

# 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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# Being a transgender woman at the International Youth Camp

by Sister from Scotland

In July this year, I attended my first ever International Youth Summer Camp. While I may have been a committed Leninist for a long time, and while I have been a member of the [Fourth International's Scottish section](#) for a few years now, unfortunately those years fell amid the COVID-19 pandemic and

thus were deprived of camps. So by Summer of this year, I was especially excited to finally attend the camp as part of a delegation made up of comrades from Scotland (along with some dear international friends based in England!). It being my first ever time would have made this camp a special occasion all by itself, but there was another, much more personal reason why I was so excited to be taking part: This was going to be my first time living publicly as a woman.

You see, I am a transgender woman. But so far I have been a very cautious and closeted trans woman. I am really early on in my transition, and until recently the only people I have truly been myself around are fellow trans people from the queer movement. And even then, I've only presented as a woman in small gatherings of trusted friends and partners. But I decided that this time, at the camp, I was going to take a leap into the unknown: I was going to dress, present, live as the woman I really am, for the duration of the camp. I was going to introduce myself to my comrades.

It is a general point with me, that I do not take leaps into the unknown very often. I am one of those people who are very easily caught and stuck by indecision when it comes to big choices. I am a woman, but a fearful one. I want to show my face: I want to be known and thought of and spoken to and loved as a woman, but I am afraid. I am a woman, but most of the time I am silent and hidden, buried deep in the closet. So what led me to take a leap, for once?

Two things. Firstly, I was impressed by the [Fourth International](#)'s approach to identity issues. Not just their historical involvement in the feminist movement, but also the ongoing commitment to racial justice, feminism and queer struggle that I could see upheld in the various sections of the international. Of course, historical and programmatic commitments, while inspiring and appealing to a closeted trans woman like me, would not alone have been enough to convince me to bare myself so truthfully and openly.

It was the second thing that was decisive. It might seem small to you, reader, but it was simply getting the chance, a few months before the camp, to meet some members of the Danish section who introduced themselves with they/them pronouns. Here they were, some gender dissidents just like me, clear and queer among their fellow comrades without a worry. It occurred sharply to me, right then and there, that if I was just a little bit braver, I could be like that!

Well, that decided it. With a good deal of panicked, excited sincerity, I told those comrades about myself, I mean really, truly about myself, and told them that I wanted to come out at the camp. They were supportive and cheerful, and looking forward to knowing the real me when we met again in France. And so, I had now committed myself. I won't lie: It was a decision I would worry and fret about as the camp drew near. This was natural, obviously. I was about to come out to about two hundred people, and across multiple language barriers too! Would I get tangled up in explaining myself? Would there be misunderstandings? Would some people turn out to be bigots? I had reason to be more than a little nervous: A depressing number of times in my years on the left, I have seen how easily some supposedly progressive "comrades" have dropped the act and morphed into reactionary dogs when challenged by actually-existing trans people with ideas and opinions.

However, I was also buoyed by a kind of feverish anticipation. The simple prospect of cutting the bullshit, dropping my boyish disguise and being totally honest seemed so radical, so wonderful, so liberating, that I could not wait to get to France. Besides, I knew full well that to be openly myself at the camp was a political commitment, not just a personal one. I am both a militant in a battle for my own civil rights and a socialist, and I feel it is my duty as a transgender socialist to do my best to bring together the causes of trans rights and socialism into one struggle. I firmly believe that the perspectives of trans people are valuable, and that the

socialist movement is lessened by their absence, just as it is lessened by the absence of black perspectives or disabled perspectives. If the patriarchy tries to turn gender into a binary of bitterly opposed frontlines, then gender rebels like me are well positioned to show how these frontlines are vulnerable to permeation, sabotage and mutiny. We cannot be quiet, not when we have so much to give, so much to talk about, so much to teach. And so, I felt compelled to raise my voice: A woman's voice, loud, sharp and liberated.

As the fateful date approached I made some preparations, like telling the other members of the Scottish delegation, and coming out to a few comrades I had already met. Their support and acceptance was a welcome boost, and it really cemented my resolve and confidence to know that they would have my back during the camp. And when, after the long journey down to the campsite, the time finally came to commit to things and reveal my true self, it was good to be able to take the first steps with some help from comrades. I remember, on the first morning of the camp, speaking with my delegation, airing out some last-minute nerves and making absolutely sure that, in the event of any exclusion or bigotry, I could count on them to help me assert my right to be there as the woman I am.

Thankfully though, all that worrying was completely needless. I got so hung up on potential issues and fears, only for them to dissolve the moment I walked out into the sun in a dress and began introducing myself. I don't think I was prepared for how natural it all felt, as if I had been doing this my entire life. Whether it was a comrade who had previously met me as a "boy", or whether it was someone entirely new, things went so smoothly that I was a little bit shocked. But only a little bit, because the dominant emotion I felt was joy – pure, riotous, joy.

This wonderful feeling would develop into a deep sense of fulfilment as the days passed. Yes, as one of a handful of trans women at the camp, I was in an extreme minority, but it

hardly felt that way. On the contrary, the blanket response of my sisters was to welcome and include me, and as I spent time participating in the women's discussion spaces, learning, sharing ideas and helping to plan actions, I came to realise some things: chiefly, that this was the first time I properly felt a part of a women's movement.

I am a feminist. The problem is though, that the feminist movement in Scotland and the UK is in a parlous, disorganised state compared to the women's movement in the rest of the world. Feminism in these gloomy islands can't boast of mass, vibrant, militant women's strikes and demonstrations in the way that Argentinian or Portuguese or Polish or Chilean feminism can. In addition, the feminist movement here is so riven by culture war junk and middle class transphobia, that it feels pretty difficult for a trans woman like me to feel safe or welcome taking part in what little we have. There is that constant worry with the movement back home, a lingering fear that solidarity is something that can easily be revoked when the sister doesn't fit some arbitrary biological or social norm.

I had no such worries among the women at the camp. Here I experienced live, determined, militant sisterhood, a sisterhood ferocious in combat yet caring and inclusive towards its own, a sisterhood committed to mass revolutionary struggle. And I was welcome implicitly, no questions asked! As I sat in meetings surrounded almost totally by cisgender women, I felt utterly at ease, a circumstance which honestly surprised me. I reflected that, were I in a similar setting in the UK, I would be a lot more nervous and on-edge, the familiar fear gnawing at me and making me wonder whether my inclusion might suddenly be subject to withdrawal on some bigot's whim. But here, among revolutionary socialist women, I was as much a woman as any other, a comrade to be loved and supported.

And this love and support helped me realise something else,

too: The sheer difference which living in an honest manner makes to my ability to express emotions. I've long been aware of how enforced masculinity has marked and scarred me in various ways. Throughout childhood, I was conditioned, punished and harassed into acting and thinking like a boy by various forces, whether they be the ways patriarchal society moulds the minds of children to adopt certain gender roles, the way kids learn to laugh at girly "faggots" and "trannies", or the way an overly emotional child is relentlessly bullied for being "soft" and "effeminate", too much of a "crybaby". This prolonged campaign against the personality of the child induces a painful kind of alienation- Confused and afraid, bombarded by the world around you, the easiest response is just to give in and try and fit the role as well as you can, even if it means doing as the oppressor wants and shutting away parts of yourself. Sure, it might make you less of a target, and you might be convinced that it's better to try and be "normal" and "just like the other boys", but it never, ever, feels right. Even though you can't put your finger on what's wrong and why you feel so at odds with yourself, you simply cannot ignore the pain, no matter how much you scream at yourself to shut up and conform. It's hard to be at peace when you're mutilating yourself.

This is something that you gradually confront as you begin to wake up and process the fact that you've been brainwashed, but you really do not realise the extent to which your identity has been dulled by living a lie until the burden of the lie is gone. It's something I've been approaching as I've shared my womanhood with loved and trusted friends, but the scale, duration and public nature of my doing so at the camp, and in front of so many cis people simultaneously, affected me in ways I hadn't prepared for. It shook me, but in the most wonderful way possible. Living so naturally and freely as a woman was like coming home to myself. Suddenly, I was so much less inhibited and so much more confident in expressing my feelings and emotions. Years of self-censorship and self-

scrutiny have led me to mentally check myself in countless ways whenever I'm with other people, but here I didn't need to think about how I acted and expressed myself at all- Everything just flowed naturally.

So here I was, accessing those alienated parts of my personality that had been walled off and hidden by a childhood of having to be a boy. Here I was: A confident, affectionate, goofy, relaxed woman, perfectly at ease among her sisters and comfortable in her own skin. It felt so good to throw all the old defense mechanisms, all the nerves, all the congealed boy shit- in short, all my chains- right into the trash. How lightly you breathe when you aren't chained down!

This is what made the Youth Camp so special for me. I think it speaks to the way that the Camp functions as a space for a kind of pre-figurative politics, a way of testing out some elements of socialism via collective, co-operative living. The ability to express yourself exactly as you wish to at the Camp, there among your fellow militants, is a miniature of that limitless expression of the human personality that will be the right and freedom of everyone under socialism. I may be back in Scotland now, and I may be remaining quite closeted for the time being, but I nevertheless see the camp as marking an important milestone in my transition. It has inspired me, and given me strength and determination. I have had a sample of full, liberated womanhood, and I want it every day of my life. Yes, the world will not always receive me as enthusiastically as my comrades have done, and yes, the struggle for freedom will be long and difficult, but I also know what's at stake and what's to be won, if only I, we, all of us women dare! And I know that it can only be so through collective, revolutionary sisterhood. We will go forward over the corpse of the patriarchy, arms linked and voices raised as one.

*Our bodies, our choice!*

*Every woman a sister, every sister a revolutionary!*

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Sister from Scotland is a [Fourth International](#) supporter.

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<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7813>

<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/being-a-transgender-woman-at-the-international-youth-camp/>

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# The experience of the International Youth camp, an essential political moment!

The International Youth camp took place from 23 to 29 July 2022 in Vieure, France. After two years of suspension due to Covid-19, the gathering is a week of self-managed camp that this year brought together more than 200 young revolutionaries from different parts of Europe, but also from Ukraine, Russia, Brazil and Mexico to celebrate the 37th edition of the youth camps of the [Fourth International](#).

This annual camp is dedicated to indepth discussion of different themes, to the sharing of our local and international struggles and to the developing of common strategies and actions. Each day is divided into several parts. The mornings are reserved for plenary educationals on themes such as ecosocialism, feminist and LGBTQIA+ struggles, imperialism, anti-racism, anti-fascism, class struggle as

youth and strategic approaches. This year we had guests such as Andreas Malm (Socialistiska Partiet, Sweden), Olivia Borchmann (SUF, Denmark), Julien Salingue (NPA, France), Laurent Sorel, (Gauche Éco-Socialiste, ex Ensemble Insoumis, France), Marta Autore (Comunia, Italy) and Jonathan Simmel (SUF, Denmark)

The afternoons are mainly aimed at highlighting specific concepts or situations arising from the theme of the plenary. They consist of concrete workshops on different struggles, inter-delegation meetings to deepen our international knowledge and share strategies of struggle, but also non-mixed spaces for self-organisation of feminist, LGBTQIA+ and anti-racist struggles. In order to build and elaborate a real internationalist struggle, standing commissions on the Russian imperialist war in Ukraine and ecosocialism today were also on the agenda. A [declaration in solidarity with the resistance of the Ukrainian people](#) was also adopted.

Throughout the busy stay, the camp also remains a place for practising self-management where young activists manage the different daily tasks from cleaning to multilingual interpretation. There are also voluntary tasks such as the awareness team (to deal with conflicts or personal concerns) or the care team (which acts as a preventative measure and ensures the well-being of everyone) that allow us to make the space as safe as possible and to carry out certain tasks around care.

This kind of political practice is even more indispensable in a materialist perspective. The neoliberal capitalist system in which we live shapes our thinking; in other words, our consciousness is constructed according to the world around us. Throughout the year we fight this system, even when the revolution seems far away, we know that the struggle is permanent and on all fronts. For many participants, far from being a utopian space outside the system, the camp, by its organization and structure, allows us to have a foretaste of a

self-managed internationalist communist solidarity society requiring perpetual adjustments in order to ensure the proper functioning of community life. Indeed, during meetings between FI youth delegates in preparation for the camp, the camp is constantly redefined each year on the basis of previous criticisms. The camp is organized by the member organizations or those close to the Fourth International in Europe, and its construction is ongoing and international.

This political moment is an essential exercise that acts as a catalyst facilitating the sharing of experiences, a festive atmosphere and above all a true spirit of camaraderie. The experience of the youth camp is essential in the construction of tomorrow's anti-capitalist, ecosocialist, feminist, queer, anti-racist, anti-fascist and internationalist society.

*Translated by [International Viewpoint](https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7766) from [Gauche Anticapitaliste](https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7766) Originally published at: <https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7766>*

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**“Total, BP or Shell will not voluntarily give up their profits. We have to become stronger than them...”**  
**Interview with Andreas Malm**

Andreas Malm is a Swedish ecosocialist activist and author of several books on fossil capital, global warming and the need to change the course of events initiated by the burning of fossil fuels over the last two centuries of capitalist

development. The Jeunes Anticapitalistes (the youth branch of the [Gauche Anticapitaliste](#), the Belgian section of the Fourth International) met him at the 37th Revolutionary Youth Camp organized in solidarity with the [Fourth International](#) in France this summer, where he was invited as a speaker.

**As left-wing activists in the climate movement, we sometimes feel stuck by what can be seen as a lack of strategic perspectives within the movement. How can we radicalize the climate movement and why does the movement need a strategic debate in your opinion?**

I share the feeling, but of course it depends on the local circumstances – this Belgian “Code Red” action, this sort of *Ende Gelände* or any similar kind of thing, sounds promising to me, but you obviously know much more about it than I do. In any case, the efforts to radicalize the climate movement and let it grow can look different in different circumstances.

One way is to try to organize this kind of big mass actions of the *Ende Gelände* type, and I think that’s perhaps the most useful thing we can do. But of course, there are also sometimes opportunities for working within movements like Fridays for Future or Extinction Rebellion for that matter and try to pull them in a progressive direction as well as to make them avoid making tactical mistakes and having an apolitical discourse. In some places, I think that this strategy can be successful. Of course, one can also consider forming new more radical climate groups that might initially be pretty small, but that can be more radical in terms of tactics and analysis, and sort of pull others along, or have a “radical flank” effect. So, I don’t have one model for how to do this – it really depends on the state of the movement in the community where you live and obviously the movement has ups and downs (it went quite a lot down recently after the outbreak of the pandemic, but hopefully we’ll see it move back up).

Finally, it’s obviously extremely important to have our own political organizations that kind of act as vessels for

continuity and for accumulating experiences, sharing them and exchanging ideas. Our own organizations can also be used as platforms for taking initiatives within movements or together with movements.

**For some of us, our first big climate action was during the COP 15 in 2009 in Copenhagen. Now we are in 2022 – what do you think are the lessons that the climate movement has learned since then?**

The COP 15 in Copenhagen was a turning point. I was very active in the run-up to COP 15 and was part of the group that organized the big demonstration there. But the sense that most of us had in the movement after COP 15 was a general sense of failure. Of course, the COP itself was a massive failure, but we also realized that the demonstrations and direct actions didn't really have an impact. The movement realized that the focus on the COP summits that we had had up until then didn't really make sense at all, and it was largely after that that you saw a decisive turn towards opposition to fossil fuel projects, blockades, climate camps and things like that.

I think that this strategic turn will have to be reinforced, particularly given the fact that this year's COP will be held in Egypt and next year's COP will be held in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. These two countries are both completely inhospitable to dissent – it's impossible to organize anything on the ground there and so this is different from the most recent COP happening in Glasgow. The climate movement will have to organize things in other places – we can't bring activists to Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt, this resort town where the summit will happen. So, these two upcoming COPs should be occasions for the movement to pull off mass actions at various places around the world at that time, targeting fossil fuel projects.

I was at the COP 26 in Glasgow last November. Again, there was a very big demonstration – something like 100,000 people, –

again, there was an alternative “people’s forum”, and I had a sense of déjà vu. This is something that we’ve been doing for a long time and it doesn’t really get us anywhere. One very brilliant comrade in the climate movement in Portugal, João Camargo, expressed in discussions around Glasgow and in a piece he wrote that we need to decisively turn our backs on the COP process because it’s so useless. As I said, the upcoming two COPs really should be just an opportunity to escalate the struggle in which we engage regardless of COPs.

**Carrying on with the strategic and tactical issues, in your talk the other day you mentioned the question of the role of the workers and the workers’ movement as they are (and they are obviously very different in the different countries). You elaborate a lot on how to block the most destructive fossil infrastructures and companies; how do you see that in relation to the workers – not only in these sectors but more generally – and the workers’ movement as you know it – be it the Swedish example or other countries?**

I think I phrased this a bit unfortunately the other day and I came across as too dismissive of trade unions. That wasn’t really my intention. My concrete experience over the past few years in relation to trade unions has been pretty limited, but my sort of horizon is northern European and in Sweden the trade unions are completely indifferent to the climate issue probably more so than in even in Norway and Denmark. Swedish unions are totally ignorant and uninterested and also totally incapable of putting up a fight for their members interests. We have no strikes in Sweden any longer. This is probably an exception rather than the rule, but the level of class struggle in Sweden is so low that from my point of view it’s extremely hard to imagine that all of a sudden organized labor in Sweden would rise to the occasion and become an important player in climate politics.

In Germany, which is where I have a little bit more concrete experience of climate activism to an extent, the situation is

a little bit more complicated. On the one hand, with the Fridays for Future movement in 2019, which was stronger and larger in Germany than anywhere else, you had a moment in the autumn of 2019 when you had a trade union component to these strikes and the big public sector union called on its members to join. On the other hand, you have a very negative experience from the struggle around coal in Germany – which is really a key struggle in the whole European field of climate politics – where the big trade unions have resisted calls for an immediate or even early phase-out of coal and have been very retrograde in clinging to coal.

Out of this experience a position has emerged that has been articulated by my dear friend and comrade Tadzio Müller, who has been sort of a key organizer, strategist and thinker of Ende Gelände. He now almost says that he considers the working class in the global North to be more or less part of the enemy – he thinks that the organized working class is so invested in the existing economy that it will just defend coal and similar things like it has in general. Then there is an opposite position which is very forcefully articulated by another friend in common, Matt Huber, in his recent book *Climate Change as Class War. Building Socialism on a Warming Planet*: he says that the only hope for climate politics is to activate the forces of organized labor and that it's only by turning towards the working class – including by taking jobs in the industry, something like the old industrial turn that we had in the 80s – that we can make any progress on the climate front. So the organized working class is the only conceivable subject of a climate revolution. So these are like polar opposites and here I find myself advocating a kind of centrist position between these two. I cannot accept the idea that the working class is part of the enemy – not even coal workers – but on the other hand I don't really believe in the idea that organized labor will be the prime mover of the climate front. I think the prime mover of the climate struggle will be and is a climate movement that isn't defined around class. I think

there are three routes for someone to be interested in the question of climate: 1) having some kind of personal experience of adverse weather which is becoming more and more common; 2) having knowledge of the severity of the crisis without having personally experienced it, which isn't very hard to get by and doesn't require a PhD or any university degree; 3) being animated by solidarity with people who suffer from climate disasters around the world. I would think that these are the three main routes into the commitment to climate struggle and none of these routes necessarily pass through the point of production. So it's potentially a funnel that draws people into the climate movement from various points along the landscape of class society.

The movement that emerged in 2019 was largely defined not along the lines of class or race or gender, but rather of age. It was primarily a youth phenomenon – with Fridays for Future in particular – and there is a logic to that because the climate crisis has a very distinct temporal aspect: it's young people who will have to deal with this through the rest of their lives while old people have perhaps benefited from the fossil economy and won't see as much of the damage. I think this needs to be theorized and to an extent accepted and understood that the age component of the climate struggle will be significant in the coming mobilizations. I think that Matt Huber and others who argue along similar lines as he does are correct insofar as the climate movement needs an alliance with the working class and with segments of organized labor to amass sufficient strength to turn these things around. The climate movement has to make sure that its politics are compatible with working class interests and can converge with those interests. But that's something else than putting all eggs in the basket of an industrial turn or proletarianization of the climate movement, which I think would be a strategic dead-end. Now the promise of the Green New Deal and of all these kinds of initiatives that we've seen in recent years – which haven't come to fruition unfortunately, but that doesn't

mean that they're useless or doomed – that the climate transition goes hand in hand with improving the standards of living for workers and strengthening the bargaining power in the political position of the working class is something that needs to be pursued further.

When it comes to the concrete tactical questions about relating to workers when you are having a blockade, again, from the German experience I think it would be a massive mistake – a workerist error if you like – to prioritize good relations with the coal workers over having an effective blockade that temporarily damages the interests of these workers because you close their mines for a few days or something like that. There have been numerous initiatives to try to establish contact and dialogue with coal workers in Germany and it's been very unsuccessful, particularly in the east where the coal workers rather tend to move towards the far right – the Alternative für Deutschland, AfD – as a defense of their interests because the AfD wants to continue with coal forever and doesn't believe in the existence of the climate crisis. Then again, we definitely shouldn't give up on the idea that the type of transition we want to see has to ensure that workers in sectors that have to be dismantled completely get equivalent or better jobs, preferably in the places where they live so they don't have to move. This should be a key component of the transition. But eventually you can't expect workers in the fossil fuel industry itself to take the initiative for closing down that industry – it's a basic Marxist insight that their immediate day-to-day class interest is of course to keep their jobs. So the initiative to close that industry down has to come from the outside and the blockade is a manifestation of this: we're coming from the outside and we want to shut this sector down because it's necessary. But you don't want to make these workers your enemies and you don't want to consider them the enemy – you want to tell them that unfortunately they are employed in a sector that has to be shut down but that we are demanding that

the transition ensures that they get equivalent or better jobs where they live.

I really felt the mistake I made the other day – coming across as too dismissive of the trade unions – when I was at this workshop about eco-unionism, where I heard several cases – some of them I knew about – of workers in factories actually proposing a conversion of their production. We've had a comrade in the Swedish section of the Fourth International (FI) who has been doing absolutely heroic work in the metal workers' union in the auto industry for decades; he has been trying to establish the idea that auto workers can save their jobs by proposing a conversion of their plants to something like electrical boxes or wind turbines or whatever it is that could be used for the for the transition. Unfortunately, he just hasn't made any progress because he's so isolated and the trade union bureaucracy has such complete control. I have sort of followed his efforts for two decades, and he's banging his head against the wall of trade union bureaucracy trying to get somewhere with this idea. I've sort of lost faith in it because it hasn't produced any results; but in cases where it does produce results, I'm obviously extremely excited and happy to be proven wrong. Nothing would make me happier than the spreading of these kinds of examples of workers in factories having ideas about the transition.

**A glimpse of hope from Belgium then. It's not like the trade unions are very green and climate friendly – well, they say they are but in reality they're not, as demonstrated for instance by their position in favor of the extension of the airport in Liège to build a hub for Alibaba's activities in Europe – but still, in the 2019 Youth for Future movement, we saw a new group called Workers for Climate that was created by grassroots and left-wing unionists. What's more, the main unions – including the bureaucracies – sent delegations to the demonstrations, and the most progressive wings of the CSC union, organizing for instance the retail workers but also the**

aviation branch, officially covered the workers who would strike. It's very symbolic, but still it was made public and the workers received the information that they could go on strike and be covered by the union.

This is a universe away from Sweden, it would never happen there – but it's great!

Another thing: in the Belgian public transport sector, there is a real interest in the climate issue. This reminds of the [statement by Naomi Klein](#) that railway workers on strike are actually struggling for climate. There may be some sectors of the working class and some unions in some countries that could more easily be reached regarding the climate issue.

My limited understanding of Belgium is that you still have a fairly significant industrial manufacturing sector and a working class that every now and then engages in some serious battle for its interests. So you have some class struggle happening in Belgium – we have nothing in Sweden, absolutely nothing! But where there is class struggle happening, of course the potential exists for workers themselves taking initiatives or for the climate movement drawing them in or for convergence or productive interaction, and this should be taken up. It's exclusively a question of the level of intensity of the class struggle. At the COP 26 for instance, there was this strike happening in Glasgow by garbage collectors, and Greta Thunberg approached them and expressed her support for their strike, and they joined the big march. That's just one example of how these things can play out. Sweden is perhaps an extreme case, but the problem is that generally I think that the intensity of working class struggles is very low compared to what it was in the 80s, 70s, 60s – not to mention of course the 1920s. If the climate issue had exploded in the 1950s and 60s, it could have played out completely differently. Now it has exploded in a moment of doldrums where the working class is historically quite weak.

One last example of how at some point we could find another potential, in Belgium at least: during the last general strike before the pandemic, in February 2019, the airspace was shut down and there were no flights at all for 24 hours. This shows what unions are still able to do and how they could potentially change things for real. On another note: now there is a huge energy crisis which is also part of the reason why there is a very high inflation in several countries, and this is a major topic which is being discussed within the labor movement in general and which also mobilizes people to demonstrate. Could there be a point of convergence here, where we can easily highlight the need to solve the energy crisis for environmental reasons as well as for social reasons?

Absolutely. I guess that two demands should be efficient in that situation. First, roll out renewables as fast as possible, also because they're now cheaper than fossil fuels actually, so the cost of a unit of electricity is lower if it comes from wind and solar than if it comes from any fossil fuel in Europe. There should be massive public investments in order to deploy renewables as fast as possible. Secondly, in this situation of rising energy prices, it should be seen as fundamentally perverse that private oil and gas companies are swimming in these insane superprofits and you should be able to whip up some kind of public anger about these.

Definitely. In France – but probably also elsewhere – there has been a proposal from the parliamentary Left to implement a special tax on these profits – and even a limited number of Macron's MPs, who usually act as loyal soldiers for his authoritarian neoliberalism, seem to be inclined to agree on this idea. Now these are immediate demands, but you also put forward transitional demands to be taken up by the climate movement, i.e. demands that enter in direct contradiction with the ongoing capital accumulation. What are some of these demands?

One of them is the demand for not a single additional fossil

fuel installation or infrastructure. This can apply to an airport, a highway or a gas terminal or oil pipeline among other things. Another transitional demand – and obviously none of this is my invention, it's something that is being discussed more and more – is nationalizing the private energy companies and taking over oil and gas and coal companies and forcing them to do something different, to stop their extraction of fossil fuels as fast as humanly possible and perhaps instead roll out renewable energy or even engage in carbon dioxide removal – that means taking down CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere in one way or another. But these are only two dimensions, they are not the only ones and again, it depends on where you find yourself. In some countries, the oil and gas and coal sectors are already nationalized – there, you would have to formulate this differently.

**You mentioned carbon dioxide removal (CDR), which is a great opportunity to discuss geoengineering. You warn a lot about solar geoengineering and Naomi Klein also does, and we can fully understand why when we see the nightmare it could be when we read or hear about that. Yet in the media in general there is not much writing about that – then again, you say you fear that it might come out all at once – and we seem to hear much more about carbon dioxide removal. Why is that? What's your take on solar geoengineering? And what's your take on carbon dioxide removal – given the state of things now, is it becoming unavoidable as a necessary yet insufficient part of the solution, to be deployed next to massive reductions of emissions?**

This is a massive field which we can talk about for hours. I have a research project on this topic with a Belgian colleague from Lund university, who is also a friend and comrade, Wim Carton. We have a research grant and this coming autumn we will do research with a whole team of interns – made up of students from my Master's program in human ecology – on various aspects of carbon dioxide removal. We will write a

book with Verso in the spring, which would be about both carbon dioxide removal and solar geoengineering and whose working title right now is Overshoot. Climate Politics When It's Too Late. I spent the past couple of months writing about solar geoengineering and trying to understand it. This might sound bizarre but I'm trying to use psychoanalysis to understand solar geoengineering because it has the component of repressing a problem as in the Freudian model of repression, where you push something out of the conscious so that it appears not to exist, but under the surface it's bubbling and sooner or later it explodes.

CDR and solar geoengineering need to be distinguished as they work in different ways. You're absolutely right that solar geoengineering isn't much talked about. Some vulgar Marxists have sort of anticipated that big fossil fuel companies would promote solar geoengineering as a way continuing with business-as-usual. That has not happened: neither ExxonMobil nor any other big fossil company say anything about solar geoengineering, nor is there any government that's advocating it and there's no far right party advocating it – although during the Trump era there was this expectation that he would soon flip over into advocating solar geoengineering, none of that has happened. On the contrary, carbon dioxide removal, which works very differently, is something that all the big oil and gas companies say that they are planning on doing as part of their net zero propaganda, and you can see far right parties – someone here on this camp mentioned Berlusconi the other day – advocating in favor of planting trees and things like that, and there are also a lot of startups and capitalist companies who see carbon dioxide removal – perhaps particularly direct air capture – as a new line of business where you can produce commodities and make profit from them. So you have this sort of the burgeoning field of business opportunities in CDR that doesn't exist in solar geoengineering because that doesn't produce any new commodities that you can sell.

There are many differences between them but another one is that CDR, just as you suggested, is going to be necessary because the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is already too high. We need to get CO<sub>2</sub> down from the atmosphere, back under the ground, locked into subsurface storage – where it was originally before it was taken out in the form of fossil fuels and set on fire. The only way to do that on a massive scale seems to be to use some kind of advanced technology – planting trees is not going to be enough because you can't return carbon to the passive part of the carbon cycle, under the ground, just by planting trees. Planting trees affects the active carbon cycle, but to get it back sequestered under the ground, where it's locked out geologically from the active carbon cycle, you need something else. A technology like direct air capture has promise in this respect because it can actually capture CO<sub>2</sub> and mineralize it, so you turn it into stone under the ground.

There are now plants on Iceland doing that and it's essentially a proven technology, but the problem there in our analysis – Wim and I wrote an article about this in Historical Materialism – is that this technology is being captured by private interests who don't see any profits potential in taking the carbon and burying it underground, because that means that you essentially put a resource out of the business cycle. What they can do instead to make profit is to capture the CO<sub>2</sub> and turn it into a product such as synthetic jet fuel or they can use it in fertilizers or capture CO<sub>2</sub> and sell it as fizz to Coca-Cola – this is what Climeworks, one of the big direct air capture companies, does. When you use it as a commodity, then you can make a profit, but that's just recycling the carbon because it doesn't actually put it under the ground. So if you want to put it under the ground you need to sort of liberate this technology from the compulsion to make profit – that's our view.

Solar geoengineering on the other hand is a very different

story because it comes with so many dangers of messing with the climate system. The biggest risk, of course, is what is known as the termination shock: if you do solar geoengineering, you have this sunscreen but you continue to build up CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere; what happens is that all of this CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is just waiting to exercise its radiative forcing – its impact on the climate; – so if the sunscreen is taken down for some reason, boom, all of a sudden this accumulated CO<sub>2</sub> creates an enormous rise in temperatures. (Picture boiling water on which you put a lid and it continues to boil, it burns hotter and hotter, and then you take away the lid and the whole boiling water comes out of the pot.) That could lead to the most unimaginably disastrous spike in temperatures and there are all sorts of other dangers with geoengineering. Therefore, solar geoengineering isn't something that people on the left should advocate for, and here I part company with someone like Kim Stanley Robinson for instance. He's a novelist who wrote a great novel called *The Ministry for the Future*, probably the best climate fiction so far, but he advocates in favor of solar geoengineering – which forms a big part of that book – from sort of a left-wing perspective. A colleague of mine, Holly Jean Buck, does the same thing in the US: she's written about solar geoengineering, and she says that this is something that the left should look upon as a potentially useful technology.

I don't think it is useful, I don't think we should ever advocate it, but we should prepare for it because it's so likely that it will start; the likeliness does not come from any aggressive sponsorship, so far like we said it's almost never talked about, but there is a logic to it which is that there is only one known technology that has a potential to immediately reduce temperatures on earth. Carbon dioxide removal would have effect over decades, and likewise, if we were to stop emissions now you wouldn't see a drop in temperatures – you would see the temperatures rising more slowly and then perhaps flattening out. If you are in a

situation where you feel we are in a total emergency and we have to do something and reduce temperatures, the only thing you can do to accomplish that is to shoot sulfate clouds into the atmosphere. It's the only known technological option for doing this. With every summer, with every new season of disasters, my feeling is OK, when will the order be given to implement geoengineering? When will things break, when will the system snap and when will there be a sudden real sense of emergency that – as in during the pandemic – we have to do something and when will there be this moment where governments start looking around: “what can we do? The American West is on fire”, or becoming a desert, or the entire Europe is burning or whatever? And then there is only one thing you can do.

If we are in such a moment and the planes take off, I'm not saying we should for instance shoot down those planes or sabotage them or something like that. But we should think about what a left strategy in such a moment would be because it looks increasingly likely for strictly logical structural reasons. There are more and more signs that part of the sort of bourgeois intelligentsia is moving towards this. For instance, there is a think tank called the Paris Peace Forum which aspires to be like the World Economic Forum in geopolitics – they have put together a commission on overshoot which is chaired by Pascal Lamy who was previously chairing the WTO, and he said a few months back that we need to look into geoengineering, that there is no other way... You know this guy?

**Yes, he is or used to be a neoliberal member of the Social-Democrats in France, he was EU commissioner for trade and then he went to the WTO...**

Right. Another sign is that about a year ago the US National Academy of Sciences put out a long report advocating a national research program into geoengineering, and I think that it's far more likely that Biden and the Democrats initiate moves towards this than Trump and the Republicans. So

this is something to closely monitor and prepare for.

This leads us to the question about the state. Many people and many leftists say that the climate and more generally the ecological disaster is a reason why we need to take up the question of the state and not only focus on something like local alternative societies, because it's so global and so bad and it will require so many investments and decisions and so on, that you need to find something as a state to act. But then of course there is the question of what kind of state we are thinking of. You talk about it a bit in in your book on the pandemic – it would be interesting to explore that question.

Fundamentally, I think that the observation is correct that this crisis, however it's dealt with, is going to be dealt with by the state. Solar geoengineering would be an incredibly extreme intervention into the whole planetary system and it would be carried out by some states. Carbon dioxide removal on a large scale obviously requires massive involvement from the state. Emissions reductions also require the state because the reductions will have to be so big and quick and comprehensive that no other agent than the state can conceivably do it. Here we should point out that all scientists who advocate carbon dioxide removal and/or solar geoengineering are perfectly clear that none of this will work without massive emissions reductions. Those who advocate solar geoengineering nowadays never say that we can do this instead of emissions reductions, they say that we have to do both at the same time; the question is "is it really likely that both happen at the same time?" They think so, I think that's an optimistic illusion. What I mean here is that there is no serious way out of the climate crisis without massive emissions reductions, and they have to be extraordinarily fast and deep and radical.

Now in whichever path states follow, I think states will undergo changes into their character. If you have a state that is implementing solar geoengineering, that state will become

extremely powerful because it will rule the climate of the planet, so you would have all sorts of dangers of authoritarianism and extremely centralized control over climatic conditions in other parts of the world. There are all sorts of scenarios: solar geoengineering might cause monsoon failure in India or some other very bad side effect somewhere in the global South. But the state that does geoengineering – it could be the US for instance – will probably continue regardless and thereby exercise incredibly centralized power over humanity.

Now a state that undertakes massive emissions reductions could also change character. it might be authoritarian because it needs very forceful steering of the economy and of society if you're going to have these rapid emissions reductions. But there could also of course be a deepening of the democratic substance of that state: for instance if you nationalize private fossil fuel companies, what you do is that you essentially extend the democracy to the sphere of energy production. In other words, you put it under public control and take one sector of the economy into the hands of the democratic polity, which in a way pushes against the limits of bourgeois democracy which says that democracy is this strictly political sphere and that the economy is a sphere that runs itself and should not be intruded. If you take over the energy sector and put it inside the political sphere then you sort of extend democracy into the economy. I think that a real transition requires this kind of deepening of democracy and that it can take on potentially something like a rupture, a revolutionary change in the sense that if you are ever going to accomplish this you probably have to defeat a very important part of the class enemy because it's not like Total or BP or Shell will voluntarily give up and say "OK, take our companies and we will never again have any profits and we're just going out of business and dying voluntarily". That's not how it works usually in history. So if we are going to accomplish that, we need to become stronger than them which is

a very tall order because they are so much stronger than us right now. So we need to become stronger than them and if we were to defeat them, then that doesn't necessarily mean total social revolution but it's a change in property relations that could perhaps set in motion a process that goes beyond the current order of things.

**Apart from the question of the state and of local initiatives, there is the question of the role of the individual. There is an important, frequent narrative put forward by corporations and governments that it's essentially the responsibility of the individuals to solve the ecological disaster, but there is also sometimes pressure in the activist circles to live and act differently and maybe sometimes even to solve this question by individual or small changes on the scale of the individual or the community. What is your impression about this?**

It is a question that always pops up and that we struggle with all the time. Generally, I think it's important to point out that individual lifestyle changes will never be the solution and that what you can do as an individual has extremely limited effect. Buying into this whole narrative that I as a consumer can change things by shopping differently is to capitulate to a bourgeois narrative about society that is fundamentally false. First of all, you as a consumer can affect extremely limited change on your own. And you acting as a consumer is fundamentally unequal in the sense that it's the richest consumer that has the most influence: you don't want to base your politics on your affluence. A working-class consumer might have no capacity – or no time – to buy the more expensive, more ecologically sustainable alternative. Bill McKibben was at my university once and he was asked the question “what's the most important thing I can do as an individual?” and he said “stop being an individual, join with others and do things together, that's the only way to change things”, and that's correct.

On the other hand, the idea that what you do as an individual doesn't matter at all is the opposite mistake. This isn't about impact but it's about credibility: if we advocate ecological war communism or a total transformation of society, it would be hypocritical of me or anyone arguing along these lines to make no changes in their own lifestyles and just go on flight binges or eat endless amounts of meat for instance. Saying that it doesn't matter what I do as an individual so I can do anything but I'm all for a total change of society is not a way to make yourself credible. You need to practice what you preach just at least a little bit.

Now there is this saying by Adorno which you might have heard: "there is no good life in a bad one", which is sometimes translated as "there is no right life in a wrong one". To me, this means that if you're stuck inside in a system that is fundamentally rotten it's extremely difficult for you to purify or purge yourself and live in a completely sustainable fashion. That's virtually impossible, unless you go out and live on your own as a hunter-gatherer in the forest to escape from the dirt of capitalist industrial civilization. We cannot strive for complete purity, it's impossible because you want to be part of society and you want to affect change in that society – you don't want to stand isolated outside of it. And as long as you're inside of it, which again is a prerequisite for changing it, then you have to make concessions to the society in which you live. This has always been the situation with our struggles: the workers have a relation of dependence to their employers and receive wages from their employers; they fight against their employers but they're still in a relation of dependence and can't just escape that dependence. In the same way, we are locked into a system that makes us consumers of fossil fuels and we can't just parachute out of it completely.

This means for each and one of us that we need to negotiate this in our own lives and make decisions balancing what's the

right thing to do. And here the thing that most often comes up is flying because that's the worst thing you can do as a private consumer in terms of emissions, and it's also an act that is hard to resist sometimes because for instance if you want to go to North America for some reason – there might be a political reason for you to go there – then there is no other option than flying. Last December I needed to go to Egypt because that's a country I have connections to. And for the first time in human history you can't get on a boat on the northern Mediterranean and cross to the southern Mediterranean – there are no boats to Egypt! That's bizarre because that's how people have traveled for millennia for instance between Egypt and Italy – but it's not there any longer because an entire capitalist society has enforced aviation is the only mode of transportation that is available. What do I do then? Do I sit home and say I can't go to Egypt because there are only flights? No, that's not what I did, I took a flight to go there. On the contrary, when I discussed about how I were to come here to this camp [in central France], I was first told that speakers are asked to take the cheapest transportation to the camp, which in my case would have meant flying here but that wouldn't have felt right – I try to avoid flying within Europe. And then I was alerted to the bus of the Danish delegation leaving from Copenhagen, so of course I took the Danish bus because that's a much better thing to do. But I think that there is no general rule for how to deal with these things in individual lives other than try to avoid excessive emissions and try to avoid emissions-intensive choices when possible. Of course you have to weigh this against other factors – the political projects you're involved in or family affiliations and so on. In any case, we need to abandon first the idea that my individual actions are what's going to change society and secondly the idea that you can become pure and free of sin and guilt in this society.

**In [your interview](#) with Stathis Kouvélakis for Hors-Série, you added another argument about how consumers don't have control**

**about how things are produced, about the global chains of production and so on, and that's another important issue for us as Marxists.**

Yes, for instance the steel sector which is crucial when it comes to emissions – there is no way that a consumer of final products really can make an impact on choices in the steel sector because steel is an input into other commodities, and as a consumer when you buy a car or whatever it is you don't get into contact with the steel industry directly, you cannot boycott it.

**One word on Sweden where you come from. What's the state of the climate or ecological movement besides Greta Thunberg and what are the challenges for the Left in the country?**

Well, Greta is an anomaly because the climate movement in Sweden is extremely weak. Sweden is generally a graveyard for social movements and Greta became famous in Sweden because she first became famous in Europe. She was kind of discovered by the Swedish media all of a sudden – “so there's this Swedish girl who's becoming very famous in Europe so we need to cover her here as well”. But Fridays for Future as a movement was always weaker in Sweden than in Denmark, not to mention Germany or even Belgium. We never reached the stage where you were – at some point in late 2019 there were a couple of fairly big demonstrations in Stockholm but still far from the influence and the magnitude seen in other countries. There are initiatives here and there. At the time this interview is published there will have been a small scale Ende Gelände type of thing in late August against a cement company on Gotland, an island to the east of Sweden. There was a massive flop in early June: an attempt by activists in Stockholm – I was part of it in the beginning – to establish a campaign called “Pull the Plug” during a summit which took place in early June and didn't receive any media attention. The summit was called “Stockholm+50” because in 1972 there was an important UNEP summit there that was sort of a milestone in the development

of international environmental politics – so the idea was that 50 years later, the Swedish government and UN would have a 50 year anniversary summit. We wanted to make actions at the same time, but the only thing that eventually happened was a march between various apartments where CEOs of oil and gas companies and banks in Sweden were living. We were going their outside of their apartments, burning some Bengal fires, chanting and so on – a great idea, but there were only 100 people. 100 people after half a year of attempts at mobilizing: a complete failure. Embarrassing even.

And then there is the question of the Left. There is the Left Party, which is the former Communist Party, and our FI section dissolved itself as a party – we used to be the Socialist Party and now we are called Socialist Politics – largely to be able to work inside the Left Party. Now the Left Party has a new chairwoman since a couple of years, Mehrnoosh Dadgostar, who goes by the name Nooshi. She has abandoned the climate politics of her predecessor Jonas Sjöstedt. He was an auto worker who used to work at the Volvo plant in Umeå in northern Sweden and was very close to some of our FI comrades because the largest metal workers union in northern Sweden is led by members of the Swedish section. He sort of started the process of inviting us into the Left Party in the years when Podemos and Syriza were interesting left-wing forces. He wanted to open up the Left Party and make it more that kind of party and suggested that we work together. He had a personal commitment to climate politics and he made it a profile issue of the Left Party. But Nooshi's strategic project is to win over working class voters from the Sweden Democrats – the far right – back to the Left Party. Now I'm simplifying a bit but she kind of has the idea that the working class is essentially the white working class in old industrial or postindustrial towns in rural areas, and that in order to win back these voters from the Sweden Democrats we have to tone down our climate politics and our anti-racism. Our current – Socialist Politics – and quite a few others within the Left Party are of course

dissatisfied with this turn – this is a controversial line that she has taken. She's styling herself as an old-fashioned Social Democrat, very pro-industry – she likes to go to construction sites and put a helmet on and take photographs of herself posing as a worker, this kind of workerist attitude...

**This sounds similar to the short-lived experience of Sahra Wagenknecht's Aufstehen in Germany.**

Yes, it is that sort of thing. You have this tension all the time: should we be against "identity politics" and just go for hardcore class issues or should we have a broader understanding of class and the revolutionary subject. And unfortunately she has a very clear tendency towards the former position in this debate.

**One last word about Code Rouge, the action we've already mentioned at the beginning of the interview. As Gauche Anticapitaliste, we are members of a quite large coalition – with organizations such as Greenpeace for instance – which is planning an important action of civil disobedience in the beginning of October. The goal is to block a big infrastructure from Total...**

Oh, wonderful!

**We agree with you! (Total bought the main Belgian oil company Petrofina 20 years ago by the way.) We aim at mobilizing more than 1,000 activists for this action. It's really ambitious – we would like to accomplish something like Ende Gelände, which is very inspiring. We are working hard to make it a success...**

Do you have dates for this action already? Where will it be? Is there a website?

**Yes, it will take place during the weekend of 8-9 October. There is a website which is <https://code-rouge.be/> (in French and Dutch). The place has not been disclosed yet – we'll disclose it at the last moment to have more chances of success**

**in this confrontational action.**

Of course, it makes sense. Perfect! Unfortunately I can't make it on these dates, but if I could I would definitely join!

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# **Solidarity with Ukrainian and Russian resistance to the war – Statement of 37th Fourth International youth camp**

*Having met this week with Ukrainian and Russian socialists committed to the defeat of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we, activists gathered at the 37th international revolutionary youth camp in solidarity with the [Fourth international](#) in Vieuve (France) from the 23rd until the 29th of July 2022, declare our opposition to Russia's imperialist war in Ukraine.*

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine since the 24th of February 2022 marks a clear escalation of the war which had been going on since 2014 in the country. It is aimed at satisfying Great Russian expansionism; it has resulted in numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity; tens of thousands of Ukrainians have already been killed, 15 million have been forced to flee their homes and many of them had to seek refuge abroad. The immediate withdrawal of Russian troops is necessary to stop the sufferings and ensure the democratic

self-determination of the people in Ukraine.

We express our solidarity with the Ukrainian people who are the victims of this unjustified assault and support their resistance against the invading and occupying power. We also stand in solidarity with opposition to the war as expressed by Russian activists, many of them having had to flee abroad to escape the authoritarianism of Putin's regime. We remind Europe that this regime is hailed by many far-right movements which have been on the rise throughout the continent.

We warn against any direct inter-imperialist war between NATO and Russia, all the while striving for the defeat of the Russian invasion. A nuclear conflict would be a disaster the world has only had horrifying glimpses of before.

We call for the cancellation of all Ukrainian foreign debt held by Western powers as well as international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. This debt has only helped develop a neoliberal regime of capitalist accumulation in Ukraine at the expense of the Ukrainian working class. Freeing these funds would help Ukraine resist the Russian assault and rebuild the country without the interference of Western neoliberal markets.

So far, the sanctions have targeted a limited number of members of the Russian ruling class; they clearly are ineffective in stopping the war.

Furthermore, Western companies continue to trade military components with Russia. We support the expropriation of Russian millionaires' assets in foreign banks and their redistribution to rebuild Ukraine and support the victims of the war. This requires an international public register of wealth; such a register would also be a necessary first step to impose any meaningful tax on the capitalists of our own countries to make them pay for the economic and social crisis which the war in Ukraine has aggravated while allowing for

even more delirious profits for capitalists such as in the spheres of energy and arms sales.

We thank our Ukrainian comrades from [Sotsialniy Rukh](#) for dedicating time to come to this camp and share their experiences; we will stay in solidarity with them and with our Russian comrades to contribute to the defeat of the Russian invasion in any way we can and help rebuild an independent and democratic Ukraine. We hope our exchanges and discussions during and after this camp can help inspire a world free of military blocks and all neo-colonial relations.

29 July 2022

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# Building revolutionary tenderness: Chronicles of the 37th Revolutionary Youth Camp in France

*Between July 23 and 29, around 200 young people gathered to celebrate the 37th edition of the Revolutionary Youth Camp organised by the Fourth International in Vieure (France). After almost three years since the last camp, the hope, motivation and emotion of returning to share self-managed spaces of camaraderie, support and mutual learning were enormous. And it certainly did not disappoint.*

One of the greatest difficulties we have when it comes to explaining and developing our political project for society is to bring our theoretical proposals to praxis with maximum consequences. They accuse us of being utopian or idealistic

and perhaps we are, but we need oases in which to show how a fair, democratic, supportive, open and empathetic society where the division of tasks, interpersonal relationships and collective interests prevail over the principles of exclusion, competitiveness and individualism prevailing in capitalist societies.

That is what the revolutionary youth camps are about: of understanding the revolutionary organisation as part of a joint learning process of our own struggles, but also of sharing experiences of struggle and resistance with comrades from the global north and south who allow us to walk towards an ecosocialist, feminist, queer, anti-racist and anti-capitalist horizon.

Thus the program, which is usually divided into thematic days, tried to offer a broad look at the main issues that affect the crisis of neoliberal capitalism and that help us build poles of radicalisation in youth. It placed special emphasis on the need to bet on ecosocialism as our lives depend on it; to stand firm in the anti-imperialist struggle and against the radicalisation of authoritarian neoliberalism; to vindicate the importance of LGBTQI+ struggles not only on a cultural level, but also in the materialist intersection of advancing collective rights and freedoms; to delve into the advances that feminism has made and discuss how to go on the offensive against reactionary discourses. Finally, the importance and necessity of having organic structures that allow us to organise rage internationally was also addressed, enabling us to weave common strategies against a system that devours, crushes and marginalises us.

All of this was developed through plenary activities that addressed how to be revolutionary in a world in flames, how feminist and LGBTQI+ struggles are a threat to capitalism, the characterisation of authoritarian neoliberalism and its attacks against international solidarity networks, how to decolonise society, the role of youth in the class struggle

and the importance of organising ourselves to crush capitalism. On the other hand, educational activities also took the form of workshops in which participants elaborated specific problems or shared experiences of international struggle. Among them, we can highlight the need to bring to the debate aspects such as new forms of relationships and radical ways of loving, the importance of talking about capitalism and mental health, the new struggles in which youth play a central role, as is the case with housing and the fight against speculation or the Marxist theory of the state.

At the same time, spaces for women, LGBTQI+ and people of colour were created which, in addition to being safe places for those who are part of the group, also allowed us to go deeper into the discussions and horizons towards which feminist, queer and anti-racist struggles are directed.

In short, the camps are an opportunity for political training, but they are also the best option for weaving personal networks of friendship, sisterhood and camaraderie, which are essential to the societies we aspire to build. In other words, to harden ourselves without losing our tenderness, because tenderness is revolutionary and knows no borders. Therefore, I would like to thank all the compañeras for making the camps a space that truly becomes a reference point when imagining alternative futures. In difficult times for social movements and the radical left, enjoying places where utopia becomes a reality is a pill that enables us to recharge our batteries, to focus on youth building along a new political path. Paraphrasing Durruti, "ruins don't scare us because we carry a new world in our hearts. And that world is growing right now." For this reason, understanding the revolutionary organisation as part of a joint learning process of our own struggles, and sharing experiences of struggle and resistance with comrades from the global North and South, is a ground-breaking and transformative exercise that inspires us to stand firm until victory. Long live the Revolutionary Youth Camps. Long live

the Fourth International.

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