

The Plebs News

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A tale of two or three or four elections.

Short term gain but long term worry.- Global drift to the right continues



Earlier in the year Plebs News reported on 2024 as the year of elections with over half of the population of the world going to the polls to elect leaders or parliaments. The UK and India were expected elections but they were joined by an unpredicted election when President Macron of France called a snap election taking place two weeks before the country showcases the Olympic Games.

In the UK Labour held a twenty point lead in the opinion polls and many predicted a large Labour majority after fourteen years of austerity. The election vote was very much pushed by anger and despair rather than hope with the Labour leadership warning of hard times ahead. Austerity and Tory infighting made their victory inevitable. The appearance of Nigel Farage as leader of a renewed Reform Party further damaged the Tories splitting the traditional Tory vote and leaving Labour with a landslide victory. The good news was soured by the low turnout and Labour gaining less of the popular vote than under Corbyn in the 2019 and 2017 elections. The combined Tory/ Reform vote would have seen a much smaller majority for Labour a presents a challenge at the next polls. Many Red Wall seats returned to Labour but odd outliers returned reform candidates and independents, fuelled by Gaza ceasefire votes gained a handful of seats.

In France, Macron's Renaissance party, formed from nowhere in 2017 and mainly at the expense of the Socialist Party, had been crushed in the EU elections and rather than wait for political weakness to trigger an election he took the gamble to call them early. The first round produced a disaster with Marine Le Pen's nationalist National Rally receiving the most votes and leaving Macron's party in third place behind a left coalition. A hasty alliance of left parties, under the banner of Popular Front, and centre candidates amalgamated in an uneasy relationship to contest the second round in order to prevent a Le Pen government. National Rally still gained many seats but the Left/Centre coalition holds the majority with the Popular Front holding the largest. Macron has now broken with convention refusing to appoint a Prime Minister from among the Popular Front, leaving ministers in position and seeking allies on the Centre Right Republicans. We wait to see the outcome with the threat of strikes and demonstrations at Macron's actions and instability likely until the Presidential elections in two years.

In India the BJP, led by Mohandira Modi in his third election were expected to increase their majority to enable them to potentially alter the secular constitution, but another alliance INDIA was formed to prevent a Modi landslide. The coalition included some left parties but mainly consisted of regional parties and centre parties angered by Modi's divisive politics as well as unemployment and inequality.

The EU elections too showed a shift to the right across the continent.

All three elections demonstrate the effects of globalisation on national politics and the growth of right wing votes as populations seek protection from global austerity and neoliberalism rather than collective solutions of traditional left politics.

Voters Want Change. Labour Must Deliver It.

Tribune

Change. A simple slogan that chimed with the nation last night. A deeply unpopular Conservative Party has been booted out of office after 14 years of wrecking Britain. Our schools and hospitals are quite literally crumbling and virtually nobody feels any better off. Johnson partied away during the pandemic. Truss crashed the economy. And Sunak demonstrated just how out of touch the Tories are.

Much post-election analysis will focus on the sheer incompetence of these individuals. They have presided over numerous scandals, from partygate to crony contracts. But the anger runs much deeper. Their failed austerity agenda has battered and bruised our public services, increased poverty, and wrecked our communities.

It's no surprise that the top three concerns for voters in this election were the cost of living, health and the state of the economy.

There's much to celebrate about the defeat of the Conservative Party. From the inhumane Rwanda deportations to the outrageous anti-strike laws, some of their worst policies have been consigned alongside them to the dustbin of history where they belong. Unfortunately, much of their legacy remains intact. Their poisonous racist culture war rhetoric has enabled the rapid rise of the far-right. The Reform Party have won 14 percent of the vote, with 5 MPs in Parliament including Nigel Farage. They came second in numerous Labour heartlands and their influence is likely to grow in the coming years. We only need to look over the channel to see the consequences of legitimising their rhetoric.

A closer analysis of the election result demonstrates the challenges ahead. Turnout in this general election was just 59.4 percent — the second lowest since the Second World War. Labour have won a landslide with just 34 percent of the vote and the party faces a strong challenge not just from the Reform Party but from the Greens and Independent candidates too.

The Greens have picked up significant support with 4 MPs, also coming second to Labour in dozens of seats. And Labour have lost 5 former strongholds to Independent candidates who capitalised, among other issues, on a wave of anger over Labour's awful stance on Gaza. From Bradford West to Bethnal Green and Bow, some of the party's safest seats have become marginal constituencies. Voters cannot be taken for granted and politicians will have to work much harder to win the trust of our communities.

It's abundantly clear that a hollow technocratic managerialist agenda could spell trouble for the party — from left and right — in the years to come. From housing to healthcare, it is now a Labour Government that will be tasked with fixing the multiple crises Britain faces — and a Labour Government that will be held responsible if it doesn't. That means ditching the discredited fiscal conservative approach to our public services. Sticking to the same Tory tax and spend policies that got us into this mess in the first place is a disaster waiting to happen.

Labour are right to say they are inheriting a mess. But they are wrong to pretend there is nothing they can do about it. There is a thumping mandate for transformative change. Labour has a historic opportunity to lift children out of poverty, to provide the investment this country so desperately craves and to fix our public services.

It is the task of our movement to ensure that Labour delivers. That means taking on the corporate lobbyists who have already succeeded at watering down Labour's workers' rights policies and continuing to organise in the workplace and in our communities. From Palestine solidarity to public sector pay, there are plenty of battles ahead. Tribune will continue to work alongside Labour MPs, trade unionists and community organisers in advocating for bold and ambitious policies to transform the country.

We have seen the end of Tory rule. Now, let's see the end of Tory rhetoric and Tory policy. Voters want a change. If Labour does not deliver it, they will look elsewhere.

The "extreme centre" is collapsing under its own contradictions

Tommaso Segantini- Open Democrarcy

The emergence of new political parties, movements and figures across Europe and in the United States is creating some cracks in the political and economic order of the last three decades.

The establishment parties of the "extreme centre" (as British journalist Tariq Ali has described the political spectrum occupied by traditional centre right and centre left parties) that have alternatively served the interests of the top 1%, corporations and financial institutions, are being threatened by the rise of a broad range of diverse political forces, ranging from far right nationalist parties to progressive radical leftist movements.

It is interesting to see how The Economist, the notorious free market advocate weekly news magazine and representative of the ideology of the "extreme centre", analyzes the new western political landscape.

In an article called "The new political divide" which appeared in The Economist, the author argues that we are witnessing the formation of "a new political faultline: not between left and right, but between open and closed". The basic argument put forward is that political contestation in most western countries today is between the "open ones", the parties and the individuals in favour of free trade, globalization and openness, and the "closed ones", defined as the "anti-globalizers", the "wall-builders", "those who argue that the world is a nasty, threatening place".

In the group of "populist" and "closed" parties and movements, the author includes very different political forces, ranging from the far right to the radical left, from Bernie Sanders to Donald Trump, without making any sort of distinction or nuance; a very populist, in fact, and intellectually dishonest depiction of reality.

Curiously, the author doesn't offer an explanation for the rise of "closed-world types", although he considers their rise as "the gravest risk to the free world since communism". The reason for this is, I think, rather obvious: the upsurge of these new political parties is a direct symptom of the policies and the worldview promoted by the "open ones", especially during the last 30 years; to admit it would be to disavow the whole intellectual edifice defended by the magazine and by the author himself.

The author recalls what is at stake, according to him, and offers some solutions to counter the rise of new political forces: he calls for the defense of the "system of institutions, rules and alliances, led by America", and the economic system of the last decades that has brought us close to nuclear war and on the brink of environmental disaster.

He then describes the European Union as "the world's most successful free-trade club", which could collapse, according to the author, because of the rise of "nationalist" forces; he forgets to mention, however, the extraordinary contempt for democracy and the destructive economic policies implemented by European officials, the primary catalyst for the rise of "wall builders" across Europe.

Then, he accuses Trump of "threatening to block new trade deals" (in reference to the TTIP and the TPP), probably one of the few reasonable things said by Donald Trump during his campaign.

Towards the end of the article, the author states that "trade creates many losers", and reasonably suggests to implement "bold policies" to "preserve the benefits of openness while alleviating its side-effects", such as strengthening the social safety net and "invest in public infrastructure".

It is hard to imagine, however, how those policies could be part of the agenda of the best "open types" according to the author, such as Emmanuel Macron, the former French finance minister who left the government led by Francois Hollande to form his own centrist political movement, 'En Marche'.

Emmanuel Macron participated in a government led by the Socialist Party, which, since it took power in 2012, has brought forward an austerity agenda completely in line with the previous Sarkozy government. Macron situates his movement to the right of the current French government.

The author then mentions Hillary Clinton, the prototype representative of corporate interests and of the "Washington Consensus", which the author claims, quite incredibly, is "equivocating" openness.

If individuals like Macron and Clinton are the kind of "open types" the author has in mind, the chances that the advocated "bold policies" get implemented are very, very low, to put it euphemistically.

The "free world", with its international and economic order as we have known it for the last century, is crumbling. If the emergence of "closed ones" appears to be such a great danger, the author is undoubtedly promoting the "free world's" self destruction, as the solutions he puts forward to counter their ascendancy are the continuation of the causes that generated it.

The author's ideological blindness, like the one of western elites, impedes him in making any kind of lucid and rational self-criticism. The establishment, through its delusions and lies, is digging its own grave, and appears to lack the internal ideological resources, political will and the integrity to change its course of action.

Given the catastrophic results of the "open ones" in the last century, the collapse of their ideological structure and economic system is good news. Unlike what the author suggests, the forces contending the political vacuum that is being created are very diverse. The direction the winds of change will take will be crucial. Progressive radical forces still offer some hope and are the only genuine alternative to the weakening centrist parties and the far right forces that feed on each other in a vicious, toxic circle.



In this fully updated edition of his coruscating polemic, Tariq Ali shows how, since 1989, politics has become a contest to see who can best serve the needs of the market. In this urgent and wide-ranging case for the prosecution, Ali looks at the people and the events that have informed this moment across the world. This reaches its logical conclusion with the presidency of Donald Trump, the success of En Marche in France and the dominance of Merkel's Germany through Europe.



"It strikes me that what's called the moderates are the most immoderate people possible"

India election: Why did Modi's BJP lose in Uttar Pradesh, its fortress?

Al Jazeera

New Delhi, India – It was April 1, All Fools' Day.

India's elections were yet to start, but Delhi-based columnists were already calling the verdict on the biggest prize of all: Uttar Pradesh (UP), the northern state that is the country's largest and that sends the largest chunk of legislators to the nation's parliament. The state's 80 members of parliament in a house of 543 often make or break the national government.

In 2014 and 2019, they made the Bharatiya Janata Party's fortunes, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party winning 71 and 62 seats in those two elections. The columnists were predicting a repeat, a done deal for the BJP.

But Hakim Sahib, a full-time mendicant and a part-time politician from Meerut, a western Uttar Pradesh (UP) city, wasn't amused. "BJP will not win more than 40 seats in UP as there is a strong undercurrent against the party," he told this writer.

Two months later, when the results were declared on June 4 after seven stages of a staggered poll, Sahib, it turns out, had been prescient, unlike the vast majority of pollsters who had predicted a sweep for the BJP in UP and India.

As the election campaign unfolded across the state of more than 200 million people, the signs were there: Modi and the BJP were clearly a powerful force, but there was a palpable, seething rage too, among many voters — including traditional supporters — over high unemployment and inflation. A clever strategy by the opposition INDIA alliance turned a BJP campaign slogan seeking 400 seats in parliament into a narrative against the governing party: The opposition claimed that the BJP could take away constitutional rights of historically disadvantaged communities such as Dalits — who sit at the bottom of India's caste hierarchy — with such a large mandate.

All of that fructified into the outcome that Sahib had predicted: The BJP ended up with just 33 seats, with its allies winning three more. The regional Samajwadi Party, a member of the Congress Party-led INDIA alliance, won 37 seats. The Congress itself won six more. That result, along with losses in the western state of Maharashtra, has forced the BJP to rely on alliance partners to form a government, short of a national majority on its own.

The rumblings that led to this moment weren't restricted to traditional BJP critics. Some ordinary voters who led to its rise felt let down too.

Fall in Ayodhya, drop in Varanasi

In 1992, the BJP led a campaign that culminated in the demolition of the 16th-century Babri mosque in the UP temple town of Ayodhya. On December 6 that year, when images of the shrine being pulled down stunned the rest of India and shocked the world, Mohan was at the site, a part of the mob that smashed the mosque into rubble.

In January this year, Modi consecrated a grand Ram temple at the same spot: The Hindu deity Ram, according to ancient scriptures, was born in Ayodhya. It was a moment that — like the 1992 demolition — was screened across the world, and that emerged as the launchpad of Modi's 2024 re-election campaign.

But when this writer spoke to Mohan — who requested that his last name not be used — in April, he was clear that he had given up on the BJP. He has an unemployed son, who was initially tempted to join the Modi government's scheme to send Indian workers to Israel as labourers amid the war on Gaza. The son eventually turned down that option.

“This time the BJP will not come to power in the parliament elections. I will call you on June 4 to confirm this,” Mohan declared.

He was partially wrong — the BJP is poised to form the next government, with its allies. Yet in Faizabad, the constituency that includes the Ram temple, the BJP lost. And Mohan’s comments were mirrored in sentiments that voters shared even in Modi’s own parliamentary constituency of Varanasi.

His imprimatur is visible in the infrastructure development work throughout the city: a highway to the airport; cleaned up banks of the Ganges; widened roads to Varanasi’s biggest attraction, the Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

But these changes have robbed the city of its identity, said, Vishambhar Mishra, a professor at the city’s Indian Institute of Technology and the head of the Sankat Mochan Trust that campaigns for cleaning up the Ganges.

“Varanasi used to be the city of lanes and bylanes. People could start from wherever and negotiate the lanes to reach the ghats to take a dip in the Ganges,” he said. Meanwhile, the Ganges remains dirty, despite multiple promises from the government to clean it up — a contradiction he routinely highlights in posts on social media platform X.

On the Ganges, boatman Bhanu Chaudhary, who took this writer for a ride, said: “There is a lot of anger in people as there are no jobs.” Chaudhary is a graduate but is forced to row boats for visitors to the city because he has no other work.

That anger showed on June 4. Modi won the seat, but with his margin dramatically slashed, from 480,000 votes in 2019 to 152,000 this time. Many of the constituencies near Varanasi, which the BJP had hoped to win riding on Modi’s presence in the city, went to the INDIA alliance.

People beat drums in front of a vehicle carrying a large garlanded portrait of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, as they celebrate his birth anniversary in Mumbai, India, Sunday, April 14, 2024. Ambedkar, a Dalit, and a prominent Indian freedom fighter, outlawed discrimination based on caste. (AP Photo/Rafiq Maqbool)

People beat drums in front of a vehicle carrying a large garlanded portrait of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian constitution, as they celebrate his birth anniversary in Mumbai, India, April 14, 2024. Ambedkar, a Dalit, and a prominent Indian freedom fighter, outlawed discrimination based on caste. Analysts believed the Dalit move shifted away from the BJP in the just-concluded election [Rafiq Maqbool/AP Photo]

Losing the Dalit vote

But the biggest reason for voters shifting away from the BJP may have been the party’s own statements, say observers.

The slogan insisting that the BJP-led alliance would win 400 seats spooked many Dalits, who feared that the party could change the constitution — whose drafting was led by Dalit icon Bhimrao Ambedkar — to deny them hard-won protections, said Inderjit Singh a teacher in Gorakhpur, a northern UP city. “So many seats slipped out of the BJP fold,” he said.

The opposition INDIA alliance, initial data suggests, managed to successfully stitch together a coalition of Dalits, other traditionally disadvantaged communities — known as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in India — and Muslims in many parts of the state.

“They want to change the constitution of India and stop job reservation,” claimed Gautam Rane, a Dalit activist who campaigned against the BJP. The BJP has denied that it ever had any intentions of taking away benefits that Dalits are promised in the constitution, including quotas in government jobs and educational institutions.

Rane said many Dalit voters had ditched the Bahujan Samaj Party, which has for long led the community in UP, because they felt it was too weak now to take on the BJP. The BSP still won 9 percent of the state's vote but lost in all constituencies: It had won 10 seats in 2019.

Meanwhile, Modi's comments against Muslims during the campaign — he referred to them as “infiltrators” — galvanised the community, which forms almost 20 percent of UP's population, behind the opposition alliance, said Nawab Hussain Afsar, the editor of a Urdu daily headquartered in Lucknow, the state's capital.

And they struck back, with their votes.

‘INDIA’: What you need to know about India's opposition alliance

Al Jazeera

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a fondness for abbreviations and acronyms that create buzz around his government schemes.

Last week, Modi's political opponents did exactly that as they announced a new alliance – called “INDIA” – to deny Modi a third straight win and defeat his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in next year's election.

The acronym, which stands for Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, comprises 26 opposition parties so far. More parties could join the alliance ahead of the general elections due by May.

Here's what you need to know about INDIA:

Who is leading the coalition?

The INDIA is led by the Indian National Congress party which once dominated the country's politics.

The election battle is between “Narendra Modi and INDIA, his ideology and INDIA,” Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said at a two-day conclave of the alliance in Bengaluru on July 18. “India always wins all fights.”

Europe's shift to the right must be countered with mass mobilization and politicization : Peoples Dispatch

Giuliano Granato

Over 10,000 took to the streets in Rome on June 1 to protest PM Meloni's right-wing government.

The composition of the new European Parliament will more or less trace the outgoing one. Much ado about nothing? Not really. It's not just a question of how many votes and seats you get—the conservative European People's Party (EPP) increased their share by 10 seats, and the ultra-right parties Identity and Democracy and European Conservatives and Reformists by 13—but also where and how.

The ultra-right is the leading force in two key countries such as France and Italy, where it won around 30% of votes (40% if we add the votes of Zemmours Reconquête in France and Salvini's Lega in Italy). In Germany, the quasi-Nazis of Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), deemed excessive even by Le Pen and Salvini, is the second largest party, the first in all of old East Germany.

Looking at the four largest EU countries, 3 out of 4 governing parties lost. The only government keeping its strength—losing in absolute votes (-750.000) compared to the last general elections, but gaining in percentage terms (+3)—is Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia. In France, Macron's liberal, pro-war party collapsed, the same happened with Scholz's social democratic, pro-war government in Germany. Sanchez's PSOE in Spain could stabilize its consensus, but the gap with the traditional right-wing party Partido Popular is slightly increasing (a process which started already at the general elections in July 2023).

A shift to the right of the entire European political axis

In short, the ultra-right is advancing in key EU countries and, above all, increasing its political-ideological influence even before its parliamentary weight. This is confirmed by a general shift of the entire European political picture.

Today, traditional right-wingers are often indistinguishable from their “more extreme” partners. We are witnessing a continuous “normalization” of the ultra-right, the entering of its ideas and slogans in the political and social common sense. Conservatives, liberals, greens and social democrats chase the ultra-right on its terrain: “Italians first”, “higher walls” and “defending of borders” against migrants, “fighting social parasites” etc. were part of the ideological weaponry of supremacist and fascist formations; today, however, they are the common heritage of most of the remaining political forces.

Italy is still a political laboratory for the continent

Even if Italy is an economic rearguard, as a political laboratory it continues to indicate the direction the entire continent is taking. The model of an ultra-right government that can be perfectly integrated and embedded in the mechanisms of power was “tested” in Italy and is now repeatable in other European core countries. Even the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, admitted it: “There were doubts and concerns [...] and then we saw that it was possible to work with governments even if there was an extreme right-wing party in the coalition,” because “what really matters are the policies, the substance.”

The ultra-right can safely rule as long as it respects two constraints: absolute subordination to NATO and austerity policies against working people. On this basis, the Italian laboratory also offers lessons to Marine Le Pen, who, in fact, has been engaged for months in moving her Rassemblement National (National Rally) to positions that will guarantee her the green light to govern the EU's second-largest country in the upcoming snap elections.

Today, for the ruling classes it is not a question of fascism, but about a fascism which is aligned to NATO policies or not. So, the essential condition for being accepted is not linked to the neo-fascist policies tout court, but being in favor of NATO.

Peace for the many vs. war for the few

If the main social fault line is peace vs. war, this does not necessarily translate into an electoral fault line. Because the political, economic and social framework of Europe is moving toward a generalized “war regime”. Externally it means sending arms to Ukraine and supporting the genocide in Gaza at the hands of another imperialist power, Israel; in addition we have the military operation Aspides in the Red Sea, (for the moment) a low-intensity war against China and the silence on what is going on in Congo, Sudan, in the Sahel, etc. Internally it means prioritizing military spending to the detriment of social welfare, the transformation of civilian industrial production into war production and the limitation of democratic rights.

A few days before the elections, both Ursula Von der Leyen and Josep Borrell were interviewed in warlike scenarios: the conservative leader in a Finnish air-raid bunker; the social-democratic leader surrounded by tanks. With these images, they show the future that lies ahead of us. And this is the old line the new Parliament will follow: a large alliance between conservatives, socialists, greens, liberals and even pieces of the ultra-right, starting with Meloni’s FdI in favor of exactly this “war regime”. To quote Borrell, the EU foreign “minister”, there is a broad political consensus on the need to defend the “European garden” from the “jungle” that surrounds it.

The ultra-right imposes a regime of mass passivization

Former Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti defined fascism as a “regime of reactionary masses”; today, the current situation looks more like a “regime of mass passivization.” It does not stand on “gatherings”, permanent organization and mobilization of large sectors of society as we know it from the fascist regimes in the early 1920s in Italy and Germany. The current ultra-right regime builds on the “passivization” of the masses, it manifests itself in disillusionment, resignation, disengagement. These “feelings” are rooted in a common sense of “nothing changes anyway”.

Once again, the Italian laboratory may offer interesting insights. These elections are historical for one more reason: for the first time in Italy’s national elections, abstention wins the absolute majority. The turnout rate stood at 49.6% of eligible voters. The decline in participation is a trend that has been advancing for decades and is a sign of a more overall decline in political and social participation. In fact, empty ballot boxes do not mean, on the other hand, full streets.

If we are facing a “regime of mass passivization”, the only response is what Jean-Luc Melenchon of La France Insoumise did when France’s President Macron—as a reaction to Marine Le Pen’s victory—dissolved the National Assembly and called for early elections at the end of June: insist of street demonstrations in order to mobilize the youth, working people, women, migrants and Arab-Palestinian communities against the ultra-right and the warmongering policies. The message is clear: we need to occupy our social and political space and it is, first and foremost, the streets.

Bipolarism is getting stronger in Italy

In Italy, as usual, almost everyone is celebrating, except the so-called center “third pole” who lost electoral consensus and is out of parliament. The results are the mirror of the stabilization of Fratelli d’Italia, the strengthening of the “moderate” wing of the right-wingers (Forza Italia) and the difficulties of Salvini’s Lega increasingly shifting to Meloni’s right and risking fractures due to internal contradictions.

In the opposition camp, the growth of the Democratic Party (24.1%, second party) and the remarkable success of the Left-Green-Alliance (AVS, 6.6% with around 1.5 million votes) is countered by the collapse of the 5-Star-Movement falling from 15.43% in 2022 to today’s 9.99%. Overall, pro-NATO and neoliberal bipolarism is strengthened, with two leading parties—Fratelli d’Italia and the Democratic Party—being the most firmly militaristic and pro-NATO parties.

Within these two camps there is no possible radical alternative. Today, there is a high risk of the continuation of the vicious circle whereby dissatisfaction in the working classes with the policies of center-left governments leads to the growth and then the victory of parties further and further to the right, which, in return, also disappoint when in government. And like this, the political picture shifts more and more to the right.

Perspectives towards mass mobilizations

These elections didn't solve neither the current economic, social and climate crisis nor the ongoing armed conflicts and wars. The stabilization of pro-NATO and neoliberal positions will only deepen the problems working people are experiencing. The year 2025 will see new austerity policies due to the re-introduction of the Stability and Growth Pact. In Italy, for example, it means cuts of 13 billion per year for 7 years. We are facing a social and environmental butchery.

What does it mean for our political perspective? Elections mark an important moment, because they deliver a snapshot of the consensus in our societies. But the temporality of elections does not correspond to the temporality of political processes; social transformation is a much deeper and longer process than the time of election campaigns. Chasing "immediatism" may produce some influencers, but not profound changes.

In order to fight the ultra-right, it is necessary to fight its "normalization" by conservative, liberal, social democratic sectors. We need to accept the challenges in the battle of ideas and not retreat an inch: there is no war in Palestine, but a genocide; the right to dissent is the salt of democracy; migrants are not a problem, but allies as workers etc.

In the immediate term, it is necessary to counter the war regime. But we can not reduce our actions to general slogans for "peace talks" and "negotiations"—this corresponds just to a groan of despair. We need to put ourselves at the head of democratic battles against the shrinking spaces of freedom with our body and soul like university students did with the acampadas or encampments in their campuses.

If the war regime imposes lower wages, we need to realize our slogan "weapons down, wages up!": strengthening the campaign for the introduction of a legal minimum wage of at least 10€ per hour, organizing against the dismantling of public services, because every Euro going into the weapons industry for guns and ammunition means a Euro less for hospitals, schools, culture, etc.

In the long-term, temporality necessary for political transformation, organizing, the ability to be rooted in the working classes, building solidarity and daily ties against social fragmentation plays a key role. Daily presence, consistency and patience are key factors for the credibility of a political force. And it needs our incursion into mass spaces of communication. In this sense, organization and communication can not be disjointed if we don't want to end up in dead ends which inhibit social transformation.

Giuliano Granato is an Italian political activist and spokesperson of the left formation Potere al Popolo.

Left parties in France accuse Macron of exercising a ‘royal veto’

Morning Star

LEFT parties in France accused the French President of exercising a “royal veto” today after he refused to appoint a prime minister from the left-wing coalition that gained most seats in last weekend’s National Assembly election.

President Emmanuel Macron has called on the country’s political parties to build a “republican” majority at the National Assembly before he announces a new prime minister.

Though no party won a majority in Sunday’s election, the left-wing New Popular Front (NPF) alliance of communists, socialists and Greens topped the poll with 193 seats in the 577-strong National Assembly.

Mr Macron’s Renaissance business-orientated coalition claimed second place with 164 seats while Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally — now the largest single party in the Assembly — came third with 143.

In a letter published by several French media outlets, President Macron wrote that “nobody has won” the election, calling on parties who adhere to “republican institutions, the rule of law, parliamentary norms, a (pro-)European orientation and the defence of French independence” to build a compromise.

“It is in the light of these principles that I will decide on the appointment of the prime minister,” he said.

Socialist Party chief Olivier Faure said the president was failing to respect the vote of the French people.

France Unbowed leader Jean-Luc Melenchon blasted the “return of the royal veto,” pointing out that after the 2022 elections, in which his alliance won 174 seats, the president had said: “These legislative elections have made the presidential majority the leading political force in the National Assembly.”

Now the president refuses to accept the NPF victory with 193 seats.

Sophie Binet, head of France's biggest trade union federation the CGT, accused the president of plunging the country into chaos.

“It’s like having Louis XVI locking himself away in Versailles,” she said, referring to the king guillotined in 1793 during the French Revolution.

France's CGT union federation calls for protests to force Macron to respect election results

Morning Star

THE biggest French union federation has called for mass demonstrations and possible strikes to push President Emmanuel Macron into “respecting the results” of Sunday’s legislative elections by allowing the New Popular Front (NPF) to form a government.

Mr Macron has refused to appoint a prime minister from the left-wing coalition and instead infuriated many across the country by calling on the political parties to construct a “republican” majority in the National Assembly.

Although no party won a majority on Sunday, the NPF alliance, which includes Jean-Luc Melenchon’s France Unbowed, the communists, the Socialist Party, the greens and various other groups, came out on top in the election, with 193 of the National Assembly’s 577 seats.

Renaissance, the president’s business-orientated coalition, took second place with 164 seats, while Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally came third with 143.

The new legislature’s inaugural session is scheduled for July 18.

On Thursday, General Confederation of Labour (CGT) general secretary Sophie Binet said in an interview with French broadcaster LCI that if Mr Macron does not respect the election results, “he risks once again plunging the country into chaos.”

Ms Binet said the president should allow the NPF to form the new government, although the alliance has not yet proposed a prime ministerial candidate.

She called on union members to take to the streets and “join rallies to put the National Assembly under surveillance.”

Asked about strikes that could disrupt the Olympics, which France is hosting from July 26 to August 11, Ms Binet said: “At this stage, we don’t plan a strike during the Olympic Games.”

However, Ms Binet added that the CGT did not rule out strikes during the Games if Mr Macron continued to ignore the result of the election.

The president has asked Prime Minister Gabriel Attal to continue handling day-to-day affairs, despite Mr Attal offering to resign.

Railway workers in the CGT have called for nationwide rallies on July 18 in front of prefectures and near the National Assembly in Paris to demand that the NPF be allowed to form a government, according to a statement by the union.

The leader of the centre-left CFDT union, Marylise Leon, warned that her union would not rule out strikes during the Olympics “in certain sectors if social dialogue breaks down,” including in private security and at the Paris airports.

However, she added that “the goal of CFDT is not to block the Olympics.”

Amazon Workers Are Beating the Union Busters

Tribune

By Stuart Richards

It has been a year and a half since workers at the Amazon warehouse in Coventry shook the retail giant with the company's first-ever formal strike in British history. From that time, they have become used to seeing the company's anti-union material displayed in the workplace.

But all of this only foreshadowed the scale of the union busting brought in by management as workers prepared to vote in a ballot for statutory union recognition.

Union recognition would mean Amazon would be forced to sit down with the GMB Union to negotiate on matters relating to pay, worker safety and terms and conditions. A victory here would empower Amazon workers everywhere.

From the moment workers enter the workplace, they are faced with huge posters telling them why they shouldn't vote for union recognition. As they go through the walkway into the main building, they walk past four display screens pumping out anti-union messaging. Once they enter the main building, they find even more pop-up displays, posters, display screens and notices on the back of toilet doors.

All of the workers have been told to attend up to six management meetings to be regaled with tales of how Amazon really does listen and how managers will be making changes for the better. Managers have been brought in from other sites to help spread the company's anti-union propaganda through one-to-one conversations with workers. The messaging is constant and unrelenting.

Amazon is throwing huge amounts of time, money, and resources into trying to stop workers from voting for union recognition. This is a company that is panicking.

Amazon's management is heavily investing in discouraging unionisation. It is evident that they fear transparency and the prospect of revealing their financial records through legal processes stemming from union recognition. This could expose practices they would rather keep hidden, hence their extensive efforts to influence voting against union recognition.

Ceferina Floresca is one of the instigators of Amazon's agitation. She is one of the 40 workplace leaders who have led workers through 37 days of strike action and built a union of around 1400 members inside the warehouse.

She is clever, articulate and a force of nature. One of the many mistakes Amazon bosses have made is underestimating her and her union colleagues.

They are the reason for the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) — the Government body responsible for regulating collective bargaining — determining that it is likely that the majority of workers are in favour of union recognition. They are the reason for a ballot for union recognition at Coventry being forced on Amazon.

In a sea of union-busting, Ceferina's face is one of those appearing on the three display screens given over to the union during the ballot period. The one union notice board echoes her words and those of her colleagues.

It was Ceferina and her colleagues who led the union meetings held inside the warehouse, with around 2500 workers being able to listen to the reasons for union recognition and ask questions about the wild rumours being spread by management.

'Being a GMB member enables me to represent my colleagues and be their advocate for fair treatment and better working conditions. After spending five years at BHX4 [Coventry warehouse], we have forged bonds. We spent nearly 10 hours together each day navigating the same challenges, fostering a sense of camaraderie and understanding.'

Ceferina and the other workplace leaders have the same lived experience as the other Amazon workers. They have experienced the gruelling 10-hour shifts and had to work up to 60 hours a week just to make ends meet. They have seen colleagues taken to the hospital taxis after bosses told first aiders not to call ambulances. They know what it's like to work at Amazon. They are trusted.

When Ceferina tells workers the rumours of the site closing as a result of union recognition are nonsense, they believe her. When she says union recognition doesn't mean losing benefits, it means fighting for better and saying no to losing even more benefits, they believe her.

'I believe I can be a voice for the countless individuals who work alongside me at BHX4. It is about standing shoulder to shoulder with my colleagues, amplifying their voices and fighting for a future where every worker is paid a decent wage and treated with dignity and respect.'

Of course, this doesn't mean that Amazon's union busting hasn't had an impact. When speaking to Amazon workers, you can see that many are frightened by the company's threats and rumours. Managers have told workers there will be no pay award this year if workers vote for union recognition. They have told workers there will be no pay award this year and they will lose benefits if there is union recognition. For workers who are already struggling with the cost of living and who have already had years of benefits taken from them, this is no small threat.

But Ceferina remains confident. 'Looking ahead to the ballot, I'm optimistic. Recent political shifts and a growing sentiment for improved labour conditions suggests a positive outcome is achievable. Many are eager for change both nationally and within Amazon. Our goal as a union is to advocate for fair treatment and better conditions, echoing the broader desire for improvement.'

Going forward, Ceferina has a clear message for bosses:

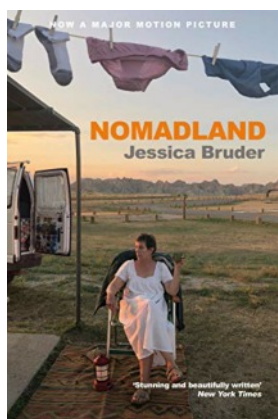
'To Amazon management, I urge you to embrace transparency and fairness. Instead of resisting unionisation, view it as an opportunity to strengthen your relationship with your workforce. Workers are not just resources. They're essential partners in the company's success.'

The ballot for recognition closes inside the warehouse on Saturday 13 July and the outcome will be released when the final votes are counted on Monday 15 July.

Whatever the result, Amazon in the UK faces huge changes as workers continue to organise in warehouses throughout the country.

'Joining the union is my response to a convergence of deeply felt concerns and unmet expectations. It represents my commitment to demand better compensation in the face of the escalating cost of living crisis.'

Ceferina's reasons for joining GMB and organising her workplace are shared by many Amazon workers. It is clear that the fire lit by Ceferina and her colleagues in Coventry has sent sparks right across Amazon UK warehouses.



Nomadland tells a revelatory tale of the dark underbelly of the American economy – one which foreshadows the precarious future that may await many more of us. At the same time, it celebrates the exceptional resilience and creativity of people who have given up ordinary rootedness to survive, but have not given up hope.

From the beetroot fields of North Dakota to the campgrounds of California to Amazon's CamperForce program in Texas, employers have discovered a new, low-cost labour pool, made up largely of transient older adults. These invisible casualties of the Great Recession have taken to the road by the tens of thousands in RVs and modified vans, forming a growing community of nomads.

Historic Amazon union recognition ballot losses by a whisker

Morning Star

Historic Amazon union recognition ballot losses by a whisker

GMB pledges legal challenge over retail giant's union-busting tactics

THE historic ballot on Amazon union recognition was lost after failing to reach a majority by just 28 votes, GMB said today. The union said it will mount a legal challenge over the retail giant's union-busting tactics after workers at the online giant's Coventry site voted 49.5 per cent in favour of union recognition. GMB regional organiser Ferdousara Uddin said "disappointment is an understatement," but that the campaign has been an immensely valuable learning experience for the wider union movement. She told the Morning Star that the vote was lost due to Amazon playing "massively on fear" against the majority migrant workforce.

"It is a positive change for the union movement that for the Amazon workers we have had to change and try different things [...] we have learnt so so much," she said.

She said Amazon convinced many employees that GMB would act as an external body making decisions on their behalf, rather than being composed of workers, suggesting that unionising could delay worker pay reviews for years.

Many of the temporary workers feared for their work visas or that they might be subject to the violent anti-trade union oppression that occurs in their native countries, she said. They also experienced difficulties casting their votes by post due to living in houses of multiple occupation and being abroad, said Ms Uddin, adding that GMB would have won the vote if electronic balloting, which Labour has vowed to introduce in its manifesto, was available.

GMB senior organiser Amanda Gearing said: "Our members have come agonisingly close to winning today and GMB will carry on the fight for the pay and recognition they deserve.

"We've seen workers pressured into attending six hours of anti-union seminars on top of the fortune spent by Amazon bosses to scare workers.

"Amazon now faces a legal challenge, while the fire lit by workers in Coventry and across the UK is still burning."

Rosa Curling, director of Foxglove, the legal non-profit supporting GMB, said: "It's time for Amazon to answer for its bullying, threats and unlawful one-click-to-quit QR codes.

"We are proud to be supporting over 900 workers in their inducement claims and we look forward to seeing Amazon in court."

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak said: "Amazon has thrown everything at trying to stop workers from having an independent voice at work.

"This is not the end. Our movement will regroup and will continue to shine a light on bad employers.

Amazon said it places "enormous value on engaging directly with our employees and having daily conversations with them."



THREE ACRES AND A COW

A HISTORY OF LAND RIGHTS AND PROTEST IN FOLK SONG AND STORY

Sheffield Three Acres And A Cow, October 2024

 Thu 10 Oct 2024 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM BST  Upper Chapel, S1 2JD

A history of land rights and protest in folk song and story, the show connects the Norman Conquest and Peasants' Revolt with current issues like the housing crisis, reparations, climate breakdown and food sovereignty via the Enclosures, English Civil War and Industrial Revolution, drawing a compelling narrative through the radical people's history of England in folk song, stories and poems.

Part TED talk, part history lecture, part folk club sing-a-long, part storytelling session... Come and share in these tales as they have been shared for generations.

See <http://threeacresandacow.co.uk/> for more information and please check our frequently asked questions page before emailing us!

"I think about this show all the time. It has totally changed the way I think about colonialism, direct action and English nationalism. Thinking about it today, four years after seeing the show, it's clear it was a life changing event for me." Monique

"The history lesson I've always wanted. Thank you for a very entertaining/life changing evening. I'll be looking at the land and listening to folk songs in a very different way" Emily

"Everyone should see this show" George Monbiot

Doors 6.30pm with the show starting promptly at 7pm. We will finish around 9.45pm with one interval.

Upper Chapel, Norfolk Street, Sheffield S1 2JD

LOCATION

Upper Chapel, S1 2JD

[Buy tickets](#)

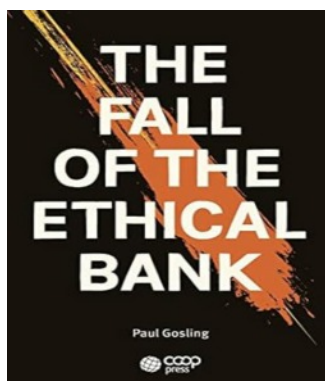
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The Fall of the Ethical Bank by Paul Gosling (Book review)



The Co-operative Bank was a PLC wholly owned by the Co-operative Group*. It was formed in 1872 as the Loan and Deposit Department of the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS) – and then became the CWS Bank. It was separated from the CWS in 1971 when it became a PLC owned by the CWS in 1971 and accepted as a clearing bank in 1975. From 2017 the Co-op has had no stake in the Co-op Bank.

* The CWS and the Co-operative Retail Services merged in 2000 to form The Co-operative Group.

As a result of incompetency by an overbearing CEO and executive team, and weakness amongst the Board, the Co-op Group became financially vulnerable. This led to The Co-operative Group losing its Bank, Farms, Pharmacy, Travel Agents, and much of its freehold property. A re-structuring of the business meant a break from its traditional role of supporting the co-operative movement.

As a result it became just like any other supermarket chain, but with no unique selling proposition (USP) and no natural customer base. It had already lost its unique position of being a manufacturer and producer and wholesaler. It lost its financial independence, having taken out big loans and having to pay out big rents in sale and lease back deals. Thus, as a business, the Co-operative Group struggles to compete with other supermarkets and funeral directors and no longer has any unique purpose. Its future is uncertain.

*

Paul Gosling, a freelance journalist specialising in the economy, accountancy, co-operatives and government and the public sector and a regular contributor to Co-op News responded to the crisis of the Co-op by writing 'The Fall of the Ethical bank' in 2018. This was the first book to be published by Co-operative Press for many years. Gosling is a lucid writer and his research is thorough.

The publication of The Fall of the Ethical bank is timely and to be recommended to everyone who cares about the future of co-operation. It tells the story behind the headlines.

Like many people, Paul Gosling (and myself) moved to the Co-operative bank in the early 1970s when it was the only UK clearing bank without a relationship with South Africa. Customers valued the bank as ethical even before it developed an 'ethical policy'.

In the first decade of the 2000s its commercial success helped to buoy up the profits of the Co-operative Group. The Fall of the Ethical Bank tells how the Co-operative Group nearly collapsed through financial incompetence.

Hubris and Nemesis

“In terms of a Greek tragedy, it is hubris and nemesis. Decision makers believed their own hype and got it wrong”.

“..... the reality is that some key decision-makers acted as if their desire to have a legacy that recognised their central role in re-building the Movement was the most important thing. So important that for their own footnote in history they risked the largest co-operative retail society and destroyed its bank”.

Paul Gosling

*

Social activists refer to 'The Co-operative Movement'. But what is 'The Co-operative Movement'. It used to be a federation of co-operative societies in membership with the CWS (later the Co-operative Group) and the co-operative organisations which supported the co-op societies. These organisations were the grass roots of the Movement. They have now all but gone. With the

break from the last vestiges of the Movement, The Co-operative Group has effectively called an end to what was the Co-operative Movement.

Thankfully, there are still (independent) Co-operative Retail Societies which have the capacity to renew the Movement. And supportive co-operative organisations to help to make it a Movement again.

Steve Thompson

Steve is a member of **Principle Five**, the Co-operative archive, based at Aizlewoods Mill in Nursery St, Sheffield.

Aizlewood's Mill, Nursery Street, Sheffield, S3 8GG

Principle 5

Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

Principle 5: Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

ICA Statement of Co-operative Identity

Lending Library and Archive

Co-operative Movement, social history, common ownership,

Sheffield social history,

journals,

and back editions of Co-operative News going all the way back to 1871

The library is open by appointment

The Catalogue can be downloaded [HERE](#)

Aizlewood's Mill, Nursery Street, Sheffield, S3 8GG

Tel: 0114 282 3132

Contact: steve@sheffield.coop

Principle 5 Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

The Principle 5 Report

which includes:

History of Co-operative Education

Time line of the Principle 5 (YCRC) from its foundation in 2013

Purposes and Aims



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Save Our Bank

Join 10,000 other members and supporters in the world's first independent customer union

The Customer Union for Ethical Banking has two aims:

Ensure that the Co-operative Bank maintains its powerful ethical stance, led by customers

Work for an eventual return of the bank to co-operative ownership

It costs just £15 a year to become a full member.

The Customer Union is a cooperative itself, owned and democratically controlled by its members.

You can learn more about the history of this unique organisation [here](#).

