with a banner reading 'Climate Justice for Grangemouth'. The police force, terrified now that activists had succeeded to get on site, were forced to allow them off-site without arrest having recognised that attempting to remove them by force from the roof would likely end badly.

Early in the week, [activists on kayaks](#) had also succeeded in getting on site with a banner reading 'INEOS: Profiting from Pollution'. Finally, after the camp had packed up, [This is Rugged activists](#) further succeeded in getting into the site and blockading it with a series of actions lasting many days.

Ultimately, the forces of the state, despite their desperation to defend fossil fuel billionaires, have been revealed as incompetent. This also shows that we can be more impactful than we ever thought we could be.

## **Questioning the way forward**

A core strength of Climate Camp Scotland is its experimental attitude toward its work. The camp relies upon an ecosystem of organisations, who provide everything from accessible toilets to facilitation of meetings, legal advice to delicious food. There is an openness to reflecting on what configurations would be most effective, and how the participatory democracy of the camp could be expanded.

One of the challenges of the camp was how to connect the educational aspect of the workshops with the action-oriented nature of the week. On one hand, a case could be made for focusing the workshops more closely on the imminent action: the skills training could focus on fence-climbing rather than tree-climbing, a history workshop could look at previous instances of direct action and what those achieved. Given that many attendees are new to this type of activism, allowing more critical engagement with direct action strategy could bring new ideas into the fold of the action.

On the other hand, climate justice depends on a lot more than direct action, and it's essential to broaden out the conversation. The mix of workshops was eclectic, but it catered to a range of concerns which all have a place in the discourse of activism. A camp with a pedagogical focus, separate from action, would also be a useful intervention in our movement. Given the police presence was particularly onerous after the camp's action, a safer space could be generated by separating camp and action. (By the end of the camp, there were allegedly 300-400 police officers on duty in the Grangemouth area.)

Another alternative would be to split the camp into different strategic pathways – a collection of workshops and activity which respectively focus on direct action, broader discourse and community outreach. The question hinges on how the camp could best enable more people to engage with climate activism toward a just transition.

## **Reaching workers and front-line communities**

The camp's stated aim to 'build bridges between workers, front-line communities, and the climate movement' was more difficult in Grangemouth than Aberdeen the previous year. Aberdeen had [a community campaign](#) which the climate camp was able to support, generating solidarity with local people in Torry. In Grangemouth the route was less clear, although conversations occurred with local people across the week which point the way to building stronger relationships in future. The camp's media team drew connections between INEOS's environmental harms and its impacts on the health of people who live in its toxic vicinity. Conversations with locals were positive. During the march, Grangemouth residents were clear-sighted about the fact that it was the police who stopped traffic, not climate activists.

Although the climate camp is clear that we need radical direct action that isn't simply adventurist, but is actually linked to a mass politics of unions, activists, and frontline communities, that is easier said than done. Building those relationships is slow and difficult, particularly given the way mass media tend to distort environmentalist actions. [Brian Parkin's account](#) of the history of Unite in INEOS is essential reading to understand the necessity to go beyond the union bureaucracy in seeking to reach out to the facility's sub-contracted rank and file.

How can direct action link with the demands of workers and communities? It is worth thinking about how broad climate messaging could be supplemented with more practical demands. A



focus on energy bills, cancer rates, life expectancy, and the sheer practicalities of converting INEOS machinery to worker-controlled renewable energy production, must be hashed out and made tangible, if climate activists aren't to be rendered alien abstract beings by the mainstream media. The fight for climate justice is a fight for a better quality of life, locally and internationally. We need to make these material necessities feel real in local areas.

INEOS want to close Bo'ness Road and turn it into a private internal road for their facility, and [the community are against](#) the plan. If that campaign were to escalate, it would be a good opportunity to create the kind of practical solidarity we saw in Aberdeen. Further, just transition strategies need to be developed which will facilitate the agency of [rank and file](#) INEOS workers to figure out the shift to sustainable energy.

Climate Camp Scotland rose to the challenge of setting up in Grangemouth this year, and now the journey begins to incorporate the many lessons learned, so we can progress Scotland's climate movement further.

28 July 2023

Republished from RS21 website:  
<https://www.rs21.org.uk/2023/07/28/climate-camp-scotland-2023/>

*Ecosocialist.scot Editor's Note: RS21 – [Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century](#) – is a group originating in splits in the British Socialist Workers Party around a decade ago. ecosocialist.scot members also participated in Climate Camp Scotland and helped organise the tour of Britain by [Leonidas Iza](#). We will be writing about our experiences and reflections in future articles.*