

## Mobilize Workers Power to Stop Fascist Terror!

Internationalist photo



Internationalist photo

Left: Internationalist Group at August 12 anti-fascist protest in Washington, D.C. Right: June 30 protest against Patriot Prayer/Proud Boys fascists in Portland.

OCTOBER 28 – All summer long, there was a stream of violent provocations by ultra-rightist and outright fascist groups across the United States. Now in the run-up to the November 6 voting, the political polarization has escalated with a series of violent rightist and deadly racist attacks. On *October 12*, a group of Proud Boys fascists leaving a speech by their founder Gavin McInnes at the Republican Club on

Manhattan's Upper East Side set upon some antifascists (antifas), isolating and severely beating one. On *October 23*, packages with pipe bombs were discovered that had been sent to a number of prominent liberals. The sender turned out to be a regular at rallies for Republican president Donald Trump and a vociferous white supremacist who yearned for the "Hitler days," vowing to "eradicate the Jews" if he had the power to. On *Octo-*

*ber 24* a racist gunman executed two black people at a Kroger supermarket in suburban Louisville, Kentucky, but walked away, saying to a white bystander that "whites don't shoot whites." And on Saturday, *October 27*, a gunman approached the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh where he murdered eleven mostly elderly Jewish congregants after yelling "all Jews must die."

Last year, Trump praised the KKK

and Nazi scum who descended on Charlottesville, Virginia chanting anti-Semitic slogans ("Jews will not replace us") and murdering Heather Heyer, as including "some very fine people." Now the racist president rants against anyone who points to his responsibility for whipping up deadly violence and race hatred. Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, want to use the

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## Let Them In! Asylum for Refugees! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants! The Caravan of the Dispossessed

OCTOBER 28 – As the U.S. midterm elections entered the home stretch, xenophobic president Donald Trump hit on a new tactic for his standard campaign of fear and falsification: whip up hysteria about an imminent invasion by a caravan of immigrants from Honduras. He is reportedly preparing a declaration of national emergency (!), while the Pentagon is readying active duty units of the military (not the National Guard) to patrol the southern border with Mexico. This would keep the fear factor active right up to election day (November 6), plus give him the opportunity to change U.S. policies on refugee status by executive order, in contravention of U.S. laws and international treaties. The imperialist chief ordered the governments of Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras to stop the caravan, or else. He also ratcheted up his immigrant-bashing rhetoric, declaring that there were "bad hombres" and a "big percentage" of "criminals" among the marchers, as well as "Middle Easterners" and "terrorists." But it hasn't stopped the 7,000 migrants from steadily marching north, and now another caravan is forming.

Let us be clear: the migrants who have decided to risk all to undertake the onerous trek of almost 3,000 miles (4,700 kilometers)

from San Pedro Sula to Tijuana are fleeing from deadly violence and extreme poverty *made in U.S.A.* The economy of Honduras has been devastated by "free trade" agreements while the gangs terrorizing its cities got their start in Los Angeles. The right-wing Honduran government which acts as Republican Trump's toady is the result of a 2009 coup engineered by the Democratic Obama administration. The League for the Fourth International and its sections in the U.S. and Mexico, the Internationalist Group and Grupo Internacionalista, have called to welcome the caravan, demanding *asylum for refugees* and *full citizenship rights for all immigrants!* And, as always, we seek to carry out actions in furtherance of our call. The Grupo Internacionalista sent an activist-correspondent to accompany the caravan on its arrival in Mexico, while the Oaxaca local of the GI held a solidarity demonstration together with Section 22 of the CNTE (National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers).

In addition to being used by the racist in the White House as an election campaign ploy, which the Democrats are assiduously trying to duck, the Central American *caravan of the dispossessed* is a human drama illustrating the brutal realities of decaying



Pedro Pardo/AFP

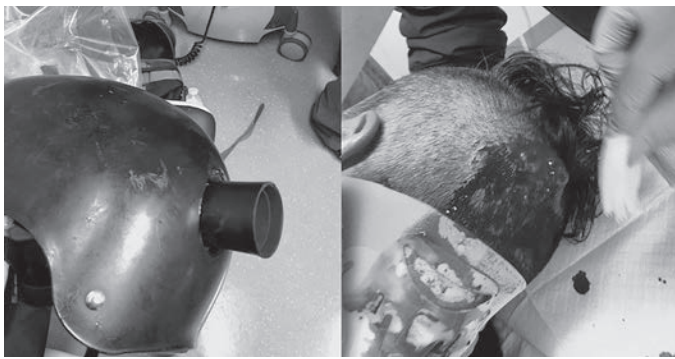
Caravan heads north after crossing into Mexico on October 20.

capitalism. It is also a political battle of the first order against the U.S. imperialists, who would use armed force to bar the victims of their depredations, just as their European counterparts let African immigrants

drown in the Mediterranean Sea. In this, as in every class battle, there are no neutrals. Either the migrants are allowed to enter, or not. We say: *Let them in!*

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Anti-fascist protester nearly killed by police flash-bang grenade, Portland, August 4.

## Stop Fascists...

*continued from page 1*

explosion of fascist terror attacks to step up state control, calling for government censorship of hate speech on social media and more stringent gun control – measures that will be used against the left and workers movement. Various reformist pseudo-socialists have sought to organize protests against “gun violence” together with the gun-control liberals. Revolutionary Marxists, in contrast, who stand on the Bolshevik program of Lenin and Trotsky, have called for, and sought to organize, mass mobilizations of workers power to crush the fascists. We warn that *the main enemy of working people and vulnerable sections of the population* is not just the fringe of “alt-rightists” and assorted white supremacists and fascists who have proliferated in Trump’s America, but *the capitalist state which protects the fascists, and which the liberals want to strengthen.*

On June 4 of last year, thousands turned out in Portland, Oregon, to protest a “free speech rally” of the “Patriot Prayer” fascists, a few days after two men were killed by a local Nazi as they came to the aid of two young black women he was menacing with Muslim-baiting threats. The murderer had attended earlier Patriot Prayer rallies. Portland Labor Against the Fascists brought out some 300 union members and supporters from at least 14 area unions, backed by coordinated resolutions of seven of those unions calling for “mobilizing against the clear and present danger that the provocations of racist and fascist organizations pose to us all” (see “Portland Labor Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation,” *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017). When the same outfit tried a repeat in the San Francisco Bay Area that August, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 voted to mobilize labor to stop the fascists in SF. This played a key role leading Patriot Prayer media hog Joey Gibson to call off his event (see “ILWU Local 10 Moves to Stop the Fascists in San Francisco” and “Fascists Forced to Flee San Francisco –

A Significant Victory” in *The Internationalist* No. 49, September-October 2017).

Both on the East and West Coasts, the fascists tried in a series of provocations to repeat their terror tactics this summer. On June 30, Patriot Prayer was back at it in Portland, which has become ground zero for the putrid milieu of fascist action squads, as it was in the 1980s for the racist skinhead scene. Class Struggle Workers Portland, which works fraternally with the Internationalist Group, again called for union action, but the protest was much smaller. One antifa activist was hospitalized with life-threatening injuries after being punched out by a Proud Boy thug. The police shot pepper balls toward the labor contingent and then lobbed flash-bang grenades into the anti-fascist crowd, resulting in a general melee as the fascists began marching. When Gibson (who is running for U.S. Senate in Washington state) announced another provocation for August 4, a CSWP leaflet, “Workers Mobilization Can Crush the Fascists,” declared:

“While Patriot Prayer and their Nazi allies prefer small street skirmishes where they can commit their cowardly assaults in the name of ‘free speech,’ or better yet, jumping activists in dark alleys, they would be hard-pressed to face a large and disciplined mobilization of workers aiming to shut them down....

“A mass mobilization led by workers defense guards can and must crush the fascists before it is too late.”

This time over a thousand people showed up to oppose the fascists, but the police went after the anti-fascist protesters with a vengeance. A police flash-bang concussion grenade lodged in the motorcycle helmet of one antifa activist, who would have died if it hadn’t been for the protective headgear.

The police were effectively acting as a defense squad for the few dozen, vastly outnumbered fascists. This was so obvious that even liberal media commented on it. The liberal *Guardian* (4 August) headlined: “Portland far-right rally: police charge counterprotesters with batons drawn.” Portland police chief Danielle Outlaw said leftists “wail and whine” about getting beaten by the cops, adding that she told Mayor Ted Wheeler that she was going to clear an Occupy I.C.E. camp with or without permission (which the liberal Democrat gave her). The Oregon ACLU complained about “the repeated use of excessive force, and the tar-

getting of demonstrators based on political beliefs.” An earlier statement by the civil liberties group declared: “To our knowledge, no other police force in America uses crowd control weapons with the regularity of the Portland Police Bureau.” The fascists, meanwhile, gave Nazi salutes inside their police-protected pen, while several wore a new t-shirt saying “Pinochet did nothing wrong,” with a drawing on the back of people being thrown from helicopters, a reference to the Chilean military dictator who killed thousands of leftists, many whom were thrown into the ocean.

The next week, on August 12, well over 2,000 leftists demonstrated in Lafayette Park opposite the White House in Washington, D.C., as police escorted a couple dozen fascists in for a “rally” that was so brief that it ended by the announced starting time. Importantly, Local 689 of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) told the Washington transit authority, WMATA, that its members would not provide “special accommodations” to the fascists (a private train to bring them in from Virginia) that transit officials had promised. This statement electrified union militants around the country, and the members of ATU Local 1277 in Los Angeles voted (over opposition from the local bureaucrats) a motion saluting the D.C. union’s stand, while Local 689 in Portland wrote an eloquent letter explaining how the year before, racist murderer Jeremy Christian had been given such special transportation along with other members of hate groups a month before killing Ricky Best and Taliesin Myrddin Nankai-Meche, and wounding Micah Fletcher on a Portland light-rail train. But in the end, the Local 689 leadership acquiesced instead of standing firm against this special protection for fascist murderers.

The same scene of aggressive police protection for fascists was repeated around the country. In Boston on August 18 cops set up a defense perimeter around a few dozen anti-communists of “Resist Marxism” against a crowd of several hundred protesters. Earlier, on August 4, at the same time as the Patriot Prayer event in Portland, in Providence, Rhode Island, 300 or so protesters from the “Ocean State Against Hate” coalition managed to drive off the anti-communists before riot police arrived. But on October 7, state police prevented leftist protesters from shutting down a Patriot Prayer hatefest flown in from Portland. In the NYC October 12 Proud Boys attack, none of the fascists were arrested at the time while three antifa activists were. Videos on the Internet show police standing around as the fascists viciously kick and pummel the lone antifa protester on the ground. In a podcast, Proud Boys founder-leader McInnes bragged, “I have a lot of support in the NYPD.” (De Blasio denied that NYC cops are sympathetic to the Proud Boys, but only after a public outcry were a half-dozen of the fascist thugs later arrested.)

Overwhelmingly, in one incident after another, in one city after another, the police defend the fascists against leftists. Furthermore, the police are indeed shot through with fascist sympathizers, including but not limited to the Three Percenters who boast that they represent retired military and active duty “law enforcement” personnel. (In Portland, a police captain, Mark Kruger, erected plaques in a public park honoring Nazi officers, including an SS Obersturmführer and a Wehrmacht general responsible for executing thousands



CSWP sticker for hard hats, printed in a union shop.

of prisoners of war in Greece during World War II. He was given a “We Are Portland” award by the city’s “human rights” commission!) Fascists and cops are defenders of the interests of capital against those it oppresses and exploits. From the Jim Crow South to the northern cities today, it is often true that “cops and Klan go hand in hand,” as demonstrators chant. In fighting the very real, and deadly, fascist threat to working people, African Americans, Latinos, immigrants, gays and transgender people and other vulnerable sectors, Trotskyists do not seek a counterproductive conflict with the police. But the “thin blue line” is what protects these would-be killers.

It is crucial to understand that the upsurge in ultraracist, anti-immigrant “populist,” violent racist and outright fascist movements and attacks is an international phenomenon, and that it is a byproduct of the continuing capitalist economic crisis, the depression that began in 2007-08 and whose effects continue to be felt today, including mass unemployment (masked by misleading government statistics), stagnant and falling wages, and the destruction of public services and social welfare programs. Many of the fascist recruits are a product of this crisis.

The capitalists are well aware of the shaky economic foundations of their rule, and as they have hollowed out the fabled middle class, they have militarized the police to be able to crush mass social unrest. That is why police in Ferguson, Missouri, have armored cars and police in Hamburg, Germany, deploy “riot control” equipment designed for civil war conditions. It is not just the Donald Trumps who promote this but also liberal Democrats like Barack Obama in the U.S. and social democrats in Europe. The proliferation of fascist gangs is part of the growing drive toward bonapartist strong-state rule, which the bourgeoisie resorts to when its normal political mechanisms are no longer adequate. As Trotsky warned in Germany in the early 1930s, calling on the state to act against the fascists is a ticket for disaster.

The Internationalist Group defends antifa activists against state repression and the fascist attacks. But the inconclusive skirmishes that have taken place in recent months will not stop the violent white supremacists. We seek to organize workers defense guards to defend all those threatened by the modern-day brown- and black-shirt thugs, whether they wear Perry Ellis polo shirts or olive drab fatigues. What is ultimately needed is a mass mobilization of the social power that can defeat both the fascists and their uniformed protectors: a class-conscious working class, led by a workers party that fights for socialist revolution to bring down the bloody rule of capital and sweep away all its defenders. ■

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# Abolish the Supreme Court and FBI With Workers Revolution!

## Kavanaugh Confirmation: You Can't Fight Supreme Court Reaction with Democrats

### Women's, Workers', Immigrants', Black, Gay and Trans Rights in Peril

On the evening of Saturday, October 6, Brett Kavanaugh was sworn in at the White House as the 144th Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, or SCOTUS, as it is known by Washington insiders. The hurried private ceremony came just a couple of hours after the Republican majority rammed through a 50-48 Senate vote in which all but one Democrat voted against confirmation. That vote took place the day after senators were allowed to view a secret report of a four-day FBI cover-up "investigation" into credible allegations of sexual assault and attempted rape made by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. No testimony was taken about allegations from two other women that Kavanaugh molested one at Yale and was present at a party where the other was raped. President Donald Trump, a fellow sexist and racist pig, was in a hurry to get past the spectacle hanging over the midterm elections, and to nail down a conservative super-majority on the court, whose black-robed "justices" issue unappealable judgments from on high.

In early September hearings, Democrats did little to pin down Kavanaugh on "hot button" issues including abortion, immigrants' and workers' rights. Nor did they focus on his role as a political operative for George W. Bush, beginning with disqualifying votes in Broward County, Florida, that led to the Supreme Court deciding that Bush II "won" the 2000 presidential election. They barely went after him for his blatant lies (exposed after his 2006 confirmation as a federal judge) about being uninvolved in White House discussions of warrantless wiretapping and torture of detainees. There was skirmishing over the one million pages of documents about his work as a top-level government lawyer, of which the Trump White House released 42,000 pages at the last minute. The battle was only joined when the allegations of sexual assault came out in the press, and for the next three weeks the media and halls of Congress were consumed with controversy over the character of the future Supreme Court justice. From all accounts, including those of friends and others who dismissed teenage "peccadillos," he went from drunken prep school party animal to drunken frat rat at Yale to cutthroat legal hit man for the Republicans.



Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth protested in New York City against Kavanaugh nomination, October 1.

On September 27, Dr. Blasey gave compelling testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee about an attempted rape committed by Kavanaugh and his friend Mike Judge against her when they were all attending elite private schools in the Washington area. The hearing was explosive, riveting the country and drawing nearly 11 million viewers across CNN, MSNBC and Fox News. To avoid the spectacle of a gang of male senators grilling a woman about a deeply traumatic experience, the Republican majority had a woman prosecutor from Maricopa County, Arizona, question Blasey on their behalf. (Yes, the same Maricopa County where the criminal torturer Sheriff Joe Arpaio, recently pardoned by Trump, set up a tent-city concentration camp holding hundreds of prisoners, many of them detained immigrants, in the scorching heat.) Dr. Blasey's testimony was utterly believable, and visibly painful to deliver. Judge Kavanaugh's blanket denial, on the other hand, was no more credible than Richard Nixon saying "I am not a crook." And then came the judge's petulant diatribe against his accusers and Democrats seeking "revenge" over the Clintons, the Trump election, etc.

Highlighting yet again the bankruptcy of this social and political system, the whole Kavanaugh confirmation charade is a powerful argument for socialist revolution.

But the political blowback, of course, is all about the midterm elections where the Democrats are seeking to topple Republican majorities in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. Protests over Kavanaugh were dominated by open and slightly veiled appeals to vote for Democratic candidates. Bernie Sanders supporter Linda Sarsour, now a member of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), declared after being dragged out of the Senate hearings, "I don't care if they are candidates you don't like.... I need you to vote Democratic" on November 6. There were chants, t-shirts and a big banner on the Capitol steps proclaiming "November is coming." The Dems also got a backhanded assist from their friends in the opportunist left. At an October 1 protest in New York City co-sponsored by the DSA, Socialist Alternative, the International Socialist Organization and Left Voice, speakers for the several social-democratic outfits warned about how the "corporate wing of the Democrats" could not be trusted, leaving the door open for presumed "progressive" Democrats, like Congressional candidate and DSAer Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

From its inception, the Supreme Court of the United States has been a bastion of reaction. It was intended as a check on Congress (a "barrier" to the "encroachments and oppressions of the representative body," as Alexander Hamilton put it in *Federalist Paper 78*), and thus inherently anti-democratic.<sup>1</sup> Already before Kavanaugh's confirmation, a hardline conservative majority was restored with the addition of Trump appointee Neil Gorsuch, who provided the decisive vote in the June decision on *Janus v. AFSCME*, intended to financially cripple

public sector unions. Where the high court has occasionally issued judgments providing limited protection for the rights of the oppressed – e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) for school integration, and *Roe v. Wade* (1973) for the right of abortion – this has been under the impact of mass struggle. Today, while the Democrats sought to avoid or downplay the hard issues in the fight over the latest abominable "justice," the new constellation on the high court heightens the clear and present danger to all our rights. On many fronts, struggles can only go forward by frontally opposing the central institutions of U.S. capitalist rule, SCOTUS among them.

The reality, as we have insisted on issues ranging from abortion rights to freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the foremost class-war prisoner in the United States, is that *there is no justice in the capitalist courts*. To defend our rights, working people and their allies must mobilize our *class* power. Striking teachers in West Virginia showed the way this year when they defied a court ruling that deemed their strike illegal, and won. Although the immediate gains were limited, their example quickly spread to other states. To effectively challenge the judicial system, which the bourgeoisie relies on to ensure its class rule, it's necessary to break with Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist parties and build a revolutionary workers party. Thus in the October 1 NYC protest the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth carried signs declaring, "Brett Kavanaugh, Reactionary Swine – Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution," "Democrats: No Friends of Women – Free Abortion on Demand!" "Janus Shows: Bosses' Courts, Bosses' State – We Need a Workers Government" and "Abolish the Supreme Court and the F.B.I. with Workers Revolution."

#### The Myth of an "Impartial" Supreme Court

Coming off the #MeToo flood of accusations and exposures of sexual harassment that has roiled the entertainment and political establishment over the last year, the battle over Kavanaugh's nomination was posed in terms of character and credibility. Dr. Blasey's testimony resonated with large numbers of women (and men), and the blatant misogyny unleashed against her left many shaken and indignant. In protests, numerous signs proclaimed "Believe Women." Yet the history of this country – with sex-crime allegations used as standard pretexts for lynchings and racist terror – exemplifies why Marxists cannot share the feminist article of faith that women would never lie, or have faulty memory, in accusations of sexual assault. This anti-democratic notion, counterposed to the principle of innocent until proven guilty, is disproved by numerous examples, such as the rape accusations against the black Scottsboro youths in the 1930s



Reactionary Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and his defender Lindsay Graham deliver sneering rants in Senate confirmation hearings.



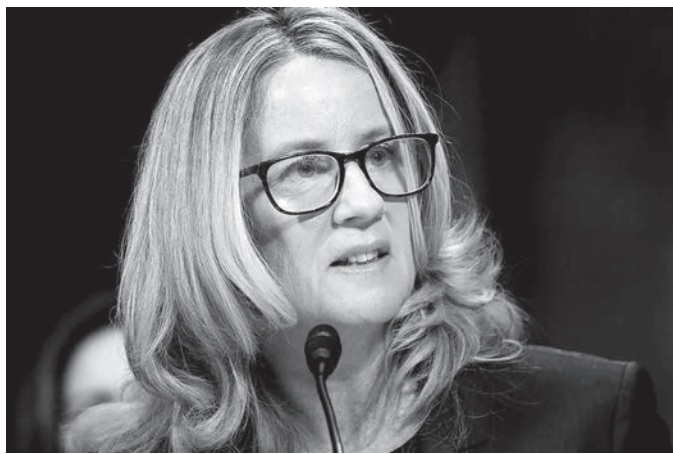
that fueled lynch law injustice. At the same time, an important aspect of women's oppression is that its manifestations are often interpersonal, taking place in private where there are only two individuals present and the question is whom to believe, an inherently fraught issue. In this case, Kavanaugh's accuser Dr. Blasey was convincing in her September 27 testimony as she described with as much dignity as possible the assault she had been subjected to, while the response of the sneering judge was to stonewall and rant against opponents of Trump, coupled with a threat:

"This whole two-week effort has been a calculated and orchestrated political hit fueled with apparent pent-up anger about President Trump and the 2016 election, fear that has been unfairly stoked about my judicial record, revenge on behalf of the Clintons, and millions of dollars in money from outside left-wing opposition groups.... What goes around comes around."

Kavanaugh was echoed by Senator Lindsay Graham, the down-home racist, good ol' boy from South Carolina, who launched a foam-flecked diatribe against Democrats and "mob rule." In the aftermath, the Republicans are trying to whip up a backlash at the polls, while fascistic misogynist Trump supporters have announced an ominous #HimToo hatefest in Portland, Oregon, for November 17. (Trade-union supporters of women's rights are already organizing to oppose that.) But more farsighted establishment figures are worried about a breakdown in trust in the Supreme Court. Mark Shields (PBS NewsHour, 8 October) recalled how on the 2000 election the court – by a 5-4 vote – effectively declared Republican Bush the winner: "I don't know, given today's climate ... if a court decision would be accepted without fighting in the streets."

Bourgeois democracy comes with a series of myths, like the idea that elections represent "the will of the people," that courts rule "impartially," and that a "separation of powers" supposedly protects against usurpation. But as anyone paying the slightest attention is aware, money is the deciding factor in elections, while the reputed autonomy of different branches of government is supposed to limit the "excesses" of democracy. All are part of the apparatus of the capitalist state, and whether or not there is a perception of "impartiality" and "legitimacy," this machinery upholds and enforces the interests of the bourgeois ruling class against those it exploits and oppresses. With a reactionary majority locked in, the hard right can now overturn any piece of legislation that "goes too far" in granting rights to workers and the oppressed. The Kavanaugh fight has exposed the crassly political nature of SCOTUS. As Marxists, we view cracks in the façade of bourgeois class rule as a potential boon to working-class consciousness. But to realize that potential it is necessary to spell out the lessons.

The treatment of Dr. Blasey was intended to avoid a repeat of the racist, sexist spectacle of Clarence Thomas's 1991 Supreme Court confirmation hearing, when a Judiciary Committee composed almost exclusively of white male senators (headed by Democrat Joe Biden) took turns lambasting Anita Hill, a black lawyer who accused Thomas of sexually harassing her when she worked for him at the Department of Education and the Equal Employment



**Dr, Christine Blasey Ford's testimony was credible, Kavanaugh's was stonewalling and a red-faced tirade.**

Opportunity Commission. But the 1991 hearing was a stand-in for the raging battle over abortion rights, which soon after were sharply curtailed in the Supreme Court's 1992 decision on *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. That ruling led to an avalanche of state restrictions to the point where today seven states (Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming) have only a single abortion clinic each.

### **An All-Round Reactionary for the Supreme Junta**

With the singular focus on Kavanaugh's character, there was little or no mention in the hearings of the fact that he is a hard-line opponent of immigrants' and workers' rights, as Democrats sought to avoid these topics. In 2008, as a judge in the U.S. District Court of Appeals in Washington, he dissented from a ruling in *Agri Processor Co. v. NLRB* upholding immigrant workers' 2005 vote to unionize. The appeals court cited a 1984 Supreme Court decision (*Sure-Tan Inc. v. NLRB*) that held that "since undocumented aliens are not among the few groups of workers exempted by Congress, they plainly come within the broad statutory definition of employee." Kavanaugh argued, "I would hold that an illegal immigrant worker is not an 'employee' under the NLRA [National Labor Relations Act]." The employer he was defending was a kosher meat packer notorious for pollution, violation of food safety and child labor laws, and brutal treatment of immigrant workers. But although the Court upheld the right of the workers in its Brooklyn distribution center to join a union, a few months after its 2008 ruling, I.C.E. police raided its Iowa packing plant, arresting and deporting almost 400 workers, eventually leading to a shutdown of the plant.

In 2012, Kavanaugh was part of a three-judge panel of the D.C. circuit court that overturned an NLRB ruling requiring that the (now defunct) Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City bargain with the union that employees had voted to join five years earlier. And in 2014, Kavanaugh dissented from the appeals court decision upholding a fine by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration against SeaWorld in Orlando for "exposing the trainers to recognized hazards." In that case, a 40-year-old woman trainer was dragged into the water by an Orca whale and drowned. Kavanaugh argued that because OSHA doesn't regulate NASCAR and the National Football League, for example, its fine had "departed from tradition"! In denying SeaWorld's responsibility to its employees, the future justice cynically asked if society should "paternalistically decide"

that participants "must be protected from themselves" because the risk of physical injury is too great. So this woman with 15 years' experience at the park should have known better and the employer is blameless, according to this judge who will now join the black-robed dictators in issuing verdicts on workers' rights from which there is no appeal.

Kavanaugh is in favor of voter suppression laws which have been used to exclude minority voters, mainly black, Latino and (currently in North Dakota) Native American. In 2012, he wrote the decision of a three-judge appeals court panel upholding a South Carolina voter ID law potentially eliminating 178,000 registered voters from the rolls, 36% of them African Americans. The new justice has also authored or joined rulings giving the government the right to massively violate rights in the name of inherent war powers. This has included holding prisoners indefinitely at Guantánamo without Congressional authorization, preventing Iraqis from suing military "contractors" for torturing inmates at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison, and holding the CIA immune from being sued by U.S. citizens for torturing and executing relatives. He also declared the massive surveillance of Americans' phone records exposed by Edward Snowden to be constitutional.

In addition, Kavanaugh would undercut the separation of church and state, having written a "friend of the court" brief advocating that a Texas school district be required to broadcast prayers over loudspeakers at the start of football games. And given his endorsement by the Christian conservative Family Research Council, many defenders of gay and transgender rights are rightly worried about Kavanaugh as the replacement for retiring justice Anthony Kennedy, who authored all of the Court's major gay-rights rulings. Now the Trump administration wants to further marginalize and stigmatize transgender people by grotesquely having the federal government register the genitalia each person is born with. This vicious and demented scheme will also assuredly come before the Supreme Court.

In short, Brett Kavanaugh is an all-round reactionary, a threat to workers' rights, immigrants' rights and women's rights, as well as to civil rights and civil liberties across the board. Little or none of this was brought out during the confirmation hearings, in part because *both* the partner parties of U.S. imperialism are enemies of those rights. Thus Senator Diane Feinstein claims to oppose torture, but sitting on the Intelligence Committee she knew about the Bush administration's waterboarding for years and didn't utter a peep. In response to the revelations about Kavanaugh's sordid morality, Trump and his supporters are screaming about "character assassination" and "due process." Marxists recognize due process as an important democratic right, without which the state could railroad anyone into prison on the basis of a mere allegation. But this Yalie drunkard dripping with class privilege was

not facing life in prison. Instead he was being vetted for a lifetime presidential appointment to a body whose dictatorial powers under the sacrosanct U.S. Constitution place it above any elected instance of government. Instead of a Supreme Court, just call it the Supreme Junta.

Due process? Tell it to Mumia Abu-Jamal, behind bars for the last 37 years (most of them on death row) for a murder he did not commit. Or to the remaining members of the MOVE commune still in jail after four decades for being the target of a massive police SWAT team assault. Did Fred Hampton, and the 37 other Black Panthers known to have been assassinated by police and FBI hit squads, get due process? Or the at least 348 Panthers who were framed up and jailed in the infamous COINTELPRO program? How about the 1,194 people killed by police in 2017, the 1,171 killed by cops in 2016, 1,222 in 2015 and 1,144 in 2014, including Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Akai Gurley, Laquan MacDonald and 12-year-old Tamir Rice – where was their due process? And then there are those targeted by the FBI in August 2017 as "Black Identity Extremists" while white supremacists, KKKers and other fascist killers were about to unleash deadly violence in Charlottesville, Virginia. Plus the immigrants who are rounded up, thrown into concentration camps and deported by the millions, both under Trump and "deporter in chief" Obama. They are in fact guaranteed due process under the Constitution. Shall we go interview the kids held in cages and tents in Texas and Arizona to see if they got it? But, surprise, you can't get in.

### **Abortion in the Crosshairs**

Among the hard-won rights that reactionaries (politely known as "conservatives") are eager to gut, abortion is at the very top of the list. The Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling established women's right to terminate a pregnancy under an implicit right to privacy derived from the due process clause of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. Ever since, reactionaries have waged a bloody and even murderous struggle to prevent women from exercising that right, with a view to eventually overturning the ruling. In the confirmation hearings, Democrats sidestepped the issue, pretending Kavanaugh never ruled in an abortion case by mostly limiting their questions to hypotheticals about whether he would ever rule against *Roe*. He repeatedly affirmed that *Roe v. Wade* is "settled law," a legalese sleight-of-hand that ostensibly marks a Supreme Court ruling as beyond consideration for being overturned. Yet in a 2003 email commenting on a draft op-ed by a judicial nominee of George W. Bush, Kavanaugh wrote:

"I am not sure that all legal scholars refer to *Roe* as the settled law of the land at the Supreme Court level since [the] Court can always overrule its precedent, and three current Justices on the Court would do so."

–"Leaked Kavanaugh Documents Discuss Abortion and Affirmative Action," *New York Times* (6 September).

Yes, indeed, the court can always overrule its own precedent and it has done so before. And Kavanaugh *does* have a record on abortion that makes it crystal clear where he stands.

As a judge on the U.S. Court of Ap-

*continued on page 21*



# U.S. Immigration Policies Always Have Been Racist and Always Will Be Until Capitalism Is Overthrown

## Smash the I.C.E. Gestapo with Workers Revolution!

On June 30, rallies and marches were held across the U.S. to demand an end to the Trump administration's grotesque policy of tearing apart immigrant families as they arrive at the border. Hundreds of thousands expressed their outrage over the Border Patrol ripping kids away from their mothers' and fathers' arms while the parents are prosecuted and the kidnapped children are shipped off to the far ends of the country. In New York City, an estimated 30,000 marched across the Brooklyn Bridge. Equal numbers protested in front of the White House in Washington while 50,000 reportedly came out in Chicago, 70,000 in Los Angeles, and thousands more in San Francisco, Boston and in over 780 protests held in every state.

Meanwhile, public opinion polls show two-thirds of the population opposed to the Trump family separation policy, while barely a quarter supported it. Two-thirds also oppose deportation of undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., while less than one in five say they should be forced to leave. And two-thirds oppose prosecuting families requesting asylum. 80% of the country, and 90% of those under the age of 35, say young undocumented immigrants brought here as children should be able to stay and become citizens. Yet despite this massive repudiation, Trump is playing to a hard core of racist, xenophobic supporters. While temporarily ceding to court orders, the government vows to replace cages for children with concentration camps for families on military bases.

Rage against the monstrous government child-snatching operation is heartfelt and deep, extending as well to many Republicans. Yet the June 30 marches and rallies, along with others in preceding weeks, were organized under the "Families Belong Together" logo by a plethora of Democratic Party front groups, headed up by the granddaddy of them all, MoveOn.org. Their aim was to energize liberals to head to the polls



Internationalist contingent at an "Abolish I.C.E." demonstration outside the NYC office of New York governor Andrew Cuomo, July 31.

in the November 6 mid-term elections in hopes of winning control of the House of Representatives and/or Senate. "Remember in November" was the overarching theme. But we remember that it was Democrat Obama who built up the deportation machine now being used by Trump, and who first began massively detaining families at the border.

Among the slogans prominently raised on signs and in chants at the June 30 protests was the radical-sounding demand to *abolish I.C.E.* (the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency of the Department of Homeland Security). For many this expressed a desire to go beyond fighting whatever is the latest atrocity perpetrated by the Trump administration and express overall opposition to the hated police force that is terrorizing millions of

immigrants across the country. The mass revulsion against *la migra* is fully justified. The Internationalist Group calls to *smash I.C.E.* as part of a *workers revolution* that will topple the entire repressive apparatus – the core of the capitalist state – that defends the brutal rule of capital over the working people and oppressed.

But socialist revolution is hardly the aim of the liberal and reformist political forces today calling to abolish I.C.E., and anything short of that will leave the racist U.S. immigration system intact. This slogan is being pushed by various "progressive" Democrats precisely in order to pin the blame for the anti-immigrant offensive on Trump alone ... and to obscure the fact that Obama deported far more immigrants than any Republican. In the remote possibility that this criminal agency were ever "abolished" by Congress or the executive, the result would be another racist and bonapartist police agency. Before I.C.E. was formed in 2003, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was justly despised by defenders of immigrants' rights.

Moreover, almost all of the proponents of abolishing I.C.E. are *not* calling for abolishing the Border Patrol, the agency that is actually rounding up and separating moms and kids on the border with Mexico and herding them into holding pens. Why not? Because the Democrats don't want to be labeled "soft on illegal immigration." They raise the call to abolish I.C.E. as a way to divert the fight against the militarization of the border regions, which has proceeded apace under both Democrats and Republicans. And while blaming the inhumane treatment of immigrants exclusively on I.C.E., the cynical bourgeois politicians

raising the demand say nothing about the fact that "deporter-in-chief" Obama was the boss of I.C.E. and could have ordered a halt to its horrific actions "with the stroke of a pen"!

These omissions are no accident. The demand to "abolish I.C.E." originally comes from the Bernie Sanders wing of the Democratic Party (although Sanders himself shies away from it). After the "socialist"-posturing senator from Vermont endorsed Hillary Clinton in 2016, some Sanders staffers set up a political action committee called Brand New Congress. The aim was to get "hundreds" of new (Democratic) candidates elected to Congress in 2018 on their liberal platform. Brand New Congress calls in its Immigration Platform to abolish I.C.E. and instead to "establish legal immigration centers around the world" (i.e., not in the U.S.). It also calls to "guarantee border security" by "chang[ing] the mission of CBP" (Customs and Border Protection, which runs the Border Patrol), and to "end border privatization."

Likewise, the Brand New Congress platform criticizes the "flaws" of Ronald Reagan's 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, but doesn't say a word about Bill Clinton's 1996 horrific "Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act." As of earlier this year, Brand New Congress had endorsed 26 candidates, including soliciting Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (a former Sanders campaign worker) to run for Congress in the Bronx and northern Queens. Another liberal outfit that calls to abolish I.C.E. is Justice Democrats, which has endorsed 38 candidates in the November elections, including Ocasio-Cortez, who recently won the Democratic primary (which virtually guarantees her election in the fall). Also actively soliciting votes for her campaign in the capitalist Democratic Party primary were Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and Socialist Alternative (SAIt).

There is much to be said about the Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez "phenomenon." She has been lionized by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, CNN and other liberal media outlets. Her candidacy is a lifesaver for the Democrats, to ensure that any push for "resistance" to Trump remains safely within the bounds of that hoary capitalist party. Speaking to National Public Radio, Ocasio-Cortez said, "We need to make sure that people are, in fact, documented." To CNN, she said, "We absolutely do need to make sure that our borders are secure." In calling to abolish I.C.E., her web site contrasts it unfavorably to the prior INS. In the CNN interview Ocasio-Cortez called to "replace it [I.C.E.] with a humane agency that is directed toward safe passage instead of the direction of criminalization." This is peddling a lie. The idea that the capitalist state's brutal immigration police can be



At June 30 NYC march for immigrants' rights. Free all the detainees! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!



transmogrified into a “humane” institution is a textbook example of liberal/reformist delusions.

Those calling to abolish I.C.E. call it a terrorist organization. So it is, *and so was the INS*. In the mid-1980s, to cite one example, some 500 inmates of the INS’ El Centro, California, concentration camp, most of them Salvadoran refugees from the brutal civil war and death squads sponsored by the U.S., were “forced to stand outside in the blistering, 100-plus degree desert sun 14 hours a day while their air-conditioned barracks are empty and locked” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 381, 14 June 1985). No less terrorist are the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) *in toto*, the Department of Justice, Navy SEALs, Army and Marines special forces, and all military and police agencies of the capitalist state, whose job it is to terrorize the exploited and oppressed into submission.

In addition to DSA Democratic candidates like Ocasio-Cortez and Julia Salazar, the call to abolish I.C.E. has now been taken up by some mainstream Democratic elected officials, including New York senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren and NYC mayor Bill de Blasio. Gillibrand is part of the Democratic Party establishment, tight with Chuck Schumer (the “senator from Wall Street”). She is a cheerleader for the U.S. Army’s 10th Mountain Division (headquartered in Fort Drum, NY), including visiting their division headquarters in Kandahar, Afghanistan. On CNN, Gillibrand called to get rid of I.C.E., to “start over, reimagine it, and build something that actually works.” De Blasio said “I.C.E.’s time has come and gone.” And at the June 30 protest in Boston, Warren called for “replac-

ing I.C.E. with something that reflects our morality and that works” or “reflects the morality of the country.”

On July 12, members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus from Seattle, Washington (Pramila Jayapal and Adam Smith), Portland, Oregon (Earl Blumenauer), Madison, Wisconsin (Mark Pocan), Worcester/Amherst, Massachusetts (Jim McGovern) and New York City (Yvette Clarke, Adriano Espaillat, José Serrano and Nydia Velázquez) introduced a bill, HR 6361, to “Terminate Immigration and Customs Enforcement” and form a “Commission to Study and Establish a Fair and Humane System of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.” The bill lists the massive violations of “detainees’ rights, their humane treatment, and the provision of a safe and healthy environment” as documented by the DHS Office of Inspector General. Among them:

- Over half of the deaths in I.C.E. detention showed evidence of inadequate medical care.
- Of 1,224 complaints of sexual and physical abuse in I.C.E. custody between 2010 and 2017, only 30 were ever investigated.

But when the Republican House leadership announced plans to hold a vote on HR 6361, its authors declared that they would vote “no” on their own “abolish I.C.E.” bill!

So much for the “humane alternative” to the terrorist I.C.E. This underscores that Democratic politicians’ embrace of “abolish I.C.E.” is an electoral maneuver. This is also true of liberal challengers like Cynthia Nixon (New York) and Randy Bryce (Wisconsin), Green Party politicians like Howie Hawkins (New York), and others. There are, of course, plenty of liberal Democrats

who are *not* calling to abolish I.C.E., notable among them Bernie Sanders (for all purposes a Democrat though he claims to be an “independent”), on the grounds that it is “not realistic,” and could drive away “moderate” voters. The answer to that, media-savvy promoters (like “marketing specialist” Shannon McClain, founder of Families Belong Together) would tell them is *segmented marketing*: call for abolishing I.C.E. in solidly Democratic districts (like the Bronx), or in solidly Republican districts where the Democrat will lose anyway so it can’t hurt and will energize the Democratic base, and downplay or oppose it in highly contested “swing districts.”

Many of these same capitalist politicians denounce Trump’s policies as “un-American,” a phrase that should

send shivers up the spine of any leftist who recalls the witch-hunting House Un-American Activities Committee. Conveying this patriotic message, the Democratic Party front group Families Belong Together printed up signs showing an immigrant girl behind bars on an American flag background. Speakers at the June 30 New York City protest demonstration called repeatedly for an immigration policy and agency reflecting “our values,” or “American values.” But the morality and values of U.S. capitalism meant separating untold numbers of enslaved and Native American children from their parents, and separating them when parents are jailed or, in millions of cases every year, when child welfare agencies (many of them notoriously abusive) order it. As for immigrant-bashing, like racist attacks on black people, it is “as American as apple pie.”

The cringe-worthy appeals to patriotic myth-making have a political purpose: to show that Democrats’ criticisms of the immigration cops do not challenge, but on the contrary seek to reinforce, the bourgeois ideology that says this is “our” country, “our” flag, “our” capitalist state. It’s just not “our president” right now. In opposition to this, Internationalists proclaim, “Asian, Latin, black and white – Workers of the world unite!”

There can be no “humane” immigration agency under racist American capitalism, which depends both on victimizing and expelling immigrant workers in periods of economic downturn, and bringing in large numbers of immigrant workers without rights during boom periods. Colonial America was built on the labor of chattel slaves and indentured servants. The 1790 immigration act limited naturalization to “free white persons.” The Page Act of 1875 was introduced to “end the danger of cheap Chinese labor and immoral Chinese women.” It was succeeded by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. A wave of European immigration at the turn of the 20th century reflected the need of the expanding U.S. economy for an industrial and mining workforce. But when those immigrant workers fought back, the bosses responded with bullets (such as in the 1914 Ludlow massacre of largely immigrant miners in Colorado).

And when the need for immigrant labor diminished in the boom-bust cycle of capitalism, the capitalist politicians passed the Immigration Act of 1924 to restrict the numbers of Jews, Slavs and Italians and to block Asians. During the 1930s Depression, the U.S. government launched a Mexican Repatriation program that “repatriated” some 400,000 people to Mexico, half of them U.S. citizens. In the late 1930s and early ’40s, Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi Holocaust were barred. In WWII, over 100,000 Japanese Americans were “interned.” The U.S. imported large num-



**Patriotic appeals to “American values” were prominent at June 30 immigrant rights march in New York.**

Cedric von Niederhausen/Bloomberg

bers of Mexican workers during the war, and then in the post-Korean War recession ran “Operation Wetback” that deported over 1 million. In the first decade of this century 10 million immigrants entered the U.S., but in the post-2007 depression Obama deported over 8 million.

That is some of the racist reality hidden by patriotic appeals to “American values”! No matter how much talk there is of restructuring, repurposing, reimagining or otherwise reforming or even “abolishing” I.C.E., there never has been and there never will be “people-friendly” immigration police agencies under capitalism. You can bank on that.

Along with sundry Democrats, in addition to the DSA and SAlt, the call to “abolish I.C.E.” has also been raised by anarchists, reflecting the fact that they are radical liberals at heart, as well as by reformists such as the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), the social-democratic Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) and International Socialist Organization (ISO); as well as by the anti-union, fake-leftist World Socialist Web Site. Some of these same groups also call for “open borders,” another case of liberal/anarchist utopianism. Capitalism is based on the nation-state, and hence borders. Even a workers state would have borders that must be defended against counterrevolution, while granting full citizenship to all immigrants, as the Bolsheviks did. As we noted in *The Internationalist* No. 44, Summer 2016:

“The revolutionary workers state, while it needed to defend its borders against counterrevolutionary threats, granted full citizenship rights to all foreign workers who lived and worked in Soviet territory.”

As the Spartacist League wrote of the “open borders” slogan back when it still stood on the program of revolutionary Trotskyism:

“This demand, like calls for a ‘fair’ or ‘non-racist’ immigration policy, is utopian under capitalism. And in fact, an open border ultimately threatens the democratic right of self-determination of the weaker power.... A truly ‘open’ border under capitalism would enable American moneybags to buy up northern Mexico, not unlike what they did to Texas over a century ago.”

–“Labor: Smash Racist Immigration Law!” *Workers Vanguard* No. 427, 1 May 1987

The then-revolutionary SL also called

*continued on page 11*



**“American values”: 55 women and children died in massacre of striking immigrant (as well as Latino and African American) miners in Ludlow, Colorado, in April 1914. The monument, erected by the United Mine Workers, was vandalized in 2003 and subsequently restored.**



# Why Big-Business Press Joins Reformist Left in Hailing Primary “Earthquake” Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to the Rescue of the Democratic Party

JULY 31 – The Democratic primary victory of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez over ten-term incumbent Joseph Crowley in New York’s 14th Congressional District has become one of the hottest political topics of the year. It’s “the age of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,” announced CNN on June 26 when the 28-year-old member of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) routed Crowley, chairman of the House Democratic Caucus. In the solidly Democratic district made up of parts of the Bronx and Queens, her election to Congress is virtually assured.

The primary victory by “AOC,” as many took to calling Ocasio-Cortez, was hyped as a “political earthquake” by media from left to right. The gutter-press *New York Post* tried to whip up a scare (and raise sales) by headlining “Red Alert.” Yet bastions of the big-business press were very far from treating her win as a threat. In a glowing statement by its editorial board, the *New York Times* (“What Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Victory Means,” 28 June) called it “a vivid sign of the changing of the guard” in the Democratic Party, as “the liberal base is fired up” and “many newly motivated women and other activists around the country” prepare to take on Republicans at the polls this November. “Many voters are ready for something different. Politicians across the country should take note,” the editorial proclaimed.

The *Times* editors were far from alone in hailing the news.

- “Ocasio-Cortez Just Did Democrats a Big Favor,” noted the *Washington Post* (27 June).
- The “thrilling upset victory” of Ocasio-Cortez is a “Big Deal,” declared *New York* magazine (27 June).
- “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Insurgent Triumph,” headlined *The Nation* (30 July).

Something is going on here, and would-be leftists would do well to think through what it means. Even the most starry-eyed can’t possibly believe that the likes of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* – pillars of imperialist liberalism for generations – have suddenly gone “socialist.” Instead, the wave of glowing coverage reflects a view articulated by *The Guardian* (27 June): “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez represents the future of the Democratic party.” If sectors of the bourgeoisie hail this as very good news indeed, it is because they have become increasingly worried that the future of this racist, imperialist party, widely discredited among youth and even sectors of its traditional base, is in question.

So what is this “political earthquake” about? Far from seeking to bury the world’s oldest capitalist party, the “democratic socialists” hailed by the *Times* seek to rescue, rebuild and refurbish it. That has always been the reason for existence of the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America, which Ocasio-Cortez joined after the DSA endorsed her campaign. This is the *opposite* of genuine socialism as put forward by



Kansas congressional candidate James Thompson with “democratic socialists” Senator Bernie Sanders and congressional nominee Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in Wichita, July 20. One calls to “abolish I.C.E.,” the others don’t, but they all are for “secure borders.” And they all run for office in the Democratic Party of imperialist war, racist repression and mass deportations.

Karl Marx, who stressed that the word can only be a deception unless it is based on the fight to win the political independence of the working class. For the workers and oppressed in the U.S., the most urgent and central task is a systematic and thorough break from the bosses’ Democratic Party, which chains them to the politics and institutions of the capitalist order.

That a panoply of reformist “socialists” were in tune with the *Times* underscores why revolutionary Marxists call them *pseudo-socialists*. The DSA hailed “AOC”’s primary win in a June 27 statement titled “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, The Political Revolution Continues!” harking back to the Bernie Sanders campaign that spurred the group’s rapid growth. For their part, the hipster social-democrats of *Jacobin* magazine (3 July) claimed: “On June 26, 2018, everything changed for the socialist movement in the United States” when the “insurgent race” of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez “catapulted the politics of democratic socialism onto the national stage.”

Groups purportedly to the DSA’s left joined in the jubilation.

- *Socialist Alternative* (2 July), which has dived headlong into Bernie Sanders’ Democratic “political revolution,” hailed the “political earthquake” and bragged about having “worked with the Ocasio-Cortez campaign to deal a heavy defeat to Crowley and his corrupt backers.”
- “Any socialist with a political pulse should be ecstatic about the victory of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,” wrote leaders of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), even as they reminded readers that “The Democrats are a capitalist party” (*Socialist Work-*

*er*, 11 July). The article, titled “How far can the left go in the Democratic Party?” is part of a roiling public debate in the ISO.

- *Workers World* (1 July) greeted the “amazing upset,” saying “Ocasio-Cortez will have the opportunity to really shake things up.” “We cannot predict how all this will play out,” but “She could be part of the process of people understanding why they need to mobilize independently of the system’s political machinery.”

So these reformists join in building illusions in the capitalist-imperialist Democratic Party which under liberal president Barack Obama was running the imperialist U.S. wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, deporting millions of immigrants (more than any U.S. government in history), the party that is now rattling sabers over “Rusagate” and calls Trump soft on North Korea. Meanwhile, on the home front Democratic mayors preside over the racist police murder of hundreds of black people yearly. The reformists just debate over “how far can they go” in this blatant class collaboration.

As the DSA held its national convention a year ago, *The Internationalist* explained the real political function of “Democratic (Party) Socialism” in an article distributed outside (in response to which DSA honchos called the cops on our comrades):

“The DSA helps the Democrats use youth revolted by the status quo to yet again shore up that status quo by putting their liberal illusions in ‘democracy’ in the service of the political system of imperialist rule. The DSA ‘left’ does its bit with double-talk, fostering confusion and drowning any question of class principle in a soup of ‘flexible

tactics,’ with *Jacobin* adding a dollop of sophistication to the social-democratic broth. And behind them jogs a crowd of pseudo-socialists hoping to catch up with the DSA after losing out in the contest to see who could best tail after ‘Bernie’ and his ‘political revolution’ for Democratic renewal. By pushing the Sanders ‘revolution,’ they all helped the U.S. political system fulfill one of its central functions in a period of turmoil.” –“The ABCs of the DSA” (4 August 2017), reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 50, Winter 2017. This is also the lead article in a 70-page *Internationalist* pamphlet available from Mundial Publications (go to [www.internationalist.org/orderhere](http://www.internationalist.org/orderhere) to order online).

Members of the DSA “left,” together with their myriad camp followers in other groups, claimed that our critique was just a symptom of our supposed sectarian aversion to recognizing “new realities.” The influx of new members, they insisted, was radicalizing the DSA in a process that would push it away from and eventually out of the Democratic Party. The scientific Marxist term for this is: bullshit. As shown by the Ocasio-Cortez campaign, and the response to her primary victory, the DSA and its new members are moving further *into* the Democratic Party. And this, in turn, helps push the fake-left groups cheering them on further to the right, as they seek ever deeper unity with the mainstream social democrats.

## “Girl from the Bronx” Becomes a “Political Rock Star”

In the days and weeks following her victory, everyone wanted to know Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s story. Where did she come from? How did she topple a powerful Democratic Party boss? What did “democratic so-



cialism” mean to her? With her primary win, “The future of the Democratic Party is suddenly more clear,” wrote *Rolling Stone* (27 June). So how did it come about that “An Instant Political Superstar Is Born in a New York Primary,” as the *New York Times* (28 June) headlined its front-page story?

Her campaign video, made by Means of Production, a Detroit-based media company with ties to the DSA, portrays her as a veritable David going up against the Democratic Party “establishment” Goliath. “Women like me aren’t supposed to run for office,” says Ocasio-Cortez over a montage of her campaigning in immigrant and working-class neighborhoods. The marketing is flawless – a “champion” for the struggling, working-class New Yorker, ascended from among their own ranks, here to turn the Democratic Party around.

Donald Trump won’t know “how to deal with a girl from the Bronx,” she told talk show host Stephen Colbert. Maureen Dowd of the *Times* picked up the theme in a column titled “Local Girl Makes Good” (30 June), calling her win “a line straight out of a J. Lo Cinderella movie.” Scores of articles recount how until a few months ago she was tending bar at a Mexican restaurant near Union Square. Presented as the millennial everywoman, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is relatable to a generation of youth with college degrees stuck in low-wage, part-time jobs.

While crafting an image of someone who reluctantly chose to run for office – an outsider answering the call of duty – in fact Ocasio-Cortez is firmly rooted in Democratic politics. She phone-banked for Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign, and helped found the Bronx headquarters for Bernie Sanders’ 2016 presidential run. After some Sanders staffers set up a political action committee called Brand New Congress, Ocasio-Cortez was among those they solicited to run for office. She was also one of 38 candidates endorsed by another liberal pressure group, Justice Democrats. And this goes back a number of years.

As a feature article in the *New Yorker* (23 July) by David Remnick explains, she worked in Edward Kennedy’s Boston office while attending university, “dealing with constituent concerns, including immigrant issues.” Today, her “ideological lodestar” is Bernie Sanders, the *New Yorker* editor notes. “When I asked her about her politi-

## This is What “Social-Imperialism” Looks Like

Republican senator John McCain was an imperialist war criminal notorious for bombing civilians in Vietnam; war-mongering from Indochina to Afghanistan, Gaza, Iraq and Syria; and being an all-purpose racist reactionary.

“I admire President Nixon’s courage” for ordering “the mining, the blockade, the bombing” of North Vietnam as part of his escalation of genocidal terror (which included the bombing of Hanoi’s Bach Mai civilian hospital) in 1972.

—John McCain (2008)

When McCain died on August 26, his imperialist colleagues and would-be colleagues fell all over themselves glorifying this enemy of the world’s oppressed. The paeans of praise included:

“John McCain was an American hero, a man of decency and honor and a friend of mine.”

—Senator and Democratic “socialist”

cal heroes ... there was no mention of anyone in the Marxist pantheon. She named Robert F. Kennedy. In college, reading his speeches – ‘that was my jam,’ she said.” (RFK is the guy who bugged Martin Luther King’s phones, waged a union-busting campaign against the Teamsters, and tried to wipe out the Cuban Revolution with big brother JFK, from the Bay of Pigs to threatening to blow up the world in the Cuban Missile Crisis, to launching endless attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro.)

So what about “socialism”? The *New Yorker* feature is titled “Left Wing of the Possible,” after the mantra of DSA founder Michael Harrington, who “sought to push the Democratic Party left,” as Remnick writes, adding approvingly: “‘The left wing of the possible’ reflects how Ocasio-Cortez practices politics.” Remnick quotes Saikat Chakrabarti of the Justice Democrats, one of AOC’s closest advisers, quipping that “the right did us a service by calling Obama a socialist.... What people call socialism these days is Eisenhower Republicanism!”

On Twitter the day after the primary, AOC (@Ocasio2018) accused today’s GOP of being “weak on crime ... weak on national security ... weak on family values.”

Unlike some fans on the left, Ocasio-Cortez makes no pretense of heading toward a break from the Democratic Party – she is up-front about the goal of reforming and renewing it as a centerpiece of her campaign. In a series of tweets on June 19, she emphasized: “We need to talk about the future of the Democratic Party.... WE have to ELECT a new Democratic Party.... We need to change the Democratic Party because that is what we CAN change.”

A key plank in her primary platform was the call for a



presidential contender Bernie Sanders “John McCain’s legacy represents an unparalleled example of human decency and American service.... He meant so much, to so many.”

—Democratic congressional candidate and DSA member Alexandria Ocasio-

Cortez (25 August 2018, on her Twitter account).

Remember this when you hear Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez & Co. praised by pseudo-socialist groups purveying what Lenin called social-imperialism: socialism in words, imperialism in reality. ■

“Green New Deal,” together with standard Democratic calls for gun control, “curbing” Wall Street by restoring the Glass-Steagall Act, to “reform our [sic] criminal justice system to be safer for everyone,” etc. This was augmented by Sanders-style calls (with echoes of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman and Lyndon B. Johnson-style Democratic Party liberalism) for Medicare for all, higher education or trade school for all, and a “federal jobs guarantee.”

None of this represents the slightest challenge to the capitalist state or property relations, yet they have been cited as evidence of alleged radicalism, together with Ocasio-Cortez’s call to “abolish” the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency. Just how “radical” that call really is can be seen by her official platform’s explanation (ocasio2018.com) that “Unlike prior immigration enforcement under the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service], ICE operates outside the scope of the Department of Justice and is unaccountable to our nation’s standards of due process.” Interviewed on NPR the day after her primary win, she said “we need to have a secure border,” stating: “We need to make sure that people are, in fact, documented.” (See “Smash the I.C.E. Gestapo with Workers Revolution,” *The Internationalist*, 14 July.)

And it’s not only establishment Democrats, even some moderate Republicans are clear-eyed about Ocasio-Cortez: “Worried About Socialism Coming to America? Calm Down,” headlined a Bloomberg (2 July) opinion piece on AOC:

“[T]he new socialist movement doesn’t look that different from a standard progressive Democratic agenda. The big new ideas are single-payer health care and a federal job guarantee. These are expensive programs that will be difficult to implement correctly, but both could lead to higher economic output as well as greater quality of life for the poor and working class. In other words, the new socialist movement may turn out to be more about evolution than revolution.”

Investors need not worry, *Bloomberg* reassures them, the “evolution” will be good for business! For sectors of the bourgeoisie worried about the Democratic Party being widely discredited, particularly among youth, this is a “breath of fresh air” indeed.

### “Establishment” Reboot?

Behind the pervasive enthusiasm among establishment liberals for Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Democratic primary victory there are cold political calculations. It’s all about the midterm elections. This is also true of so-called “women’s marches,” pro-gun control youth “anti-violence” marches and the Democrat-dominated national protests over the Trump administration’s family separation policy of snatching immigrant children from their parents at the border. All of these have been orchestrated by NGOs (non-governmental organizations) that are front groups of the Democratic Party, including moveon.org, riseandresist.org, womensmarch.com, marchforourlives.com, etc.

The Democrats are well aware that to win back the House of Representatives, and possibly even the Senate, they will have to bring out millions of young voters in November. Yet the “millennial” youth in their late ’20s who overwhelmingly despise Trump are also deeply disaffected with the electoral process and the Democratic Party in particular. Some 50% of eligible millennials voted in 2008, due to enthusiasm for Democrat Barack Obama, the first black president in U.S. history. But as disenchantment with Obama set in, the youth vote dropped to less than 20% in the 2014 midterms. And millennials are now the largest age cohort.

To overcome this, the Democratic Party number crunchers know that they have to counter youth disaffection with establishment politics. They are also aware of the several polls that show that a majority of young people say they prefer socialism to capitalism. While this sends shivers down the spines of Fox News, Glenn Beck and sundry right-wingers, as well as “centrist” Democrats of the Clinton ilk, more far-seeing liberals look beyond the label to see that the actual content of what Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA are calling for doesn’t go beyond old-line “progressive” Democratic politics. Spicing it up a little with the word “socialism” may up its millennial market appeal.

“No, Ocasio-Cortez Is Not Launching a Socialist Revolution,” headlined *Politico* (27 June) – and by “socialist rev-



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez greets supporters the day after her primary victory, together with political marketer Saikat Chakrabarti, former director of organizing technology for the Bernie Sanders campaign, co-founder of Brand New Congress and founder and executive director of Justice Democrats.



olution” it means “purging the corporatist Democrats out of the party establishment.” Instead, “the Democratic Party’s ‘big tent’ just got a little bigger.” House minority leader Nancy Pelosi’s initial reaction to Ocasio-Cortez’s victory was dismissive, saying it was just about “one district.” The next day, on CNN, Ocasio-Cortez said “we’re in the middle of a movement in this country ... it’s not just one district.” But this “movement” is to the polls, to vote for the Democrats.

In another widely quoted interview, in which she said “democratic socialism” is something she “doesn’t lead with,” Ocasio-Cortez explained the strategy: “We need to be identifying our safest seat, and using those seats to advance the most ambitious vision possible that the Democratic Party wants to espouse.” So challenge old-guard Dems only where the Democratic nominee is assured of winning. The interview was published in the social-democratic magazine *In These Times* (25 June), which in a prior piece (“Signs of a Democratic Spring,” 14 May), profiled a dozen candidacies resulting from “a long-germinating rebellion within the Democratic Party that ... might just save the withered institution from itself.”

The point that “new blood is urgently needed” in the Democratic Party was central to the *Washington Post* (27 June) column “Ocasio-Cortez Just Did Democrats a Big Favor,” which argued that her primary victory “gives the Democrats a vital chance to own the emerging electorate of young, female, nonwhite and progressive voters. This coalition can beat Trump in 2020....” It’s noteworthy that, following the fashion among many liberals right now, this essentially writes off white male workers, *many of whom voted for Barack Obama* but went for Trump in large part because they were fed up with the economic policies of the “free-trade” establishment Democrats and Republicans that threatened their livelihoods.

Pillars of the Democratic establishment signaled that they were getting the “new blood needed” message loud and clear, even if some recalcitrant Clintonites played deaf. None other than Democratic National Committee chair Tom Perez – a particular nemesis of “Berniecrats” – proclaimed that Ocasio-Cortez “represents the future of our party.” The phrase has become a mantra. New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, congratulated Ocasio-Cortez for her primary win (as Pelosi eventually did as well), and endorsed key aspects of Ocasio-Cortez’s platform, including abolishing I.C.E.

As the *Huffington Post* (4 July) reported, “establishment Democrats are now knocking on her door. A little over a week since her upset of Joe Crowley... Ocasio-Cortez finds herself as an unlikely kingmaker. She’s used her newfound power to boost the political fortune of a slew of candidates....” AOC hit the campaign trail in the Midwest, rallying Democrats from Kansas and Missouri to Michigan, and the fundraising circuit on the West Coast. And back in New York, Cynthia Nixon, the actor and de Blasio ally challenging Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo, has begun calling herself a democratic socialist.

As the *Guardian* noted, “progressives argue that they must ‘expand the electorate’ by bringing new voters into the po-

# SAlt’s Sawant Backs Seattle’s Top Cop

**When Seattle police veteran Carmen Best (left) was appointed chief of police, city council member Kshama Sawant (right) of Socialist Alternative voted to confirm the top cop. Police are the armed fist of the capitalist ruling class.**

A “socialist” voting to support the chief of police? Yes, it just happened in Seattle, Washington, when city council member Kshama Sawant of Socialist Alternative (SAlt) “stunned” observers by voting on August 13 to confirm the city’s new chief of police. As capitalism’s guardians in blue murder black and Latino people every day, this shows how low fake-socialist groups are willing to go as they immerse themselves in bourgeois politics.

One of the opportunist organizations most avidly purveying “Sanders socialism,” SAlt has faced big problems with the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America. Hying the Vermont senator’s “political revolution” for Democratic renewal was supposed to help it hit the big time, but it was the DSA that reaped the benefits, while SAlt has been left in the dust. This has meant increasing upheaval, with chunks of the organization decamping to the DSA.

In contrast, some members repelled by SAlt’s “Bernie turn” have sought to understand the roots of its opportunism. This led former leaders of its New Hampshire branch to investigate the politics of the Internationalist Group, and fuse with the IG in June. (See “Class Struggle Education League Fuses with Internationalist Group” and “An Open Letter to Socialist Alterna-

tive Oppositionists, Past and Present,” *The Internationalist* No. 52, May-June 2018.)

Kshama Sawant is SAlt’s political superstar who gave a “socialist welcome to Bernie Sanders” when he campaigned in Seattle (promoting a revival of FDR’s New Deal on the anniversary of Social Security). Her alliances with local Democrats have caused unease among some SAlt members, but the group is determined to move further and further into Democratic Party terrain. As a badge of social democrats’ aspiration to administer the capitalist state, SAlt pretends that cops are “workers in uniform.” Sawant already praised the process of hiring the previous police chief, Kathleen O’Toole, back in 2014, saying it was “positive ... that a woman will be at the head of what has been and still is a male-dominated bastion,” and describing the new chief’s call for a “tiered approach for policing protests” as a “welcome change” ([sawant.seattle.gov](http://sawant.seattle.gov), 23 June 2014).

Now Sawant has taken the next step. When O’Toole stepped down last year, she was replaced on an interim basis by Carmen Best, a 26-year veteran of the Seattle PD, who was then confirmed for the top cop job at the August 13 city council meeting. “Stunning the crowd, Councilmember Kshama Sawant voted ‘yes’ in support of Best,” reported KOMOnews.com. Sawant justified her backing of Best to become the chief of capitalist cop

repression with the claim that since Best is African American, Sawant’s support was “a vote of solidarity with my black and brown fellow community members” (Seattle City Council Insight, 13 August).

No, Sawant’s vote was a pledge of allegiance to the racist capitalist state. Since ghettos and barrios across the country erupted against racist police terror in the 1960s, the ruling class has allowed some black faces in high places, insultingly hoping this could piece off the black population that continues to face cop terror. This racist repression goes on today, regardless of whether the person heading up the institution enforcing it is black, a woman, or both. Just look at Baltimore, where there was a black woman mayor and black police chief, and almost half the cops on the force were black, when the police murder of Freddie Gray shook the city and the country. As members of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth chanted in protests against the racist police murders of Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile and so many others: **Only revolution can bring justice!** Part of building the party to lead that revolution is relentless exposure of the opportunists that sully the word “socialism” with their obeisance to the bourgeoisie. ■

litical system – as did Ocasio-Cortez and Sanders.” The “democratic socialism” ploy is all part of a get-out-the-vote operation.

## Tripping Over DSA Coattails – ISO Headed for Split?

Ocasio-Cortez’s big primary win and massive media prominence have deepened the dilemmas that Bernie Sanders’ “political revolution” posed for the opportunist left. Pushed and pulled to be more and more “Democratic” and less and less “socialist,” they’re scrambling to figure out how best to enthuse over “AOC” but still justify their own existence, as the DSA registered yet another growth spurt after her victory. For these currents, after all, nothing succeeds like success – even if it’s “success” in building the illusions and mechanisms for rebranding and rejuvenating the imperialist Democratic Party.

While cynically pretending, mainly

for internal purposes, to have something in common with Leninism and Trotskyism, groups like Socialist Alternative (SAlt) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) gush over the DSA’s growth and “successes,” rightly seeing themselves as part of a social-democratic confraternity. But grabbing a piece of the action won’t be so easy.

So they seek to maneuver. While proudly proclaiming that it joined with the DSA to campaign for Ocasio-Cortez, SAlt faces more internal turmoil as it inevitably confronts the question: “All the way with the DSA?” Its July 2 article states: “After the exhilarating victory of Ocasio-Cortez, it is possible to go further and call on Ocasio-Cortez, Cynthia Nixon, the Working Families Party, the National Nurses United, DSA, and others to begin discussing the launching of a new mass membership organization” on

a “radical program,” which “rejects corporate cash” and “runs candidates against the Democratic Party establishment and independent of them.” To be sure, “independent” of the “establishment,” but not of the Democratic Party itself.

An alternate reformist fantasy scenario is promoted by the International Marxist Tendency, which writes (*Socialist Revolution*, 1 July): “If Ocasio-Cortez operated in Congress as an independent socialist, she could call for nationalization of the Fortune 500 companies to be placed under workers’ control in order to provide the resources for full employment and a genuine living wage, health-care, education, and housing for all,” and so forth and so on. You bet – and if donkeys could fly, their wings might generate enough wind power to provide the energy for printing a million more ridiculous appeals for capitalist politicians to



please introduce “socialism” through the bourgeois state.

The International Socialist Organization – which joined SAlt in hailing Sanders’ “socialism,” while seeking a formal degree of separation by not openly endorsing his campaign – has now broken out in full-on crisis over the Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez “phenom.” One *Socialist Worker* article after another trumpets deepening collaboration with “our comrades in the DSA.” Even those arguing against jumping with both feet into Democratic primary campaigns hail the DSA’s “explosive growth” as “a terrific development for the U.S. left,” as ISO spokesman Danny Katch put it (“What’s the Path to Working-Class Power?” 27 July). But beneath the cheering lurks the question of whether the social-democratic ISO can stay afloat while seeking to ride the DSA tide.

In the wake of Ocasio-Cortez’s primary victory, a wave of anguished ISOers have taken to socialistworker.org, calling on the organization to cast aside formal reservations and obstacles to carrying out the logic of their commonly proclaimed enthusiasm for Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA putting “socialism in the air.” One declared: “Bernie Sanders decisively helped to re-popularize socialism by running for president as a Democrat, several others have since done the same at other levels of government, and a political entity, the DSA has given that ferment an organizational expression....” (Dorian B., “Confronting the Question of Socialist Electoral Strategy Today,” *Socialist Worker*, 3 July).

Pointing to the contradictions in the ISO’s policy of showering Democratic Party “socialists” with praise, while maintaining that the ISO itself should not call to vote for them (even as it supports minor bourgeois parties like the Greens), the writer states: “As thousands mobilize to elect socialists ... will we argue not to vote for or support them when they run as Democrats, even while they are contributing positively to the growth of *our* [sic] common struggle and to the building of socialist organizations which have struggled to get off the ground for nearly three generations?” Voting for and supporting such candidates of the imperialist Demo-

cratic Party is “not a question of principle or of our basic political program,” says the author.

Another piece begins: “On the day after Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s stunning victory, the internet lit up with leftist joy. Twelve hundred people joined DSA.” The authors proceed to describe the call by some DSAers to “use the Democratic Party as a launching pad to cohere a mass base for socialism” (sic), which “could eventually break away into independent political activity.” They state: “At least for now, those comrades appear to be correct” – after all, “DSA now has over 40,000 members” (Jason Farber and Zach Zill, “What We Don’t Talk About When We Talk About the Democratic Party,” *Socialist Worker*, 3 July). Well, that clinches it for sure! QED.

In the lingo of some DSAers around *Jacobin*, this supposed strategy is known as a “dirty break,” as distinguished from a clean break with the Democrats. In a piece titled “Breaking Clean or Dirty?” (*Socialist Worker*, 17 July), ISOer Owen Hill claims that “the debate between dirty and clean break is not a debate on the grounds of principle.” In reality, the whole “dirty break” business is a political rationalization, an oh-so-cute and clever way of saying: run in the Democratic Party now, talk about someday ceasing to do so in the sweet by and by.

Yet another long-time ISOer, Hadas Thier (“New Conditions Give Rise to New Opportunities,” *Socialist Worker*, 23 July), writes that “we need to reassess our past arguments” and “assess each electoral opportunity on the basis of the opportunities it affords us.” She sums up: “Endorsing a candidate who we know cannot, through their election, change the Democratic Party, let alone the system, may be a contradictory position. But so, too, is to argue that we think the election of a candidate represents a step forward for our side, but not one which we will support.” Instead of “seeking to shield our members or collaborators from contradictions, we should work alongside them” – all of which amounts to a call for the ISO to go with the flow and embrace a less “contradictory” form of tailing the Democrats.

Weighing in on essentially the same lines is Paul Le Blanc, who writes (*Socialist Worker*, 4 July): “I am deeply impressed with the remarkable growth, leftward movement and electoral successes of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).” A former member of the Socialist Workers Party who has become a “theoretical” heavy in the ISO, Le Blanc advises those seeking “a strategy for building socialism through the Democratic Party” to adopt an “over-arching political program” along the lines of “the detailed *Freedom Budget for All Americans*, put

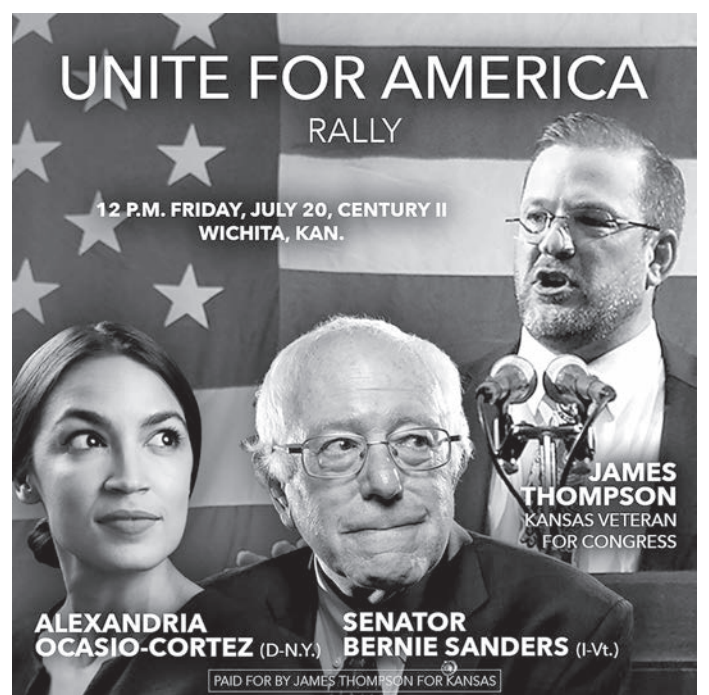
forward in 1966 by A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Michael Harrington, Martin Luther King Jr. and others.” And what became of that doomed effort (the brainchild of Max Shachtman’s Realignment faction in Norman Thomas’ “State Department Socialist” Party) to push the Democrats to the left?

Meanwhile, some in the ISO leadership try to hold on to the line that, while enthusing over Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez is great, openly calling to vote for Democratic candidates is going too far. They hew to the group’s traditional stance of support for minor bourgeois parties and politicians, like immigrant-bashing millionaire Ralph Nader. Prominent ISOers have run as Green Party candidates. One such leader is Todd Chretien, who in 2006 ran for senator on the Green Party ballot line. In a response to Thier, Chretien asks (*Socialist Worker*, 26 July):

“If Nader, an idiosyncratic figure who was vilified by the Democrats, could win nearly 3 million votes, couldn’t Bernie do as well or better, even while running as an independent? Couldn’t DSA candidates like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Jovanka Beckles and Julia Salazar make sustained inroads at the local level running as independents? Of course they could. But here’s the kicker: They probably couldn’t *win* in the short term.” [emphasis in original]

A curious aspect of Chretien’s piece is his statement: “I want to flag an assumption that we all share that may not be apparent to SW readers who are not members of the ISO”: “We are committed to a democratic centralist method of organization.” Well, yes, that certainly wouldn’t be apparent to readers watching an existential dispute in the ISO raging on its public website. Though couched in sugary assurances that all are basically on the same page – namely, they are all opportunists, just looking for the right angle – the controversy could presage a hemorrhage of members, perhaps a split. Whatever, things certainly aren’t looking good for the ISO.

To understand this whole debate and the general commotion in the opportunist milieu, it’s necessary to understand their mindset. First of all, varrious of these social-democratic groups (DSA, ISO, SAlt, IMT) in fact have programs that differ very little with each other, with laundry lists of reforms to the unreformable capitalist state. More fundamentally, they see these developments on the left-right axis of *bourgeois* politics. Trump is right-wing, the Clintons are center, Obama is a tad to the left, Sanders a bit more, Ocasio-Cortez and the DSA a bit more. It’s all a continuum according to that outlook, and for them, any movement to the left, however illusory, is positive. So they try to pressure the DSA to the left, while the DSA pressures the mainline Democrats ... and in the process they all



Star-spangled Democratic Party “socialists” and former Republican in patriotic appeal.

move to the right.

Revolutionary Marxists have a fundamentally different – and counterposed – view, from a *class* perspective. Liberals, even left liberals, are no less enemies of the working class than right-wing conservatives. Who carried out the post-World War II purge of the “reds” that built the labor movement? It wasn’t McCarthyite witch-hunters but liberal Democrats who led the charge. Who are the mayors who are the bosses of the racist killer cops in the big cities of the U.S.? Almost all Democrats. Who brought you the war on Vietnam? Democrats JFK and LBJ. And now we have the latest crop of “democratic socialists” recruiting young people to vote for the party of Obama (the “deporter-in-chief”) and Clinton (who is banging the war drums over North Korea and Syria).

Marxists understand that society is based on a division among *classes* with irreconcilable differences. Far from a move in the right direction, trying to give a bourgeois party a more “left” face is the *opposite* of a proletarian strategy, as it seeks to bolster the image and credibility of this party of the class enemy. It strengthens the barriers to the working class breaking from capitalist politics and building its own revolutionary workers party, independent of and fighting *against* all bourgeois parties. Bolshevik leaders Lenin and Trotsky told the truth sharply and clearly: the proponents of social democracy (a/k/a “democratic socialism”) are professional betrayers of the fight for socialist revolution.

The social-democratic groups are in the business of selling the idea that capitalism can be reformed, propping up this decrepit system which is already in terminal decay and is destroying past gains left and right. That business (a dirty one, to be sure) requires reliance on government parties – in the U.S., the Democrats first and foremost – that have their hands on the levers of the state power upholding the existing social order. Whether they wholeheartedly endorse Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez and others engaged in refurbishing and rejuvenating the Democratic Party, or fawn over their gains while offering soft criticisms, the opportunist left is helping build the imperialist Democratic Party of war, racist repression and mass deportations. ■

Screengrab from MoveOn.org video



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez speaking at the Netroots Nation conference in New Orleans, August 6, where she called on the Democratic Party to “come home” and be “the party of [Martin Luther] King, of [Franklin D.] Roosevelt.”



# Defeat Reactionary Ballot Measures in Oregon and Washington

*In the upcoming midterm elections there are propositions and initiatives on the ballot in several states on which defenders of democratic rights should take a stand.*

## Oregon: Vote “No” on Anti-Immigrant and Anti-Abortion Ballot Measures 105 and 106

In Oregon, Ballot Measure 105 proposes to repeal the state’s “sanctuary” law ORS 181A.820. If approved, this would give a green light to police, sheriffs and jailers across the state for “detecting or apprehending persons whose only violation of law” pertains to their immigration status, and to act as deputies of the federal I.C.E. *gestapo*. Class-conscious workers call for a “no” vote on this question. The Oregon AFL-CIO and other union organizations, along with civil rights groups, have stated their opposition to this measure, noting that it would legalize “racial profiling” – how does a police officer in racist America “detect” the suspected immigration status of a person? The Measure 105 campaign is of a piece with the nationwide and international drive to whip up deadly national-chauvinist bigotry against immigrants, scapegoating them for the deepening crises of the decaying capitalist system. If approved its impact would go far beyond the letter of the law. At the same time, we place no confidence in the Democrats’ “sanctuary” laws, and call on the labor movement to mobilize its power to stop deportations, free the tens of thousands of children and adults interned in concentration camps, and fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

At the same time, Measure 106 would amend the state constitution to prohibit expenditure of “public funds” directly or “indirectly” on “abortion” – defined in such a way as to include even the “morning-after pill.” The broad language of this measure would make it illegal for the health plans of teachers and any other state employees, and for

the state’s Medicaid program, to cover “abortion” so defined, and ban any state subsidy to agencies that provide abortion. This cruel proposal would force low-income women to bear children against their will to satisfy the dogmas of the “right-to-life” bigots. Today in “liberal” Oregon, there is only one clinic providing abortions in the vast area east of the Cascades mountain range. Half of the state’s dozen clinics are in the Portland metropolitan area. The Internationalist Group advocates *free abortion on demand*, and calls for a “no” vote on this sinister assault on women.

## Washington State: “No” to Gun Control Initiative 1639

While the ballot measures in Oregon are designed to stir up the right-wing Republican party base, and are opposed by traditionally Democratic Party aligned organizations, in Washington state it is the Democrats and their allies who are campaigning for a reactionary assault on democratic rights. Initiative 1639 would impose a broad array of restrictions on the right to bear arms for self-defense, restrictions that would fall especially heavily on working people, youth and oppressed racial minorities. This includes fees, waiting periods, and a “storage requirement” that would make it a Class C felony to store a firearm where a “prohibited person” could gain access to it. This is a recipe for a witch hunt against black and Native American gun owners. With this measure, liberal “gun control” advocates, bankrolled by Wall Street billionaires, are seeking to make gun acquisition so hideously expensive and difficult as to be effectively illegal for most of the population – the same strategy used by anti-women bigots to chip away at the right to abortion. We say: vote “no,” and take the state AFT and NEA unions to task for undermining the rights of their members and other workers in supporting this anti-democratic assault! ■

## Smash I.C.E. ...

*continued from page 6*

for: “Asylum for refugees from death squad terror – Stop the deportations! Full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers!” In stark contrast, today’s chauvinist SL refuses to call for asylum for refugees (trying to cover this by pretending it is the same as the illusory call for “open borders”), while often sounding similar themes as Trump or other xenophobic right-wingers in Italy, Britain and elsewhere.

It is true that Immigration and Customs Enforcement is not just any old police agency. Its agents and their so-called “union” (which is not a workers organization at all but a protection society for these hired guns of the bourgeoisie) have adopted an overtly political stance, campaigning and acting as a kind of praetorian guard for Trump. But this is hardly unique. The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) under its founder and long-time chief J. Edgar Hoover engaged in massive witch-hunting, often acting as a law unto itself. It contin-

ues to do so today, despite the Democrats’ embrace of this sinister agency. The same could be said of CIA cloak-and-dagger operations, or National Security Agency spying on the U.S. population. But the idea that there could be a capitalist state without political police, spy agencies, border guards and immigration police is a liberal/reformist illusion.

This points to a fundamental question highlighted in Lenin’s aphorism, “Who – whom?” Who exactly – what class force – is supposed to “abolish” such repressive forces? If we are talking about the present U.S. government, or any instance (congress or parliament, presidency, courts) of any bourgeois government, carrying this out, even with another party in office, it only means, at most, that one police force would be replaced by another equivalent agency. The idea that the capitalist state would put an end to its immigration police, or its borders, is a liberal illusion. Nor can a capitalist country, except in rare circumstances, have a non-discriminatory immigration policy. That is why revolutionary Marxists (Trotskyists) do not call

# Massachusetts: Defend Transgender Rights, “Yes” on Ballot Question 3



Internationalist photo

Internationalists at Boston rally for transgender rights, October 28.

In Massachusetts, Ballot Question 3, the Gender Identity Anti-Discrimination Referendum, is a vote to uphold or repeal a 2016 state law (SB 2407) prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity in public places. As the ballot language states: “A YES VOTE would keep in place the current law, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity in places of public accommodation.” This comes amid outrage over a recently leaked U.S. Department of Health and Human Services memo calling to define sex as either male or female, to be determined immutably by the genitals each person is born with and enforced by federal

regulations. The *New York Times* (21 October) called this “the most drastic move yet in a governmentwide effort to roll back recognition and protections of transgender people under civil rights law.” This attempt to further marginalize, humiliate and threaten anyone who falls outside such unscientific and reactionary “norms” would involve “widespread genetic testing and keeping records of citizens’ genitals” (*The Atlantic*, 21 October). A federal registry of genitalia?! As militant defenders of transgender rights and the rights of all the oppressed, the Internationalist Group strongly advocates a “yes” vote on Massachusetts Ballot Question 3. ■

## Protest Exclusion of Socialist Action From Connecticut Ballot

The Secretary of State’s office of the state of Connecticut has excluded Fred Linck, Socialist Action candidate for U.S. Senate, from the coming November ballot. According to Socialist Action, the state failed to account for 56 nominating petitions that “could contain as many as 1680 uncounted signatures” which would put Linck above the 7500 signatures needed for ballot inclusion. In addition, after inspecting a sample of submitted signatures at the Secretary of State’s office, campaign volunteers found that town clerks illegally rejected voter signatures for

being “unaffiliated” and “inactive” (*Socialist Action*, October 2018).

This is clearly a politically motivated maneuver to exclude a leftist candidate, as former Republican politician and banker Oz Griebel was included on the ballot after having turned in fewer signatures than Linck. While we have fundamental political differences with Socialist Action, this is an attack on basic democratic rights and all left organizations. The Internationalist Group defends Socialist Action against this anti-democratic attack, and support its demand that Fred Linck be included on the ballot. ■

for “immigration reform.” Rather, we call for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*, and for the *socialist revolution* needed to realize this basic democratic demand.

The Internationalist Group has from its origin been in the forefront fighting against the persecution of immigrants and the racist police agencies that enforce it. We do not seek to pressure the capitalist state to do what it will never do, which can only prettify it. Instead, we put forward demands to mobilize immigrants and the power of the multi-racial, multi-

national working class in concrete action to stop the racist bourgeois state where possible: *Drive I.C.E. jails out* (of New York/Los Angeles/Portland, etc.)! *For worker/immigrant action to stop deportations!* And contrary to the liberals, anarchists and reformist DSA/SAlt/RCP/FSP/ISO pseudo-socialists who build illusions in the Democrats, we fight to forge a *revolutionary workers party* to lead the struggle to overthrow the dictatorship of capital and replace it with the liberating rule of the international proletariat. *Smash I.C.E. with workers revolution!* ■



# Caravan...

continued from page 1

When the caravan arrived at the Mexican border at Ciudad Hidalgo, it was met on the bridge over the Suchiate River by a wall of 200 federal police, dispatched by President Enrique Peña Nieto in compliance with the orders of his imperialist overlord. Under a sign proclaiming “Welcome to Mexico,” the police fired tear gas into the crowd which was led by women and children. The next day, as hundreds waded into the river to cross, youths in the caravan tore down the chain link fence and the entire procession headed on to the next city on its path, Tapachula, Chiapas. Contrary to the claims of Trump and his puppet, Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, marchers insisted that no one instigated them to leave Honduras. “We just couldn’t take it anymore,” a 24-year-old youth told our comrade who met them in Tapachula. With a daughter, mother and sisters to support, he was the only one in his family with a job, until he was laid off.<sup>1</sup>

As the migrants left Tapachula on the way to the next town, Huixtla, they chanted “*Los migrantes no somos criminales, somos trabajadores internacionales*” (we migrants are not criminals, we are international workers), echoing the slogan that was painted on the wall opposite Tijuana that was built by Bill Clinton. But more than a political act or a long-planned migration, the caravan is an exodus. In fact, many marchers carried their bibles, the informal organizers periodically calmed people by having everyone pray, and several compared their odyssey to the biblical tale of Moses leaving Egypt. For some this includes the illusion they may touch Donald Trump’s heart and open the door to a better life. But most know that they have a hard road ahead. One woman had a little stall in Honduras to sell things but couldn’t pay the “war tax” demanded by the gangs. She left with her husband, daughters and sisters as they had no future there. A young man carrying the multicolor gay rights flag joined the caravan the day after being threatened with death by a gang of homophobes. This exodus is driven by desperation.

To get an idea of how extreme the situation is in Honduras, the national income is US\$2,300 per person, compared to almost

<sup>1</sup> An account by our correspondent will be published on our web site, [www.internationalist.org](http://www.internationalist.org).



**Migrants rest in Huixtla, Chiapas after walking 26 miles from Tapachula. For more photos of the caravan, go to <https://www.flickr.com/photos/internationalist4/>.**

\$10,000 in Mexico. Only Haiti’s figure is lower in Latin America. According to United Nations figures, 19% of the population in Honduras earns less than US\$1.90 a day (the international measure of extreme poverty), a percentage which is six times higher than in Mexico and El Salvador (both 3%). As for inequality, even the CIA World Factbook recognizes that Honduras “suffers from extraordinarily unequal distribution of income.” Thus the poorest 40% of the Honduran population received only 10% of all household income, far less than Mexico and Nicaragua (16%). But it’s not just that Honduras is poor and has a rapacious ruling class, leaving those at the bottom with little or nothing. It is important to understand the political origins of the social and economic crisis devastating Honduras, which lead straight to Washington and Wall Street.

During the 1980s, Ronald Reagan used Honduras as the base for the U.S.’ counter-revolutionary war on Nicaragua, building up a murderous Honduran military. In the 1990s, Bill Clinton began deporting hundreds of members of gangs like the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and 18th Street Gang to Central America. Then when Mexican president Felipe Calderón launched a “war on drugs” in 2006 on orders from George W. Bush, many traffickers shifted their operations to Honduras. The murder rate more than doubled from 2006 to 2012, becoming the highest in the world, and San Pedro Sula, the industrial center, is the most violent city on the planet. The gangs are notoriously tied to the police and military, which are bankrolled by the U.S. Meanwhile, the world capitalist crisis from 2008 on devastated employment in the textile/garment industry. Following the 2009 coup that ousted Liberal landowner Mel Zelaya as president, public services were privatized, subsidies were slashed and tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs. That coup got the green light from Hillary Clinton’s State Department.

So it is militarism and catastrophic economic/social conditions made in the U.S.A. that have led thousands of poor people and entire families with babies and young children to trudge several thousand miles, braving the elements (walking in 95° heat, punctuated by torrential rain), the thieves who prey on migrants, and the corrupt and violent police, in order to arrive at the U.S. border where they will be met by the guns of the United States army. The answer is not “foreign aid” that bolsters the profits of U.S. corporations, or building some factory sweatshops paying starvation wages that

only deepen the poverty, it is to break the stranglehold of U.S. imperialism on Latin America, which both conservative and liberal U.S. politicians (like Obama’s former Secretary of State John Kerry) arrogantly refer to as “our backyard.” And that can only be accomplished through socialist revolution, including in Central America.

Honduras is effectively a Yankee neo-colony (it was the archetypal “banana republic,” run by the United Fruit Company), where everything gets decided by Washington. Semi-colonial Mexico is also under the imperialist boot, whether it is governed by bourgeois populists like Mexico’s president-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador and his MORENA (National Regeneration Movement) party or a hardliner like Peña Nieto of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), which ran the country for seven decades with greater or lesser degrees of subservience to U.S. imperialism (mostly greater). This is particularly true of immigration policy. So while the U.S. deported some 294,000 immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras from 2015 to September 2018, during the same period Mexico deported 436,000 who had come from this “northern triangle” of Central America. For its services as a buffer and border police for the United States, Mexico has received billions of dollars from the U.S. Treasury (*El Universal*, 21 October). And now federal police have resumed arresting hundreds at the southern border.

The Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico has from its inception denounced anti-immigrant repression, calling for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. So immediately after the brutal October 19 attack on the caravan by federal police, the GI joined with class-conscious educators of the militant Section 22 of the CNTE to organize a solidarity action in Oaxaca, calling for “Workers Actions in Defense of the Central American Migrants.” On October 21, the state assembly of the Oaxaca teachers passed a motion saying, in part: “Section 22 of the Education Workers declares its support for the caravan of Central American migrants, and therefore will mobilize the workers in its ranks to accompany and support this caravan as it passes through states where the CNTE has a presence, while calling on the rest of the workers movement to join in defending the passage of this caravan.” The defense actions include calling on health workers to organize medical brigades to provide aid. The motion ended: “We reject all racism and xenophobia whipped up by the Mexican bourgeoisie, lackey of U.S. imperialism.

Let them in! Neither illegals nor criminals, the migrants are international workers!”

Currently Peña Nieto is promising asylum and jobs to the caravan members if they register with Mexican immigration authorities. Caravan organizers have refused. López Obrador (universally known as AMLO) has also offered them jobs helping to build a transportation corridor across the Yucatan peninsula. Not coincidentally, this would keep the Hondurans in southern Mexico, far from the U.S. border. At the October 24 protest, a speaker of the Grupo Internacionalista emphasized that repression against immigrants will not stop under AMLO, whom many leftists and teachers are supporting. “AMLO has said over and over that he won’t clash with Trump over the question of immigrants.” She stressed that the fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants must be part of a revolutionary struggle, noting that this elementary democratic right was implemented by the French Revolution of 1789, the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The GI spokeswoman concluded with a call to “break with all the capitalist parties and build a workers party on a revolutionary and internationalist program.”

As the Central American caravan approaches the U.S. border, Trump is escalating his anti-immigrant offensive while the Democrats keep a sepulchral silence and try to change the subject. All bourgeois parties are enemies of immigrant workers, whom the capitalists brutally superexploit. In defending our immigrant sisters and brothers, the key is to bring to bear the power of the workers movement, not just in words but in deeds. We are one international class. We have the power to stop racists like Trump and the modern-day slave catchers of the immigration police. But to use that power, we must forge a leadership based on the program of international socialist revolution of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

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**Poster for October 24 rally in defense of Central American migrants.**



# Cast a Blank Ballot Vote and Take to the Streets to Mobilize a Class-Struggle Response by the Workers Against the Bourgeoisie



General strike against labor and social security reform, 28 April 2017, in São Paulo. Today we need strong workers' actions against electoral fraud, the militarist drive and the attack on workers.

The following article is translated from *Vanguarda Operária* No. 14, October-November 2018, published by the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil*, section of the League for the Fourth International. In the first round of the elections on October 7, the right-wing militarist Jair Bolsonaro led with 46% of the votes, while Fernando Haddad of the Workers Party (PT) was second with

29%, out of a field of 13 candidates. The second round of voting, a run-off between the two front-runners, is to be held on October 28.

The current general elections in Brazil are already the most explosive since the birth of the "New Republic" under the 1988 Constitution, and the tension will only grow. The blatantly undemocratic nature of the electoral process be-

gins with the veto by the judiciary of the candidate who, by all indications, would have won the presidency: former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, historic leader of the Workers Party (PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores). At the same time, calls are mounting for intervention by the army, supposedly to fight against corruption. Military intervention in Rio de Janeiro has already led to the murder of councilwoman Marielle Franco, due to her criticism of the escalating massacres by the police. The incendiary rhetoric of the impeachment campaign that removed President Dilma Rousseff from office and Operation Lava Jato (Car Wash)<sup>1</sup> has translated into armed attacks on Lula's caravan. And following the stabbing of Jair Bolsonaro, the candidate of the armed forces, the top army brass has multiplied its threats of military intervention to maintain "governability".

But the verbal and physical violence of the election campaign is only a reflection of the social violence against those at the bottom emanating from the top levels of capitalism. The electoral contest is polarized between two negative poles: on the one hand, those who seek to prevent at all costs the return of the PT, whose candidate is Fernando Haddad, to the Palácio do Planalto (Brazil's White

<sup>1</sup> A mammoth investigation, instigated by a judicial "task force" trained in Washington, supposedly intended to root out corruption among Brazilian politicians but primarily used as a club against the PT, a reformist workers party, and its popular-front government with sections of the bourgeoisie. See "Brazil: No to Impeachment! For Workers Mobilization Against the Rightist Bourgeois Offensive – No Political support to the Bourgeois Popular Front Government," *The Internationalist* No. 43, May-June 2016.

House); and on the other hand, those who want to go all-out to defeat the deadly danger represented by the misogynist (anti-woman) racist Bolsonaro. We warn that the bonapartist danger – that is, of an authoritarian regime based on the repressive forces of the capitalist state – is very real, but it will not be banished through the ballot box. In addition, we caution that the danger does not come solely from Bolsonaro supporters. The reality is that the entire Brazilian bourgeoisie is determined to impose by force its policy of "austerity" that aims to drastically slash workers' rights. The bourgeois alliance of the "popular front" around the PT will also be obliged to apply these anti-worker "reforms" in one way or another. Unless we stop them.

In the face of these fraudulent elections, manipulated by the judges and under military tutelage, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB – Fourth-Internationalist League of Brazil) calls to mobilize the power of the working class and of all the oppressed in powerful workers actions to:

- **shred the labor "reform" with militant strikes in the metal and auto plants;**
- **shut down schools and hospitals to break the spending cap on social programs imposed by Constitutional Amendment 55<sup>2</sup>;**
- **answer Operation Lava Jato and Petrobras' privatization auctions by oil workers occupying the refineries and imposing workers control; and**
- **fight for a workers and peasants government.**

<sup>2</sup> See "Brazil: Mobilize the Working Class to Smash the 'End of the World' Laws," *The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017.



Posters of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and the Comitê de Luta Classista (Class Struggle Committee) in the huge #EleNão (#NotHim) demonstration in Rio de Janeiro, September 29. The LQB and CLC fight for women's rights against anti-woman rightists and also against the popular front, which in 13 years of office did not legalize abortion. Poster in the center has front pages of CLC tabloid with the headline, "Workers Revolution Will Avenge Marielle Franco," the black councilwoman murdered in March for her denunciation of police massacres in the favelas of Rio.





The entrance to São Paulo's Guarulhos airport blocked by pickets during the 28 April 2017 general strike.

## I: Well-Planned Electoral Fraud

Fraud goes hand in hand with bourgeois elections almost everywhere on the entire planet. It is committed wholesale by gerrymandering of election districts, the influence of corporate money and large donors, the monopoly of the media, restrictive regulations designed to obstruct the participation of revolutionary organizations, and many other devices. In countries like Mexico, fraud at the retail level is so traditional that typical practices have names: stealing ballot boxes (operation raccoon), multiple voting (the carousel), electronic altering of results (system crash), vote stuffing (pregnant ballot boxes), etc. In Brazil, however, this time we have a special operation from the right, planned long beforehand, to kick the PT out of the presidency and ensure that it never again takes office. This began on the very night of the second round of voting in the 2014 elections, when Aécio Neves, the candidate of the PSDB (Party of Brazilian Social Democracy, the main conservative bourgeois party), refused to accept that he lost the election (by more than 3 million votes) to Dilma Rousseff of the PT and demanded a recount.

Beginning in March 2015, the mass mobilizations initiated by the PSDB and financed by FIESP (Federation of Industrialists of the State of São Paulo) and other organizations of top-level Brazilian capitalists began. For them, Dilma's crime was that, for fear of alienating the PT's base, she did not cut enough social programs benefitting the poor, and dragged out the labor and social security "reforms." In the impeachment process, the main charge against her was that she used budget stratagems (the famous "*pedaladas*") to avoid cuts in the Bolsa Família (family stipend) and Minha Casa, Minha Vida (subsidies encouraging home ownership) programs. The street protests were marked by sharp social differences: the right-wing, upper-middle-class demonstrations ("*coxinhas*") vs. the left-wing demos, more plebeian in character ("*mortadelas*"), organized by the PT. But as the conflict escalated and intensified, the right-wing mobilizations were increasingly dominated by ultra-rightist, fascistic elements (such as the Movimento Brasil Livre) and marked by calls for intervention by the armed forces. At the same time, Judge Sérgio Moro focused his Operation Lava Jato on indicting, convicting and sentencing Lula in order to prevent him from running for president again in 2018.

The charges against the former PT

president are absurd, based on statements by suspects in exchange for leniency in plea bargains (*delações premiadas*) lacking any concrete proof. They refer to events that occurred in 2013 and 2014, that is, after Lula's presidency, and therefore are not in return for supposed favors to the companies (OAS and Odebrecht). The charges have to do with a three-bedroom apartment in Guarujá, on the São Paulo coast, and another in Atibaia, in the São Paulo interior. In the first case, it is alleged that the apartment was owned by Lula and his wife Marisa Letícia, although there is no documentary evidence of this, plus the fact that they never occupied it. The accusation is that the contractor OAS upgraded the apartment as a form of bribe, and that this amounted to "passive corruption" (since the accused, Lula, had not actually done anything). In turn, the fact that Lula denied receiving any monetary benefit was the evidence of "money laundering." In the second case, the fact that Marisa Letícia bought a couple of small pedal boats (*pedalinhos*) for use by her grandchildren in the neighboring lake was supposed proof that this apartment as well was owned by the couple.

So here we have "*pedaladas*" and "*pedalinhos*": in much of the rest of the world, such accusations would be laughed out of court. But in Brazil of Lava Jato they were enough for a corrupt Congress to throw out a president elected with 54 million votes, and to sentence a former president to 12 years in prison and a fine of US\$8 million. Why? Because it is in response to drive by the bourgeoisie to accelerate its attacks on the working class. It's even possible that Judge Moro isn't particularly concerned about definitively winning the case against Lula: the main thing was to ensure that he would be under arrest during the 2018 elections. In fact, in an IPSOS poll published on April 14, a few days after Lula turned himself in to the police, 73% of those interviewed said that "the powerful want to keep Lula out of the elections." In addition, 66% thought that now that Lula is jailed, the politicians would try to put an end to Lava Jato, and 55% agreed that "Lava Jato amounts to political persecution against Lula."

For our part, we demand that Lula be freed and the ridiculous charges against him be dropped. In addition, we denounce the Supreme Court (STF) veto of Lula's candidacy and insist that the population has an unrestricted right to vote for whom-



Judge Sérgio Moro, a puppet of US imperialism, trained by the FBI in Washington, was honored by Time magazine in New York as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. His wife, Rosângela Wolff Moro, is a lawyer representing Shell Oil in Brazil. Moro serves as the spearhead of a politicized judiciary that has been running roughshod over democratic rights on the road to rule by "dictators in black robes."

ever it wishes. Far from being apologists for Lula, the LQB never called for a vote for the PT ever since it first formed a popular front with sections of the bourgeoisie in the 1990s. In the eyes of revolutionary workers, the crimes of Lula and the PT were that they made political alliances with the enemies of working people; that the *mensalão* (monthly payoffs) were used to buy votes from bourgeois allies in parliament<sup>3</sup>; and the favoring of Odebrecht's projects, which employed near slave labor in Angola, and of construction companies in Brazil that practiced industrial homicide with dangerous working conditions.

### The Bottom Line: No Lula There in the 2018 Election

But despite massive support for Lula among workers and the poor, reflected in election polls where he had twice as much support as any other candidate; despite blockades of highways around the country by the MST against his arrest warrant; despite several thousand supporters rushing to São Bernardo do Campo (Lula's home base) to be with him, and notwithstanding illusions among some union and left sectors that "He will not surrender" (Vagner Freitas da CUT) and "Lula did not surrender! There will be no arrest!" (*Diário Causa Operária*, 6 April), despite all this and after some theatrics at the Metalworkers' Union hall, Lula finally surrendered, predictably. In his farewell address, he explained: "Do not think that I am against the Lava Jato, no.... I will comply with their warrant.... I want to prove that they are the ones who have committed a crime, a political crime." Lula summed up: "If I didn't believe in the judicial system, I wouldn't have formed a political party. I would have called for a revolution in this country. But I believe in the justice system, in a just justice" (*Brazil de Fato*, 7 April).

Any revolutionary Marxist knows perfectly well that to believe in Brazilian bourgeois justice is an idiotic, dangerous illusion. But Lula is neither a Marxist nor a socialist, much less a communist (as the ultraright claims) and revolutionary. He says so himself. From the outset he was a trade-union bureaucrat, whose dreams, as he spelled them

<sup>3</sup> See "Brazil: Lula Against the Workers – Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!" *The Internationalist*, May 2006, and "Brazil: The Election Racket of the Bourgeoisie," *The Internationalist* No. 38, October-November 2014.

out at that emotional moment, were petty-bourgeois and bourgeois, to make progress within the framework of this capitalist society: for the poor to have a home and education, to travel, to be prosecutors or judges. Lula began his career in the *pelego* (corporatist) pseudo-unions of the dictatorship and was part of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), the pseudo-opposition party tolerated by the military. Like another pro-capitalist trade unionist with whom he had a certain resemblance, Lech Walesa (of the anti-Soviet nationalist Solidarność movement in Poland), Lula always followed the imperialists' orders. Walesa led a counterrevolution that soon destroyed the shipyards where he originated. Lula acted as a sheriff for the U.S. in the Caribbean, sending Brazilian troops to occupy Haiti and imposing "neoliberal" policies in Brazil: slashing workers' rights while setting up welfare programs for the poor.

So Lula got the message that the Brazilian bourgeoisie did not want him to be president of the country again, and he accepted its verdict. He would be arrested, could defend his honor and, depending on the outcome of the elections, he could go free in a short time, or not. In any case, the essential thing was that there be no "*Lula lá*" ("There's Lula!" a favorite chant in PT election rallies) in 2018. All the drama of launching his candidacy even though he was jailed and then, at the last moment, transferring votes to Haddad, the Lula Livre (Free Lula) festivals and the rest were just stagecraft to improve the PT's score in the election race. Now the PT is equipped with a very "moderate" program: revoke the labor reform, yes, but there will be another "reform" to "ensure the economic sustainability of the system," and in particular "the balancing of social security accounts." Reform of the justice system, but no mention of Lava Jato, and so on. With this and a feel-good slogan approved by the political marketers "*Brasil, feliz de novo*" (Brazil happy again) harking back to the PT's hit election jingle from 1989 – "*Sem medo de ser feliz*" (Without fear of being happy) – Lula's successor can negotiate whatever alliance he needs with sections of the bourgeoisie.

Thousands of PT posters proclaimed: "An Election Without Lula is a Fraud". So what does the PT do in this situation? It fully participates in the fraud. Yes indeed, the judicial ban on the candidate with far more popular support than any other is a denial of the democratic right of the popu-



lation to vote freely, and thereby ensures that the result, any result, will be fraudulent. So what would a workers party that really fights for the interests of the working people do? It would unleash tumultuous mobilizations in the streets and in front of Election Board offices, it would trigger political strikes, the whole works. The contradiction is that an electoral boycott would be fully justified, but there are currently no conditions in Brazil to make it possible. It would require a high level of working-class combativeness, plus revolutionary leadership, and both are lacking. More than lacking, the Workers' Party formed a popular front subordinating the workers to their bourgeois "allies" precisely in order to constitute a barrier to avoid revolution. As we wrote on the eve of the 2002 election:

"The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB), section of the League for the Fourth International, and the Class Struggle Committee (CLC) fight for the revolutionary political independence of the working class against all bourgeois candidates, parties and alliances. We warn that the popular front led by the PT will act to discipline the working class for the benefit of the bankers and industrialists .... We Trotskyists call for a blank ballot (*voto nulo*) and proletarian opposition to the popular front. We emphasize that to achieve the most basic democratic rights, an agrarian revolution, freedom from the imperialist yoke, and the emancipation of all those exploited and oppressed by the poverty produced by the capitalist system requires international socialist revolution." – "For Proletarian Opposition to the Popular Front! For International Socialist Revolution!" *The Internationalist* No. 14, September-October 2002

Today, electoral fraud is continuing on a daily basis. **September 24:** The Superior Election Tribunal (TSE) canceled 3.4 million voter ID cards for not having been updated with biometric data. Of these voters, 1.5 million are in the Northeast, where the PT is strongest (70% voted for Dilma Rousseff in 2014). This could tip the scale of the election. **September 25:** Federal Police in Rio de Janeiro and in the Northeast confiscated election fliers with the likeness of Lula. **September 28:** Justice Luiz Fux, president of TSE, banned *Folha de S. Paulo* from interviewing Lula in prison, a serious violation of the right to information. **September 29:** It was revealed that a judge from Goiás planned to issue an injunction on the eve of the balloting ordering the army to collect electronic voting machines. **October 1:** less than a week before the vote, Judge Moro released excerpts from a statement by Antônio Palocci in which the former minister alleges, without proof, that the PT received bribes in the campaigns in 2010 and 2014. **October 2:** Judge Moro's wife posted repeatedly on Instagram against "voting for a thief"; the daughter of army commander Villas Bôas campaigned against having an "inmate in command" of the country.

Throughout this process, the leading role of the judiciary has been notorious. In June, Justice Fux even threatened that the TSE could overrule the outcome of the election if it was determined that it was influenced by fake news. In civic education courses, justice is portrayed as "neutral" and "independent." The image is that of the woman blindfolded, with a scale and sword in her hands. Marxists, on the contrary, insist that the courts are part of the repressive apparatus along with the police, armed forces and prisons, which form the hard core of the capitalist state. Cur-

rently in Brazil, the judiciary has played a prominent role in the offensive of reactionaries pushing for a bonapartist strong state. This is the product of an effort by U.S. imperialism to impose its domination in a more sophisticated manner than military coups. And in this, the PT is deeply involved. Not only have most of the judges of the STF and the TSE been appointed by Lula and Dilma, but also in the National Constituent Assembly that produced the 1988 Constitution, the PT played a prominent role in the creation of a Public Prosecutor's Office and a judiciary with practically unrestricted powers.<sup>4</sup>

### The Fraud of Bourgeois Democracy

However, electoral fraud is not limited to abusive and authoritarian actions by judges and courts or military threats. It is also reflected in the ways in which "representative democracy" manages to not represent the interests of working people. For example, a Datafolha survey (1 May 2017) found that 71% of respondents are against social security reform. However, none of the larger parties and any of the main candidates oppose social security reform as such. The PT only says it rejects the "reform of [unelected president Michel] Temer and Bolsonaro." But when an economic adviser to the PT, Marcio Pochman, commented that "Pension reform will not be a priority," he was refuted by Haddad. To calm the markets, the PT candidate said that "we have a fiscal problem" and that "this reform of Temer (...) has useful things. The pension schemes for government workers should be the initial object of the reform" (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 17 September). So in order to satisfy capital, Haddad attacks the interests of the workers: the universal experience is that individual retirement accounts (IRAs in the US, Afores in Mexico) lead directly to the destruction of pensions with guaranteed benefits.

The same goes for Petrobras (Brazil's oil company), the target of attacks from the right and Lava Jato, whose campaign against corruption is facilitating the penetration by imperialist companies to the detriment of the former state enterprise. Another survey by Datafolha (26 December 2017) shows that the vast majority (70%) of the public is against privatization of Petrobras; even a majority of conservative PSDB supporters are against that. Yet a statement from the Federation of Oil Workers (FUP) on September 28 revealed that, after the fifth round of auctions in the production sharing regime, "In all, 13 multinationals have already appropriated 75% of reserves" of oil fields of the pre-salt layer.<sup>5</sup> What's to be done about it? The FUP has held demonstrations, gone to court, without result ... and now it is calling to vote for the PT. But the PT's government program, after a few sugary words about "strengthening Petrobras," says: "the sharing regime in the pre-salt area shall be maintained." So, even with an overwhelming majority of the population opposed to the policies of all the

<sup>4</sup> "[We] are creating another organ in the scheme of the three powers [executive, legislative and judicial]. It is an oversight body that does not hang on any of the branches of the Montesquieu scheme. Why propose the financial, political and administrative autonomy of the body? Because we want a strong prosecutor of the law" (Plínio de Arruda Sampaio of the PT in a meeting of the Subcommittee on Judiciary and Public Prosecution in the 1987/88 National Constituent Assembly).

<sup>5</sup> A layer holding large petroleum and natural gas deposit at great depths (4 miles or more) in the South Atlantic between Brazil and Africa.



**Lula surrounded by supporters at the ABC Metalworkers Union, April 7. Despite the mobilization of thousands, the leader of the PT accepted the decision of the bourgeoisie, as in the past.**

main parliamentary parties, there is no way to put that opposition into effect.

The right to abortion? None of the major parties call for it. In fact, PEC 181 would make abortion a crime in all cases, including anencephaly (when a fetus lacks a major part of the brain or skull) or when the pregnant woman's life is threatened. Capitalist and reformist politicians, even if they are supportive, won't challenge the power of the evangelical caucus in Congress and the Catholic Church. They cite surveys that shows that 75% of the Brazilian population is against the right to abortion. But when asked who should decide whether or not to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, almost two-thirds say the decision should be by the woman herself. Yet in current conditions, there is no electoral route to legalize or even decriminalize abortion – it will depend on the mobilization in the streets of the defenders of women's rights. In the huge demonstration of the #EleNão movement on September 29 against Bolsonaro, a protest manipulated by the various bourgeois forces, the Liga

Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and the Class Struggle Committee carried a sign saying: "For the Right to Free, Safe Abortion on Demand – Against the Right (Bolsonaro, PSDB, DEM, etc.) and Against the Popular Front (PT, PCdoB, PSB and PSOL), Enemies of Women's Rights – For a Revolutionary Workers Party."

In short, the inherent electoral fraud of bourgeois "democracy" and its parliamentary system includes diluting, deflecting and preventing the expression and carrying out of the will of working people and the oppressed. Its democratic pretensions and even our most basic democratic rights are denied by the power of money, the influence of lobbies and all the tricks like the "separation of powers", which only serve to defend the interests of capital. To combat and defeat this electoral fraud and the fraud of bourgeois "democracy" as a political system of capitalist domination, we must mobilize the power of the proletariat at the head of all the oppressed in a struggle pointing to the need for international socialist revolution.

## II: Militarization of Politics on the March

Every election in Brazil since 1988 has seen a face-off between two bourgeois poles: conservatives, gathered around the PSDB, and "progressives," united in a popular front around the reformist Workers' Party. This time, however, as a result of the polarization produced by Operation Lava Jato and the battle over the impeachment of PT president Dilma Rousseff, the anti-PT pole was dominated by retired army captain Jair Bolsonaro, candidate of the PSL (Partido Social Liberal), with an ultra-rightist and militarist program. Bolsonaro, who boasts of being an ex-parachutist, openly defends torture and calls for a return to the military dictatorship that dominated Brazil for more than two decades. His vice-presidential running mate, retired general Antonio Hamilton Martins Mourão, has called on numerous occasions for intervention by the military. Although some deluded leftists treat them as "fascists", the reality, which is no less dangerous, is that the Bolsonaro-Mourão slate is the new military party, an ARENA in gestation.<sup>6</sup> *Warning: this military party will not be defeated at the polls.*

<sup>6</sup> The National Renewal Alliance was created in 1965 to back the military dictatorship installed by the coup d'état of March 1964, and to oppose corruption and the "communist menace" that it identified with the populist bourgeois government of President João Goulart.

For 26 years in Congress, Bolsonaro was part of the "lower clergy" (back benchers), part of the "allied base" of bourgeois support for the popular-front governments, even though he was a far-rightist. As one of the main mouthpieces of the "bullet caucus" (of active or retired military members of Congress), he chaired the lower chamber's defense and public safety committees. He was successively affiliated with eight different parties (PDC, PPR, PPB, PTB, PFL, PP and PSC) before joining the PSL. This party, formerly a minor outfit, reneged its liberal past and turned to ultra-right nationalism after being taken over by Bolsonaro earlier in the year. Its motto now is "Brazil Above All" – reminiscent of the words of the first stanza of the German national anthem appropriated by the Nazis, "*Deutschland über alles*." And in order to satisfy the religious proclivities of the Brazilian right the PSL adds, "God Above Everyone!" Bolsonaro uses social networks more than almost any other deputy, pitching himself as a ferocious anti-communist and defender of the "Rule of Law," the police and judiciary in particular.

Bolsonaro is famous for his praise of the coup of 1964 ("imposed by the people") and his justification for the military dictatorship (the coup-general "Castelo Branco was elected by Congress"). Asked in 2015 if he would support the installation of a dicta-



torship today, he answered “yes”. In 2016, in casting his vote for Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment, the retired captain praised Colonel Brilhante Ustra, commander of the military intelligence center where the future president (Rousseff) was tortured. Bolsonaro not only praised coup plotters, in 1988 he was jailed for 15 days and expelled from the military academy for having two years before drawn up plans (later published by *Veja* magazine) for an “Operation Dead End.” The operation consisted in placing bombs in several military installations and in the main water supply plant of Rio de Janeiro to protest against the low salaries of the troops. Despite this clearly terrorist plan, the high command allowed him to transfer to the army reserve. Taking advantage of his notoriety, Bolsonaro promptly began his political career as a city councilor of Rio.

The misogynist and racist candidate has constantly played around with threats of violence, especially against women, gays, blacks, indigenous people, communists and the left in general, but not only against them. In 1999, in an interview with TV Bandeirantes, he insisted that it would be impossible to make changes in Brazil through elections. “You’re only going to change, unfortunately, when we start a civil war here,” he shouted. He added: “And doing the job that the military regime didn’t do. Killing 30,000 people, beginning with FHC [the right-wing then-president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso].”<sup>7</sup> In 2002, Bolsonaro told congresswoman Maria do Rosário, “The only reason I don’t rape you is that you’re not worth it”; he repeated this threat on the floor of Congress again in 2014. In the current campaign, when asked about the deaths of people in shootings between police and drug traffickers, he replied: “If [a police officer] kills 10, 15 or 20, with 10 or 30 shots each, he should be decorated, not prosecuted” (G1, August 28). And it’s not just opinions. Threats have an effect. Bolsonaro elected president could result in a reign of terror against poor people, blacks, women.

### “Self-Coup” and a Military Takeover in “Successive Approximations”

Immediately following the stabbing of Bolsonaro in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais on September 7, his running mate made explicit his bonapartist-militarist intentions. That same night, the PSL candidate for vice president, General Mourão, stated in an interview with GloboNews that “the country is experiencing a breakdown of social norms, with generalized anarchy, there is no respect for authority anymore, with armed bands roaming in the streets.” He threw in that “in order to ensure that the country continues to function,” the president, as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, “may decide to deploy the armed forces.” He added: “But this is a self-coup.”<sup>8</sup> In 2015, General Mourão was removed from the post of commander of the Southern Military Command for his criticism of President Rousseff and his provocative remarks about a “controlled fall” of the president, “discontinuity” in government or a situation of “chaos” in the

context of the political crisis.<sup>9</sup>

A year ago, the general went back on the offense, this time against President Temer, who was installed by the impeachment of Rousseff, saying in a speech promoted by a Masonic lodge in Brasília that “Either the institutions solve the political problem” – that is, “withdraw” the politicians accused by the judiciary of “illicit acts” – “or else we will have to enforce it.”<sup>10</sup> Regarding possible military intervention, Mourão said that “We have plans, quite well laid out,” but for the moment let “the powers” solve the situation. “If they cannot, the time will come when we will have to impose a solution. And this imposition will not be easy.” His view, he said, “which coincides with my colleagues in the Army High Command,” is that a military takeover could be through “successive approximations.” In this vision, a Bolsonaro-Mourão government could be a first approximation to the bonapartist military regime that they aspire to. Elected, or imposed.

Another senior military official who in 2016 insinuated that “the army could be called upon to intervene,” General Eduardo Villas Bôas, the commander of the army, caused a commotion in April with his intervention to prevent Lula’s candidacy. As the Supreme Court deliberated on whether Lula was to be jailed, the military chief warned in a tweet that the army “shares the desire of all good citizens to repudiate impunity” (*El País* [Brazil edition], 4 April). The ministers duly saluted, and Judge Moro ordered the arrest of the former president. Recently, a day after Mourão’s statement about a “self-coup,” Villas Bôas raised the spectre that a new Bolsonaro government could “have its legitimacy questioned” (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, 9 September). “The worst case scenario,” he said, would be that of “someone *sub judice*” (whose case is in the courts) – i.e., Lula – confronting the Constitution and the Clean Slate Act,<sup>11</sup> “throwing out legitimacy, making it difficult to establish stability and governability” and “further dividing Brazilian society.” Asked if Bolsonaro was the candidate of the military, the army commander replied that “obviously” the captain “has appeal for the military public, because he seeks to identify with the issues that are dear to the Forces.”

Concern is growing in certain imperialist sectors about the militarization of politics in Brazil. A few months ago, the *New York Times* (22 July) published a detailed report titled “Brazil’s Military Enters Politics, Stirring Fears of a Dictatorship.” It wrote that “Retired generals and other former officers are mounting a sweeping election campaign, backing about 90 military veterans running for an array of posts – including the presidency – in national elections this October.” In fact, the military electoral mobilization is far larger. A UOL news agency report (Sept. 21) with data from the TSE shows that 214 retired military personnel are running for office this year, in addition to 82 active members of the armed force and 594 members of the military police. When you

<sup>9</sup> See “The Role of Imperialism and the Military in the Brazilian Political Crisis,” *The Internationalist* No. 44, Summer 2016.

<sup>10</sup> “General Speaks of the Possibility of the Army ‘Imposing a Solution’ to Crisis,” *O Globo*, 17 September 2017.

<sup>11</sup> The 2010 “Ficha Limpa” law calls for judicial panels to rule on the eligibility of all candidates to run for office based on whether they have been found guilty of corruption, even if their cases are still in the courts.



Alan Marques / Folhapress

**Congressmen Alberto Fraga of the ultra-rightist party DEM and Jair Bolsonaro imitate shooting firearms in the Chamber of Deputies. Upon joining the PSL, Bolsonaro announced that he would try to bring more military men into Congress. “The bullet caucus will become the machine gun caucus,” he said.**

include firefighters (who in Brazil are part of the armed forces), there are 990 military personnel up for election, almost a battalion of candidates in combat fatigues. Bolsonaro’s party, the PSL, has 135 candidates who listed their military ranks, and the Patriota “party” of Corporal Daciolo is running 37.

After Mourão’s statements about military intervention, the controversy did not stop. He ranted against women (families without fathers, with only a mother and grandmother, are just “factories to produce misfits” who then go into the drug trade, he said), Indians (“lazy”) and blacks (“hustlers”). He proposed to eliminate the “13th month salary” (Christmas bonus), saying that this is just some “Brazilian jabuticaba” (exotic fruit), and to impose a new constitution, designed by “notables” (“the Constitution does not have to be made by delegates elected by the people”).

To calm spirits, the minister of defense issued assurances that the “Armed Forces will guarantee results of the polls” (*Fol-*

*ha de S. Paulo*, 22 September). But who decides the outcome of the polls? Not to worry, he replied, the military will “follow to the letter” what is prescribed by Article 142 of the Brazilian Constitution, which he described as the “bible of the Armed Forces.” So what does that constitutional provision say? The text specifies that the mission of the Armed Forces, besides “defense of the Motherland”, is to be a “guarantee of constitutional powers and, on the initiative of any one of them, of law and order.” On the initiative of any of these powers means that the president (Temer) or the judiciary (STF and TSE) could summon the army to impose “law and order.” And who is saying this is General Joaquim Silva e Luna, the first defense minister since the founding of the New Republic in 1988 who is not a civilian. In another novelty, the president of the Supreme Court now has an “advisor” installed by the military, General Fernando Azevedo e Silva. The militarization of politics in Brazil is advancing in giant strides.

## III: The Spectre of Bonapartism

Meanwhile, we are witnessing a notable growth in the influence and control of armed institutions at all levels of society. It has already reached public education, where we see a dramatic increase in the number of schools run by the military. Not military academies, but “normal” public schools administered by military police officers, with military discipline. In those schools, parents are required to pay 75 dollars for uniforms, students are organized into platoons and student councils have been abolished. In the state of Goiás, the number of schools under military police administration increased from eight to 46 in the last five years; there are 122 throughout the republic, according to a report in the magazine *Época* (23 July). The justification of the state government is that it is a “measure to counteract the high rates of violence in the *periferias* [outskirts of the cities, i.e., slums].” A spokesman for the Union of Education Workers of Goiás commented: “A uniformed policeman inside a school with a gun on his waist is coercion.” But the union is barred from even entering schools run by the military police.

Militarization of the streets is already in full sway in Rio de Janeiro. In February, the unelected president Michel Temer decreed military intervention in the state of Rio, claiming the need for “extreme measures to put things in order.” The justification was “disorders” that occurred during Carnival. But the most notable things

about Carnival were the police dragnets and the political content of the samba lyrics, which were highly critical of the Temer government. Supposedly intended to combat “violence,” the military takeover has in fact led to an escalation of killings by police. Thus the Legislative Observatory of Federal Intervention in Public Security of Rio de Janeiro recorded that the number of deaths due to police intervention rose from 80 per month in 2017 to 895 people killed in the first eight months of this year, or 112 per month on average. Of these deaths, 105 were in massacres involving clashes with police, especially in *favelas* like Lins and Rocinha, according to the data lab Fogo Cruzado [Crossfire] (G1, 20 August). As always, the overwhelming majority of the victims were black and poor.

In short, in order to combat violence, the first step would be to expel the military police and soldiers from the *favelas* and *moros* (hilltop areas) of Rio, and from the outskirts of all the metropolitan areas of the country. So where are the mass demonstrations demanding “military police out of the *favelas*, army and navy out of Rio”? There aren’t any. Instead, the left is focusing its activity on these bogus elections, manipulated by the judiciary and monitored by the military. In particular, there has been a crescendo of calls for a “useful vote”, in other words, a *vote of fear*, in favor of the PT’s slate of Fernando Haddad as president and

<sup>7</sup> “Bolsonaro Has Already Proposed to Kill FHC and Another 30,000 Brazilians,” *O Povo* (Fortaleza), 19 November 2017.

<sup>8</sup> In 1992, Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori, backed by the armed forces, staged a coup d’état in which he dissolved the congress and the judiciary. This move against the “separation of powers,” common to many bourgeois constitutions, became known throughout Latin America as an *autogolpe* or “self-coup.”





**Unelected president Michel Temer and General Eduardo Villas Bôas, commander of the Brazilian Army, review military parade on Army Day, April 18.**

Manuela D'Avila of the PCdoB<sup>12</sup> as vice president, in order to block a Bolsonaro victory. In a possible second round of voting, we can be sure that virtually the entire left will be calling to vote for the PT slate, which would be the continuity of the popular front that ruled the country from 2003 to 2016. But militarization did not begin with Bolsonaro, or with Temer or the alleged “coup” of impeachment. The federal intervention decree in Rio is new, the first under the Constitution of 1988, but it was preceded by *numerous military interventions in states ordered by Lula and Dilma* from 2006 on.

Let's not forget the brutal occupation of Rio de Janeiro during the 2014 World Cup, and the Olympics in 2016, when the military – dispatched by Dilma – terrorized the *favelas* of Rio. Or that the repression of the explosive protests of 2013 was also the work of the PT government, in collusion with the PSDB state government in São Paulo. In fact, the number of deaths by police in Rio has constantly risen from 2013 (416) to over 1,000 in 2017 (UOL, 9 March and 18 December 2017). The escalation this year is only the latest chapter in this bloodbath. We also recall that the National Security Force (FNS), which mobilized to crush oil workers protests against the pre-salt auctions, was created by Lula in 2004. The reality is that in order to combat the slaughter, it is necessary to organize worker and peasant self-defense, as we called for at the time of the massacre in the Baixada Fluminense outside the city of Rio de Janeiro in April 2005.<sup>13</sup> During the massive street demonstrations of 2013, 2014 and 2016, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista and the Class-Struggle Committee fought to mobilize the power of the working class, getting the teachers union of Rio de Janeiro, SEPE-RJ, to approve a motion calling to:

- Mobilize the working class and its power, and in particular the trade unions, to defend against police attacks!
- Form workers defense committees based in the unions to protect protests and the favelas!

<sup>12</sup> The thoroughly social-democratized Communist Party of Brazil, which has acted for years as a left satellite of the PT.

<sup>13</sup> See “Slaughter in the Baixada Fluminense: Mobilize the Power of the Working Class!” (in Portuguese), Vanguarda Operária bulletin, April 2005. See also, “Lula’s Brazil: Land of Massacres” and “How the Opportunist Left Embraced the Capitalist Police,” in *The Internationalist* No. 22, September-October 2005.

- Tear down the walls of steel around Maré!
- Drive out the pro-imperialist occupation troops from Haiti, the *favelas* and social movements!
- “Brazil: No to the World Cup of Repression!” *The Internationalist* No. 37, May-June 2014

### **Fascism: What It Is, And How to Fight It**

Such class mobilization requires a political struggle not only against the fascist and militarist right, but also against the popular-front left that has run the affairs of the bourgeoisie for 13 years. Although the LQB since the 1990s called for a *voto nulo* (blank ballot) and a political fight against the popular front, the overwhelming majority of the left succumbed to the pressure of that class-collaborationist front, calling to vote for PT in the second, decisive round of voting, while a large part of the left supported the police in the “strikes” by military police and military firemen. Marcelo Freixo of the PSOL (Party of Socialism and Freedom), who now heads his party’s slate for the federal Chamber of Deputies, even asked for more UPPs (Police Pacification Units) in the *favelas*.

As the election race heats up, we are hearing calls to vote “against the fascists and the coup.” Many identify Bolsonaro with fascism: Haddad compares the ex-captain Bolsonaro with the ex-corporal Hitler. They use the Stalinist/liberal definition of fascism as any markedly repressive government or movement. Thus leftists such as *Diário Causa Operária* (3 October) consider that the PSDB candidate for governor of São Paulo, João Doria, would be “even more fascist than Bolsonaro” because he says he would order police to shoot to kill. By this criterion, the coup leader General Pinochet in Chile is labeled fascist, when in reality the Pinochet regime was a military dictatorship (supported, naturally, by the genuine fascists like Patria y Libertad). Fascism is not an idea but a movement of enraged masses, especially ruined petty bourgeois, used by big capital to crush the labor movement. As the Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky, co-leader together with Lenin of the October Revolution and founder of the Red Army, defined it:

“At the moment that the ‘normal’ police and military resources of the bourgeois dictatorship, together with their parliamentary screens, no longer suffice to hold society in a state of equilibrium – the turn of the fascist regime arrives. Through the fascist agency, capitalism



**Ordered into Rio de Janeiro during the World Cup by PT president Dilma Rousseff, police invade the Maré favela, 27 March 2014.**

sets in motion the masses of the crazed petty bourgeoisie, and bands of the declassed and demoralized lumpenproletariat; all the countless human beings whom finance capital itself has brought to desperation and frenzy.”

–Trotsky, *What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* [1932]

It is not simply a matter of definitions. Behind the talk of a supposed fascist danger represented by Bolsonaro there is a program, also of Stalinist/liberal origin: to form an “anti-fascist” or “democratic” front with sectors of the bourgeoisie. In some cases, it is in the form of a call to vote for Haddad of the PT, that is, for the popular front, already in the first round of voting. In other cases, the call is for a much “broader” front. One such appeal argues that “#EleNão should be a mega-front.” The candidate of this front would be Haddad, they say. “The candidate is of the moderate left; the front would be even more moderate” (“Without a Broad Democratic Front, It Will Be More Difficult to Defeat Bolsonaro and the Coup in the Second Round,” *The Intercept Brasil*, 2 October). They want to clamp on a lock to prevent radicalization of the left. In doing so, they would be helping the real bonapartist danger, of a military/police/judicial regime seeking to repress the struggle of the workers and the oppressed. As we have said, the popular front is no barrier to the militarists, which will not be defeated at the polls.

As Trotsky wrote in the *Transitional Program* (1938): “‘People’s Fronts’ on the one hand – fascism on the other: these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution.” The purpose of this program of the Fourth International was to help the workers in the process of their struggles to construct a “bridge between present demands and the program of socialist revolution. This bridge should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the working class.” This requires a sharp struggle to throw out the pro-capitalist bureaucracy of *all* the trade-union federations: right-wingers such as Força Sindical, the semi-*pelego* (corporatist) UGT, the CUT led by the PT, but also the Intersindical and Conlutas. Today the LQB and the CLC call to cast a blank ballot in these counterfeit elections and to take to the streets to or-

ganize powerful workers actions against electoral fraud and the bonapartist danger.

–*For a national education strike to demand: military out of schools!*

–*Occupy the refineries to impose workers control on Petrobras!*

–*For workers mobilization to demand: military police out of the favelas, soldiers out of Rio!*

–*Prepare a general strike to revoke the labor “reform” and prevent pension “reform”!*

The spectre of a fully bonapartist regime has not yet materialized. Perhaps it could arrive “by successive approximations” as suggested by General Mourão in his speech at the Masonic Grande Oriente of Brazil lodge. Those who prematurely scream “coup” run the risk of not recognizing it when the danger is really at hand. But the possibility is there in the framework of the capitalist economic crisis which has lasted ten years without overcoming mass unemployment, precarious employment in temporary and part-time jobs, the fall of workers’ wages, the bankruptcy of large sections of the petty bourgeoisie, the explosion of debt and other scourges. In the absence of revolutionary leadership, this crisis provides the social basis giving rise to racist and fascist movements, right-wing populism, anti-immigrant xenophobia and the incitement to a military-police “strong state” with an iron fist to crush those sectors in struggle against the calamitous rule of capital.

The advance of militarist and ultra-right forces goes hand in hand with attacks on workers’ rights. It is an international phenomenon, from nearby Argentina, where rulers pay the imperialist bankers while casting more workers into poverty and denying women’s right to abortion, to far-off Europe, where imperialist rulers condemn the Greek population to abject poverty and let immigrants drown at sea. In the imperialist colossus of the United States openly fascist forces are growing in the shadow of the regime of Donald Trump. But there is also a struggle by the revolutionaries to mobilize the labor movement to crush this plague before it is too late. The main task on all these battle fronts of the class war is to form the nucleus, in the heat of bitter struggles, of genuine revolutionary, Leninist/Trotskyist workers’ parties, which as part of a reformed Fourth International fight for international socialist revolution. This is the “election program” of the Trotskyists of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista. ■



# Brazil Elections: On the Second Round

The following article is translated from *Vanguarda Operária* No. 14, October-November 2018, published by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for the Fourth International.

The urgent task facing class-conscious workers and revolutionaries continues to be to **mobilize powerful workers actions against the election fraud, the militarist danger and the attacks of the entire bourgeoisie** against the exploited and the oppressed. Calls to form a “democratic front” and to vote for Fernando Haddad of the Workers Party (PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores), the candidate of the bourgeois popular front, only serve to undermine the necessary proletarian and revolutionary response to the danger posed by Jair Bolsonaro and his supporters who want to impose a militarist solution to the Brazilian crisis.

As soon as the first round of the elections ended, showing the heavy vote for the ultra-rightist congressman running for president, a general panic engulfed the ranks of the left in all its varieties. The former army captain, a defender of torture and the military dictatorship, who did not hide from the electorate his homophobia, machismo and prejudice against indigenous peoples and blacks, took 46% of the votes. The PT candidate, Haddad, received only 29%. In opposition to both bourgeois candidacies, we call for a blank ballot on the second round of voting.

Bolsonaro’s precinct captains wear green/yellow shirts with the colors of Brazil’s flag and the national soccer team as a uniform, recalling Italian fascist Benito Mussolini’s black shirts and the brown shirts of Hitler’s Nazis. The xenophobic and racist nationalism of the candidate of the “bullet caucus” (military and police members of the Brazilian Congress) and his vice-presidential running mate, General Hamilton Mourão, has already sparked deadly violence. On the day of the first round vote, Mestre Moa de Kantendê (Romualdo Rosário da Costa) was assassinated in the city of Salvador, Bahia. Mestre Moa, the founder of the Afoxé Badaué Carnival troupe and one of the greatest masters of capoeira in Brazil, was stabbed 12 times by a supporter of the militarist candidate for having criticized Bolsonaro and defended Haddad.

The attacks are continuing. The Agên-



**Bolsonaro takes aim, at the LAAD International Defense and Security Fair in Rio de Janeiro. During the election campaign, the ex-captain threatened “we’re going to shoot the petralhada [PT membership].” A “joke,” as the election court ruled?**

cia Pública (October 10) counted at least 50 cases of physical assaults by Bolsonaro supporters during the first ten days of October. Nor is the danger limited to personal safety. A large-scale military intervention in the country is underway. On the eve of the first round of voting, some 94 armored combat vehicles arrived in the port of Paranaguá, donated (!) by the U.S. Pentagon (infodefesa.com, 5 October). What is their purpose? To attack Venezuela? Defense of the “Republic of Curitiba” (the seat of the Lava Jato judicial “investigation”)? In any case, we can be sure that they will be used for internal repression. A previous delivery, in 2015, included 50 M113 armored personnel carriers, several of which were used when the military assaulted the Complexo do Salgueiro neighborhood in São Gonçalo, in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

The reality is that we are witnessing an *international* drive for militarization. To confront and defeat this onslaught, it is necessary to mobilize a superior force: that of the *international working class*. The workers are the real targets of this *capitalist* attack, as was also the case in the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. The fundamental focus of the political events of recent years is to impose by force the free-market “reforms” that

the Bovespa (São Paulo stock exchange) and the imperialist bankers are demanding. To claim that one can stand up to this by making nice with sectors of the “*centrão*” (the rightist block that dominated the country for a decade and a half after 1988) and by voting for an ever more moderate PT candidate is a dangerous illusion.

Haddad is heading a “popular front” alliance, as was the case previously with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff: a coalition of class collaboration that chains

workers, the left, blacks, indigenous people, women, gay, lesbian and transgender people, and all of the oppressed to a section of the ruling class. The purpose of this two-headed front (the Frente Brasil Popular and Frente do Povo Sem Medo [Front of the Fearless People]) is to prevent radicalization of the opposition to the capitalist assault and to divert the justified fear caused by the forward march of the militarized ultra-right into electoral channels, which already showed themselves in the first round to be a dead end.

A Haddad victory at the ballot box? To be sure, the numbers of blank ballots and abstentions add up to millions. But after going to all the trouble of ousting the PT president from the Palácio do Planalto [Brazil’s White House] and ensuring that the historic leader of the PT would not be a candidate in 2018, do you think that the masters of this country are about to let a PT candidate win the presidency again? The only way to combat and defeat the threat of a bonapartist “strong state” based on the repressive apparatus (military, police and judiciary) is with hard-hitting class-struggle action.

Key sectors of the bourgeoisie are out to crush the Workers Party precisely because it is a reformist *workers* party, no matter how right-wing, sellout and class-collaborationist. However, the leadership of this party *also* wants to drain its class content. Haddad is the candidate of the bourgeois popular front, as he is confirming every day. In his television presentation (October 12), he said his campaign “is not of a party, it’s of everyone who wants to change the country.”

And this “everyone” encompasses a whole range of bourgeois sectors and politicians who only yesterday were denounced as “coup plotters.” Already before the first round Haddad conjured up support from the [mainline conservative] PSDB for his second round candidacy on a “republican agenda.” After the October 7 vote, he dropped the proposal for a constituent assembly. He no longer speaks of repealing the anti-worker “reforms” of “President” Temer. If elected, he would attack workers’ rights, as did Lula and Dilma.

Today the panicked Brazilian left is calling, almost in unison, to vote for Had-

dad. In addition to PCdoB and PCB, the PSOL in its entirety (Unidade Socialista, Resistência, Insurgência, MES, CST, LSR, EM, etc.), several Trotskyoid groupings, and even the “*coxinha* left” of the PSTU (which made common cause with the right-wing in the impeachment battle), are calling to vote for the PT on the second round.

Particular mention should be made of the Movimento Revolucionário de Trabalhadores (MRT – Revolutionary Movement of Workers), which previously insisted that it never voted for the PT but is now “critically voting for Haddad” (“Declaration of the MRT, October 10). Even more revealing is the justification put forward by these centrists: they say that in voting for the PT candidate “we are accompanying the hatred and will to fight against Bolsonaro.” This is pure tailism. They even claim that they give “no political support to the policies of the PT,” while giving political support to the PT itself, and to the popular front it is leading. It shows that, in distress, all the talk of class independence spouted by these pseudo-Trotskyists goes up in smoke.

It’s not an isolated case. When the stabbing of Bolsonaro occurred, the MRT’s main candidate declared, in a matter of minutes, that “We repudiate the attack on the candidate Bolsonaro” because, despite political differences, “we are against *atentados* [assassinations or attempted assassinations] as a method of political struggle.” Even though in the following days they published a long article quoting Trotsky on terrorism, with that repudiation the MRT joined the rest of the left candidates in pledging obedience to the bourgeois state.

Revolutionary Trotskyists are against violence within the left and we do not support the method of *atentados*, which is no answer to the violent oppression perpetrated by the whole system of exploitation, and moreover is often counterproductive, as in this case; but we give no solidarity to this criminal [Bolsonaro] nor do we salute the bourgeois “democracy” that condemns millions to the poverty imposed at police and military gunpoint.

Even when the MRT, like other opportunist groups, speaks of organizing “self-defense committees” to “deal with the advance of authoritarianism and the extreme right,” it does not indicate their class character: they could be the core of committees of the popular front, bringing together various political forces including bourgeois forces. Revolutionary Trotskyists, in contrast, call for the formation of workers self-defense groups, based on mass organizations of working people, mainly the trade unions.

History teaches that one cannot defeat bonapartist and even fascist forces by making alliances with supposed “democratic” sectors of the bourgeoisie. Experience from the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s to the Unidad Popular of Salvador Allende in Chile in the early 1970s provides more than enough proof that the popular front leads to defeat, one way or another. The urgent task in defending the oppressed is to break with the bourgeoisie, form organisms of workers power, and build the nucleus of a revolutionary – Leninist and Trotskyist – workers party.

–Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, 14 October 2018



**Militarization underway: 94 armored combat vehicles donated by the Pentagon arrived in the port of Paranaguá at the beginning of October. In April, the Brazilian army received another 52 tanks donated by the U.S. For what purpose?**



# Organize All Port/Warehouse Workers! Mobilize Labor to Stop Deportations!

## L.A. Teamsters Defend TPS Immigrants

On October 3, Teamsters locals fighting to defend and organize port truckers and warehouse workers in the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and also San Diego, concluded a three-day strike with a dramatic show of power in defense of immigrant rights. A half dozen Teamster big rigs surrounded the entrance to the Metropolitan Detention Center in downtown Los Angeles, along with protesters, including immigrant rights groups such as CARACEN, and activists from other unions, including IUPAT (painters). Later in the day, the Teamsters and immigrant rights activists caravanned to the L.A. port, where they blocked a freeway entrance in an act of civil disobedience. Sixty-four arrests were made. The protest was called under the slogan, “Immigrant Rights Are Workers Rights, Protect TPS for Working Families.” That same day, a U.S. district judge in San Francisco granted an injunction to stop the Trump administration from stripping Temporary Protected Status protection from hundreds of thousands of immigrants who fled wars and natural disasters from Central America to Haiti and Africa.

We say: **Stop the revocation of TPS! For workers action to stop deportations!**

The Teamster action is an important step toward mobilizing workers power to stop the deportations, which the Internationalist Group has been fighting for since well before Donald Trump took office. In January, when the government announced the cancellation of TPS for Salvadorans, tens of thousands of whom live in the Los Angeles area, the Internationalist Group mobilized together with a contingent of Transport Workers Against Deportations whose banner demanded “Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!” and “Unionize Undocumented Workers!”

In February, Transport Workers Against Deportations and other Internationalist Group supporters were among some 200 protesters who stopped an I.C.E. van from entering the L.A. Metropolitan Detention Center for around two hours in an emergency mobilization in response to a massive wave of I.C.E. raids sweeping the city. Transport workers held signs calling for “Workers Defense Guards Against Racist Anti-Immigrant Attacks” and “Workers Action to Smash the Deportation Machine of Democrats and Republicans! Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!”

Addressing the heavily immigrant crowd in Spanish, a speaker from the Transport Workers Against Deportations contingent pointed out the burning need to bring out the power of organized labor in mass mobilizations capable of physically stopping I.C.E. from deporting our immigrant brothers and sisters. He stressed that to make that happen, trade-union militants must fight for a class struggle perspective against the current pro-Democratic Party misleadership of the unions, and that we will need a revolution to sweep away this whole racist capitalist system. On May Day, the Transport Workers Against Deportations contingent joined with the Internationalist Group in chanting “Luchar, Vencer, Obreros al Poder!” (struggle, win, workers to power).

On October 3, standing with the giant Teamster rigs circling the detention center



**Transport Workers Against Deportations at October 3 Teamster action in Los Angeles against cancelation of Temporary Protected Status for immigrant workers during strike by L.A./Long Beach port truckers and warehouse workers.**

gave a glimpse of the enormous power transport workers could wield in defense of immigrants if armed with a class struggle program. In this case the port truckers’ and warehouse workers’ action in L.A. was linked to the formation of a national alliance of several unions, Working Families United to #Save TPS, including the Painters, UNITE-HERE (restaurant and hotel workers), UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers), Iron Workers and Bricklayers.

The labor alliance is hardly radical, it’s a top-down initiative of bureaucrats linked to the Democratic Party, and the Teamsters’ action is only a token of what a real mobilization of workers power would look like. But together they symbolize a sea change for union officialdom, from opposing unionization of undocumented immigrant workers to at least making a show of defending them. This can provide an opening for class-conscious trade-unionists to take the lead in organizing this key sector of the working class and to bring out the tremendous power of the workers movement to actually stop the deportations. A strike to shut down the port of Los Angeles in defense of immigrants and all workers would have an explosive impact. It would not only put the I.C.E. immigration police up against the wall, it could lead to a wave of unionizing immigrant workers nationally. But that requires a leadership built on a program of internationalist class struggle.

The three-day strike in early October was against giant transportation companies XPO Logistics and NFI/Cal Cartage. The *Los Angeles Daily News* (3 October) reported that “hundreds of teamsters picketed at and near marine terminals, rail yards, warehouses and distribution centers across Southern California.” The *troqueros* in the ports are mainly Latino immigrants and horribly abused, with the government and the bosses calling them “independent contractors” if they own or lease a truck. This is in order to deny them the right to unionize and other rights, while the workers are drowning in debt to and horribly exploited by the big trucking and shipping companies.

An estimated 1,400 port truckers are

working with Temporary Protected Status. TPS cards are held by some 400,000 immigrants from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan, as well as Honduras and five other countries. The viciously racist Trump administration cancelled TPS legal protections for card-holders from the first four countries – scheduled to take effect mostly next year, meaning that they face imminent danger of being declared “illegal” and deported. Last March, card-holders and their children (there are at least 270,000 children born in the U.S. to a TPS parent) filed a federal lawsuit against the arbitrary and racist cancellation of TPS, which would rip families and communities apart. The lawsuit was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California and the National Day Laborers Organizing Network, and includes members of UNITE-HERE, the IUPAT and CARECEN.

In issuing the preliminary against cancellation of TPS protections, U.S. district judge Edward Chen included as one of the potential grounds for concluding this was “motivated by racial animus” the fact that “President Trump described Haiti as a ‘shithole’ in a meeting with [Department of Homeland Security] Secretary [Kirstjen] Nielsen where he expressed desire not to welcome Haitians in the United States, just days before DHS announced it would terminate Haiti’s status.” The court order is a welcome setback to the government’s war on immigrants. But the Trump administration will surely appeal, and if the Ninth Circuit Court upholds an injunction, it will then go to the now solidly right-wing-dominated U.S. Supreme Court. The threat of deportation still hangs over the head of these workers and their families, and even TPS status is unstable. Class-struggle unionists must demand that all immigrants in the U.S. – no matter where they came from, how they got here or what papers they have – should have the same rights as everyone else.

Almost all TPS card-holders are working men and women, in such industries as construction, restaurants and hotels, supermarkets, landscaping and child care where they make up a big share of the workforce. Tens of thousands are union members.

“Working Families United” is campaigning to stop the revocation of TPS and to lobby Congress to pass bills allowing TPS card-holders to apply for legal permanent resident status. The campaign, backed by the AFL-CIO, has spent a lot of money on ads. This past month it held rallies in several cities with an eye on the midterm elections, aiming to elect Democratic politicians who are billed as “friends of labor” or of immigrants. This is a toothless, dead-end strategy. The capitalist Democratic Party is no friend to labor or the oppressed.

- It was Democrat Jimmy Carter who signed the Motor Carrier Act of 1980, which deregulated the trucking industry and led to the proliferation of low-wage non-union carriers (90% of port truckers used to be unionized).

- Democratic president Bill Clinton militarized the border and began the construction of the border wall that Trump wants to complete. Clinton feared mass immigration as the result of the 1994 NAFTA “free trade” agreement that he signed. NAFTA allowed the unfettered economic penetration of Mexico by U.S. imperialism, resulting in peasants losing their land and migrating to the U.S.

- In the 2000s, Hillary Clinton as a U.S. senator voted to expand the border wall and further increase the apparatus of immigration control established by her husband. As secretary of state she was involved in the 2009 coup in Honduras, which set off the mass exodus which is continuing today.

- President Barack Obama earned the title of “deporter-in-chief” for his record number of involuntary I.C.E. “removals,” at a pace that Trump has yet to match.

We say: **Break with the Democrats! Build a class-struggle workers party!**

The Teamster campaign to represent port truckers, “Justice for Port Truckers,” has carried out 16 “targeted” strikes in the last five years. It has also facilitated some 1,000 individual claims to the California Labor Standards and Enforcements office and class-action suits in the courts, opposing the misclassification of truckers as “contractors” rather than employees, and reporting the wage theft by the bosses. The workers often win these legal suits, and, so far, at least \$48 million in back pay and penalties has been awarded to workers. Yet after making payments on their rigs, paying for fuel, insurance, maintenance and other expenses, such as compliance with stepped-up environmental regulation, most port drivers still make less than the minimum wage.

Even if the workers prevail in these claims, winning recognition as employees and getting a fraction of what they are really owed, they are still left with *no rights, no benefits, and no union!* What’s needed is fighting unity in the ports – from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) to port and intermodal truckers to railyard and warehouse workers – to **unionize all workers in the ports and warehouses!** This struggle cannot be won with a legalistic campaign relying on the bourgeois courts or the capitalist Democratic politicians – it must look to the power of the working class and its allies. ■



# Supreme Court Seeks to Gut Unions

## Life After Janus

### *Bust the Union-Busters with Hard Class Struggle!*

**Not Democrats or Republicans But a Workers Party to Fight for a Workers Government!**

A slightly abbreviated version of this article was distributed as an Internationalist Group leaflet at the American Federation of Teachers convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on July 7.

On June 27, the Supreme Court of the United States issued its long-awaited ruling in the case of *Janus v. AFSCME et al.* Organized labor and public sector unions in particular have been dreading this moment for several years. The decision, hailed by President Donald Trump as a blow against Democrats, threatens to seriously weaken unions financially by cutting off “agency fees” paid by those who refuse to join the union but still benefit from union-negotiated wage agreements, legal representation against employers, and other services. To no one’s surprise, the conservative majority of the black-robed justices decided by 5-4 against the union. This decision will effectively make the entire country “open shop,” and could unleash a union-busting offensive by both public and private sector employers.

Across the country, would-be union-busters celebrated. Nevertheless, unionized workers have the power to make them choke on their cheers. *Janus* may be a turning point in the class struggle in the United States, but it is far from the death sentence that the present labor leadership fears ... and did nothing to stop. What the Supreme Court decision does, in addition to letting non-union members become “free riders,” is effectively eliminate the obligatory dues check-off. This arrangement is the height of class collaboration, giving bosses control over union finances, which they can cripple by holding back the cash. In New York City, the courts canceled the dues check-off after the union leadership caved in and called off the 2005 subway and bus strike. And it was Democratic NY state attorney-general Eliot Spitzer who led the anti-union charge.

Decades of bureaucratic deal-making, capitulations, of building illusions in “labor-management cooperation,” and support for the Democratic Party have led to this sorry state of affairs. Unions would be far stronger if they collected their dues directly from the membership and stopped acting like a service provider. But then they would have to do what they should have been doing all along – waging hard class struggle. That includes defying the bosses’ state and would require raising class consciousness among the members. Behind the decision to eliminate the “agency shop” is a calculation by the ruling class – the bourgeoisie – that they could get away with it without serious blowback from labor. We need to prove them wrong. And to do that, we need to oust the pro-capitalist misleaders of labor who fear and loathe class struggle like the plague.

Already 28 states have “right-to-work”



Protest in NYC’s Foley Square on June 28 against the Supreme Court ruling in *Janus* case.

laws outlawing any measure requiring that employees contribute to the unions that represent them. These union-busting laws came out of the Jim Crow segregationist South, the brainchild of a Texas white supremacist who was financed by some of the U.S.’ most powerful capitalists and hobnobbed with fascists.<sup>1</sup> Conservatives and a web of ultra-rightist moneybags like the Koch brothers, the American Legislative Exchange Council, the Freedom Foundation in Washington state, the Independence Institute in Colorado, the Uihlen and Bradley family foundations in Wisconsin, the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, the Liberty Justice Center, the Illinois Policy Institute and the State Policy Network have been pushing for years for a court decision to enforce “right-to-slave” nationally. The Supremes split 4-4 on the earlier *Friedrichs v. California* case, due to the sudden death of Antonin Scalia. But after the Republican Congress blocked Obama’s nominee, Trump installed a hard-line defender of corporate interests, Neil Gorsuch, on the court.

So what did labor do this past year with *Janus* looming? The bureaucrats acted like it was “game over,” because they are so wedded to the “law and order” of American capitalism that they couldn’t even conceive of fighting the Supreme Court. (In fact, many labor “leaders” are lawyers, including AFL-CIO chief Richard Trumka and American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten.) They called for rallies *the day after* the decision, making no attempt to mobilize labor’s power beforehand. A February 24 “Working People’s Day of Action,” two days before the Supreme Court hearing on *Janus*, was simply a showcase for Democratic phony “friends of labor.” Class-struggle unionists, in contrast, have fought the union-busters tooth and nail. In the Pacific Northwest, Wyatt McMinn was arrested in September 2013 for protesting a Freedom Foundation “right-to-work” confab in Van-

couver, Washington.<sup>2</sup>

The anti-union forces targeted government workers (teachers, postal workers, state, county and municipal employees) because they are the one remaining stronghold of organized labor (34% unionized), as unions in the private sector have been decimated (barely 6% of the workforce). So now that “right-to-work” is “the law of the land,” the union tops are scrambling to sign up everyone and sending out teams to talk up the benefits of unions. But mainly, as always, they are looking to the Democrats for salvation. In New York, Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo, after previously championing non-union charter schools and bashing teacher unions, now wants to run for president and needs labor support. So suddenly he is posing as more-liberal-than-thou in his ongoing feud with New York City mayor Bill de Blasio.

On April 12, before a packed house of labor leaders at the United Federation of Teachers headquarters, Cuomo signed legislation to limit the damage the *Janus* case can do to the unions in New York. It curtails the services the unions must provide free to workers who do not join the union (and don’t pay union dues). As the UFT press release put it, “Outside of the negotiation and enforcement of the collective bargaining agreement, public sector unions will now be allowed to provide legal, economic and job-related services and benefits to members only.” In NYC, where city health insurance is run through the unions, and in union strongholds such as Buffalo and Rochester, the *Janus* decision may not have an immediately paralyzing effect, though it will certainly bleed the unions financially. Elsewhere it will be devastating.

After right-wing Wisconsin governor Scott Walker rammed through his bill eliminating collective-bargaining rights for public employees in 2011, public sec-

tor union membership in the state was slashed from over 50% to under 25%. At the UFT Delegate Assembly in February, Wisconsin AFT president Kim Kohlhaas listed the results: a \$5,000 cut in take-home pay as teachers had to pay for health insurance and pensions; loss of prep time and duty-free lunch periods; daily before-school management meetings; and all teachers are now “at-will,” without tenure, so they can be denied a contract for no reason. Meanwhile, state funding for public education was slashed, funds per student for voucher programs are now higher than in public schools, and due to a teacher shortage caused by educators fleeing the state you can

get a teaching license before graduating from college.

But what Kohlhaas and UFT president Mike Mulgrew didn’t say is that the massive revolt against Walker’s bill by tens of thousands of teachers and other public employees was *called off by sellout union leaders*. To bust the union-busters, labor must use its power – that is, the unions must be *prepared to strike* – to *walk out and shut it down*. Teachers in West Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona and other states did just that this spring. But AFT and NEA leaders are so beholden to the Democrats that they claim that striking is only called for in Republican “red states.” And they hide behind legislation like New York’s Taylor Law which makes it illegal for public employees go on strike. UFT leaders are so terrified of the “s-word” that when a delegate who is a member of Class Struggle Education Workers raised it, they ordered her words stricken from the minutes.

Class-struggle unionists stand for a *closed shop*, where employers must hire union members only, which was banned under the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 (which also outlawed secondary strikes and spurred a purge of “reds” from union leaderships). We defend the *union shop*, where all employees must join the union, which was outlawed by the Supreme Court in 1985. We fight for *union hiring halls*, such as in West Coast longshore and some construction trades, where the unions dispatch workers. We fight *against* all anti-labor laws and union-busting measures such as bans on the agency shop and the dues check-off. But we are not in favor of such practices, which amount to formalized class collaboration between unions and management. The dues check-off was introduced during World War II in exchange for a no-strike pledge by the unions.

The previous Supreme Court ruling overturned by the *Janus* decision was *Aboud v. Detroit Board of Education* (1977), which institutionalized the agency shop in order to ensure a steady source of income for unions in exchange for “labor

<sup>1</sup> See “It Will Take Hard Class Struggle to Defeat ‘Right to Work,’” *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.

<sup>2</sup> See “Defend Wyatt McMinn, Defeat ‘Right to Slave!’” *The Internationalist* No. 36, January-February 2014; and “Wyatt McMinn Not Guilty!” *The Internationalist*, June 2014.



peace.” An *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief by AFT president Randi Weingarten in the *Janus* case, upholding *Abood*, is a paean to “Labor-Management Collaboration Made Possible Through Collective Bargaining.” Without that collaboration, it may be “more difficult for a union in this circumstance to decline to pursue marginal grievances” and the “outcome is often a more confrontational, less cooperative relationship,” Weingarten wrote. And if that wasn’t explicit enough, the AFT chief told education writer Valerie Strauss (*Washington Post*, 5 March):

“The funders backing the *Janus* case and the Supreme Court Justices who want to eliminate collective bargaining with the hope that such a move would silence workers need only to look at West Virginia for what will happen if they get their way. A loss of collective bargaining would lead to more activism and political action, not less.”

But it takes two to class-collaborate, and as a result of the betrayals by the union misleaders, key sections of the capitalist class figure they don’t need to anymore. They’re going for the jugular. Supreme Court justice Samuel Alito said as much in the majority opinion on *Janus*: “Whatever may have been the case 41 years ago when *Abood* was decided, it is thus now undeniable that ‘labor peace’ can readily be achieved through less restrictive means than the assessment of agency fees.” Yet there is ferment among the ranks, and a willingness to fight that hasn’t been seen since the 2011 workers revolt in Wisconsin. The bought-off union bureaucrats (Weingarten makes over half a million dollars a year) may bandy about the spectre of West Virginia, but these “labor fakers” are incapable of waging class war, which is what it will take.

The present U.S. labor bureaucracy was put in place in the anti-Soviet Cold War through a wholesale purge of the “reds” who built the unions. That witch hunt was carried out by liberals and Democrats, not McCarthyite Republicans like Trump. Occasionally, when pushed to the wall, the union tops may give way to real displays of workers power – such as the 2005 New York City transit strike when TWU Local 100 walked out, shutting down the subways and buses in defiance of the Taylor Law. Or the labor revolt in Wisconsin in 2011. But even when giving into the pressure of the ranks, the pro-capitalist misleaders of labor cannot *lead* such struggles, at best they tail after them and at the decisive moments stab them in the back. Life after *Janus* will require hard class struggle, *and for that the parasitic bureaucracy must be driven out.*

It is crucial to distinguish the unions from the labor bureaucracy, a parasitic petty-bourgeois layer that sits atop these mass workers organizations, seeking to mediate between the working class and the bourgeoisie but ultimately loyal to the ruling class. Those fake-leftists who equate the unions with the bosses become adjuncts to the union-busters. Thus the vile World Socialist Web Site (a/k/a Socialist Equality Party) recently hailed the Supreme Court’s decision in the *Janus* case as “a defeat for the union bureaucracy, not the workers” (“Supreme Court rules against unions in *Janus* case,” WWSW, 28 June). Various reformist social democrats, on the other hand, reflexively adopt the attitude of the “progressive” wing of the labor bureaucracy.

This is notably the case of *Labor Notes*, led by supporters of Solidarity. Its July 2018 issue is a special guide to *Rebuilding Power in Open-Shop America*. The guide features a six-point “prescription” for “getting back to basics,” including nostrums like “Be Democratic,” “Fight the Boss,” “Turn Up the Heat,” “Ask People to Join,” “Count Noses,” “Don’t Go It Alone.” It has a self-assessment quiz, advice like “Make Meetings Welcoming and Useful,” and other helpful hints for the left-talking bureaucrat who wants to rev up the ranks for a little action. But nowhere does *Labor Notes*’ guide mention capitalism or capitalists (instead it talks of “the 1%”), no-strike laws, the Democratic Party, the labor bureaucracy and the other enemies and obstacles to be confronted in a knock-down, drag-out labor battle. Its prescription for militant trade-unionism won’t prepare workers for the sharp class struggle ahead.

That was dramatically shown in Wisconsin in 2011. The mass workers revolt arose from the ranks, much like the recent West Virginia strike, as teachers in Madison and then statewide decided to “sick out” in response to Scott Walker’s draconian anti-union legislation. It quickly mushroomed as tens of thousands marched around the state capitol in the cold, day after day, with over 100,000 on the weekends. The labor action riveted activists around the country. Supporters in Egypt sent pizzas. *The Internationalist* declared from the outset, in a leaflet, “It will take nothing less than a *statewide general strike* to defeat labor hater Walker.” Soon calls for a general strike were everywhere. The Wisconsin South Central Labor Federation (SCLF), led by supporters of *Labor Notes*, voted to authorize one. It even issued a how-to pamphlet.

When D-Day arrived as the Republican governor and legislature passed the bill, the *Wisconsin State Journal* (10 March 2011) reported, “Thousands Storm Capitol as GOP Takes Action.” Under these circumstances, a general strike wouldn’t be a walk-through like European unions sometimes call. Fearing the explosion that would result, the state AFL-CIO called off the struggle, told workers to go home and instead mount a drive to recall Republican legislators. And for all its militant talk in the preceding days, the *Labor Notes* leadership of the SCLF caved. It was not prepared to take on the top labor officialdom, the Democratic Party and the capitalist state. And so the struggle went down to defeat.

The *Janus* decision sharply poses the need for a leadership with a program to play hardball, as the bosses are doing – to fight to win. Class-struggle unionists would call for union dues to be collected by the union itself, at the workplace and on the shop floor. They would call for elected strike committees and delegates that can be recalled at any moment. They would fight to break all ties to the Democrats, Republicans or any capitalist party, and instead to fight to build a class-struggle workers party, as IUPAT (Painters) Local 10 in Portland, Oregon did in 2016.<sup>3</sup> And they would prepare to shred anti-labor laws and Supreme Court decisions with massive workers action, on the road to a revolutionary workers government to bring down the rule of capital. ■

<sup>3</sup> “To Hell with the Bosses’ Parties – For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!” *The Internationalist* No. 45, September-October 2016.

# Kavanaugh...

*continued from page 4*

peals for the District of Columbia Circuit, Kavanaugh dissented in the October 2017 *Garza v. Hargan* case, which ruled that an undocumented immigrant teenage girl seeking an abortion should be allowed to have the procedure without having to wait to be placed with a legal guardian. The court overturned a previous ruling by a three-judge panel on which Kavanaugh sat, which held that the young woman should be transferred to a legal guardian before allowing her to have the abortion. (By which time it would be too late, and the legal guardian might be opposed to abortion.) Kavanaugh’s dissent claimed that the original ruling followed from Supreme Court precedents “holding that the Government has permissible interests in favoring fetal life ... and refraining from facilitating abortion.” He added the new ruling “is ultimately based on a constitutional principle as novel as it is wrong: a new right for unlawful immigrant minors in U.S. Government detention to obtain immediate abortion on demand.” (See *Garza v. Hargan*. 17-5236. United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, 24 October 2017.)

***The Internationalist Group says emphatically that ALL women should have the right to free, safe abortion on demand!*** This applies regardless of where they were born and whether the capitalist state recognizes them as “legal” residents. It also means access to free contraceptives and free quality medical care. The woman’s decision should be hers alone, independent of state action or the pressure of relatives or companions, and at any point during her pregnancy with due concern for medical risks to her. Contrary to the anti-woman ideology of religious reactionaries, a fetus is not a person, and the state has no right to condemn any woman under any circumstances to carry through an unwanted pregnancy.

Kavanaugh’s vile dissent is proof positive that he is a sworn enemy of women’s basic democratic right to control their own bodies. Judge Karen Henderson took an even more drastic line, holding that because the young woman entered the U.S. without documentation, the Bill of Rights doesn’t apply to her.<sup>2</sup> Yet apart from a few perfunctory questions regarding *Garza* from Senators Blumenthal and Durbin, the Democrats did not press Kavanaugh on this. Why? Because (a) they don’t want to have a fight over abortion prior to the midterms, (b) they don’t want to be seen defending undocumented immigrants, and (c) because the Democratic Party built up the deportation machine under Obama, whose administration ramped up deportations to historic levels (over 8 million). And while Democrats focused on the threat to *Roe v. Wade*, many defenders of abortion rights warn that it is likely

<sup>2</sup> Contrary to Henderson, the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution states unambiguously that “No person shall ... be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” The 14th Amendment, which was won as a result of the Civil War, the Second American Revolution, reconfirmed this. For Kavanaugh, who already held that employees who are undocumented immigrants are not employees, it is a small step to say that persons who are undocumented are not persons (whereas corporations are, by the right wing’s logic).

that the first result may be for the Court to approve even more state restrictions under *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*. It’s worth noting that Kavanaugh was a clerk for Judge Walter King Stapleton when he wrote the majority opinion on *Casey* for the Third District Court, so he is well versed on this route for undercutting the right to abortion.

The issue of abortion will certainly not be limited to court fights. Nor was the right to abortion won simply as a result of analysis of the 14th Amendment by learned jurists. The 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision was a result of the upsurge of mass agitation and social unrest convulsing the streets of the United States, and of the defeat that U.S. imperialism was experiencing in its war on Vietnam. As a radical women’s liberation movement emerged in the mid-1960s, bourgeois feminists also began organizing. This led to the August 1970 “Women’s Strike for Equality,” a march of 20,000 in New York led by the National Organization of Women (NOW), and November 1971 marches against anti-abortion laws in several cities. But these were small and staid in comparison with what was happening at the time. The country was in turmoil, with mass black upheavals in ghettos across the U.S. during 1965-67, radical students taking over universities in 1968, antiwar protests that repeatedly drew hundreds of thousands, and worker revolts in Detroit auto plants. At the same time, U.S. troops were attacking their officers in South Vietnam, and after the 1968 Têt offensive, the Vietnamese were clearly winning the war.

It was defeat in Indochina and the capitalist rulers’ fear that they were losing control “at home” that led to Supreme Court rulings in favor of a right to abortion, opening the door to school integration through busing in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), and putting a hold on the death penalty in *Furman v. Georgia* (1972). But as the crisis passed, the imperialist ruling class was back on the offensive, using antilabor laws against strikers (miners in 1978, PATCO in 1981), lifting the temporary hold on executions and sparking wars from Afghanistan to Central America. The 1980 election of Ronald Reagan set the stage for repeated attacks on abortion rights, rolling back busing, and more recently the undermining of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. Meanwhile, bourgeois feminists were backtracking on their limited demands. NOW focused on electing women, the Equal Rights Amendment was forgotten, and soon they were calling for women’s “right to choose” rather than utter the dreaded A-word. As reformist pseudo-socialists also adapted to an increasingly reactionary political climate, the Trotskyists stood their ground, calling for *women’s liberation through socialist revolution.*

Although every survey shows that a strong majority of the population (57% according to Pew Research Center) supports the right to abortion in most or all cases, and more than two thirds oppose overturning *Roe*, it is now under heavy attack in the rigged courts and gerrymandered legislatures. With abortion squarely in the crosshairs of a solidly right-wing Supreme Court, it will be up to the working class to defend this basic gain for women against the diktats of this





## Revolutionary Internationalist Youth at October 6 defense of Planned Parenthood Clinic in NYC against “god squad” of anti-abortion bigots.

reactionary cabal. That includes defense in the most direct, physical sense. Along with new state regulations designed to gut the right to abortion, Kavanaugh’s confirmation will likely spur further attacks on clinics. As we wrote after the 2015 attack on a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in Colorado Springs:

“What the deadly assault on the clinic made excruciatingly clear ... is the need for defenders of women and all oppressed groups to have adequate means of protecting themselves, exercising their right to *organized armed self-defense*, and for *mass clinic defense to sweep away the anti-abortion thugs*.”

–“After Colorado Attack: DEFEND ABORTION CLINICS! Free Abortion on Demand,” *The Internationalist* No. 42 (January-February 2016)

### Federalist Society Wins Big

Kavanaugh’s confirmation was not a tipping point: the Supremes already had a 5-4 hard-right majority, with Trump nominee Neil Gorsuch casting the decisive vote in the anti-labor *Janus v. AFSCME* case (see “Life After Janus: Bust the Union-Busters with Hard Class Struggle!” on page 20). But now this majority has been cemented for some time to come. While Republicans currently have a lock on Congress, the White House and the Supreme Court, as well as the military, in the long run the demographics of the U.S. are against them. That’s a key reason why the racist right is desperate to curb non-European immigration and to force white women to have more babies, and why it looks to the Supreme Court as a fail-safe mechanism to override any “excesses” of democracy. As the U.S. becomes steadily less white and more urban/suburban, rule by judicial fiat is their best bet.

Locking in a reactionary majority on the Supreme Court has been a long-standing goal of ultra-reactionaries and standard-issue conservatives alike. Since the mid-’80s, the main intellectual driving force behind this project has been the Federalist Society, an organization of right-wing lawyers, judges and legal scholars who seek to shape the courts in their image. The group was founded in 1982 by law students at Yale and the University of Chicago Law School. Its faculty advisors were the ultra-rightist failed Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork at Yale and the arch-reactionary future justice Antonin Scalia in Chicago. It originally embraced the doctrine of “judicial restraint” – the notion that the courts should not set policy on social issues. Harvard Law School profes-

sor Noah Feldman writes that “after the *Roe* decision...legal conservatives decided that enough was enough” and “the answer was the Federalist Society.” But its doctrine and desire to gut democratic rights go back to the backlash against rulings that struck down school segregation and upheld black rights:

“This philosophy emerged largely as a reaction to liberal rulings by the Warren and Burger courts – as well as those of lower-court judges – who, conservatives complained, tried to ‘legislate from the bench’ on civil rights and civil liberties.” – “Bench Warfare: How the Trump Administration is Remaking the Courts,” *New York Times Magazine* (26 August)

By the mid-80s, the Federalist Society was receiving generous grants from the Koch brothers as part of the interlocking network of right-wing think tanks, advocacy groups and political action committees that developed the agenda for and staffed the Reagan and Bush (I and II) administrations. In 2012 it shifted gears when Chief Justice John Roberts, himself a Bush appointee endorsed by the Federalist Society, ruled that the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) is constitutional. So now “judicial restraint” was out for the Federalists and judicial activism was in, to strike down laws enacted by the “representative body.” The new doctrine is “original intent,” that the constitutionality of any law or court decision would be judged not by applying broad principles laid out in the U.S. Constitution to contemporary society but rather by what the authors of that document “intended” in 1788. By such standards, “originalism” would mean bringing back slavery, denying women and anyone other than substantial property holders the vote, etc. More immediately, as Feldman noted:

“The ascendant wing of the Federalist Society has, according to critics, effectively managed to change how Washington operates, by shifting power away from the executive and legislative branches and toward the courts. It also represents something of a long-term strategy by the Republican Party. ‘By appointing judges who’ll narrowly interpret congressional regulations and statutes,’ [Pomona College professor Amanda] Hollis-Brusky says, ‘you’re gambling that you won’t be in power politically but that your judges will be on the bench and take a more active role in shaping laws over the next 30 years.’”

In line with this strategy, Trump got more

judges confirmed to appeals courts in his first year than any president in history (12), and is on track to exceed that record this year.

The regimentation of U.S. society in the 1950s during the anti-Soviet Cold War was broken by the successful revolution in Cuba and the civil rights movement. The historic, first-ever U.S. defeat in war at the hands of the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants in the early 1970s showed the world that it was possible for the oppressed to fight the imperialist colossus and win. Combined with radicalizing struggles at home, this led a frightened capitalist class to make concessions on legal rights for women, black people and civil liberties. But these temporary victories were stymied by the absence of a revolutionary internationalist leadership. The Stalinist pipedream of “peaceful coexistence” went up in smoke on the battlefields of Afghanistan and Central America in the 1980s. This set the stage for the counterrevolutionary destruction of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state and East European deformed workers states in 1989-92 by resurgent Western imperialism. Washington’s proclamation of a “new world order” went together with a full-scale attack on the working class and social programs under the watchwords of “free trade,” “globalization” and “neoliberalism.” But the economic underpinnings of U.S. imperialist hegemony were steadily eroding, leading to the 2007-08 world economic crisis, which continues to this day.

“Financialized” capitalism has careened from one speculative bubble to another, seeking to shore up the long-term decline in the profit rate. With stock buybacks, “golden parachutes” and other devices, the bosses have literally been looting the companies they preside over, while proclaiming “shareholder value *über alles*” in driving down wages, eliminating benefits and busting unions. Meanwhile, they are buying up estates as far away as possible from the center of world finance capital, from Patagonia to southern New Zealand. Wall Street’s would-be masters of the world are acting like the royalty of a doomed regime in terminal decay.

Theirs is the watchword attributed to King Louis XV of France, “*après moi, le deluge*” (after me comes the flood). In this context, a U.S. Supreme Court determined to enforce “original intent” would mean that the only alternative to destruction of the rights of the oppressed is revolution. It recalls the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision which held that Congress could not ban slavery, that no black person could ever be a citizen, and that the intent of the framers of

the Constitution, in the words of Chief Justice Roger Taney, was that black people “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” Four years later, the response was the Civil War, the second American Revolution.

Trump and his rightist allies need the Supreme Court as a bulwark for a dying social order. *So do the liberal Democrats*, who have done just as much or more to beef up the apparatus for a bonapartist “strong state” to keep the wage slaves down. Who presides over racist police murders of black people? Democratic big city mayors. Who supplied local police with military weaponry to suppress “civil unrest”? Who deported millions, more than any other administration in history? Black Democrat Barack Obama. Kavanaugh’s confirmation shows that you can’t fight a reactionary Supreme Court with Democrats. The fundamental issue here is the class nature of the state, which with its panoply of laws, federal and state agencies, cops and courts serves the interests of the capitalist class. Always, no matter who is in office. Any gains made by the working class, African Americans, women and poor people over the last 200-plus years in this country founded by capitalist slaveowners *came through hard class struggle*, often led by communist organizers. At every step, the capitalists and their government fought to extinguish this struggle. Following on decades of erosion of union and civil rights under successive Democratic and Republican administrations, the need to forge a revolutionary leadership against the capitalist assault is more urgent than ever.

***Build a workers party to abolish the Supreme Court and FBI, and smash the I.C.E. Gestapo, with workers revolution! ■***

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# Caravana...

*sigue de la página 24*

pagar el “impuesto de guerra” (“derecho de piso”) que le exigía una de las pandillas. Se sumó a la caravana con su esposo, hijas y hermanas porque ya no tienen futuro en Honduras. Un joven que llevaba la bandera del arcoíris de los derechos de los homosexuales se sumó a la caravana un día después de que fuera amenazado de muerte por una pandilla de homófobos. Este éxodo es producto de la desesperación.

Para darse una idea de lo extrema que es la situación en Honduras, el ingreso per cápita es de 2,300 dólares anuales, en contraste con los 10,000 de México. Tan sólo Haití está por debajo en América Latina. Según cifras de las Naciones Unidas, el 19 por ciento de la población de Honduras gana menos de 1.90 dólares diarios, que marca la línea internacional de la pobreza extrema, lo que representa 6 veces más que en México y El Salvador (países ambos donde es del 3 por ciento). En lo que toca a la desigualdad, incluso el World Factbook (registro de datos) de la CIA reconoce que Honduras “sufre de una distribución extraordinariamente desigual del ingreso”. Es así que el 40 por ciento más pobre de la población hondureña recibe apenas el 10 por ciento del producto interno bruto, mucho menos que en México y Nicaragua (16 por ciento). Pero no es sólo que Honduras sea pobre y que tenga una clase dominante rapaz, que deja a los de abajo con poco o nada. Es de capital importancia comprender que los orígenes políticos de la crisis social y económica que ha devastado a Honduras se encuentran directamente en Washington y Wall Street.

Durante los años 1980, Ronald Reagan usó a Honduras como la base de la guerra contrarrevolucionaria de EE.UU. contra Nicaragua, apuntalando así al asesino ejército hondureño. En los años 1990, Bill Clinton comenzó a deportar a cientos de pandilleros como los de la Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) y de la Mara 18 hacia Centroamérica. Cuando el presidente mexicano Felipe Calderón inició una “guerra contra las drogas” en 2006 para cumplir las órdenes de George W. Bush, los narcotraficantes mudaron sus operaciones a Honduras. La tasa de homicidios pasó a más del doble de 2006 a 2012, convirtiéndose en la más alta en todo el mundo, y San Pedro Sula, el centro industrial del país, es la ciudad más violenta del planeta. Hay una vinculación tristemente célebre entre las pandillas y la policía y el ejército, que son financiados por EE.UU. Entretanto, la crisis económica mundial que comenzó en 2008 devastó el empleo en la industria textil y del vestido. Tras el golpe de estado de 2009 que depuso al terrateniente liberal Mel Zelaya de la presidencia, los servicios públicos se privatizaron, los subsidios fueron eliminados y decenas de miles de trabajadores fueron despedidos. Ese golpe de estado contó con la aprobación del departamento de estado encabezado por Hillary Clinton.

En resumen, tanto el militarismo como las catastróficas condiciones económicas y sociales producidas por Estados Unidos son las que han llevado a miles de pobres y a familias enteras con bebés y niños pequeños a emprender una fatigosa caminata de miles de kilómetros, desafiando al clima (al caminar con temperaturas de 35 grados centígrados entre lluvias torrenciales) a los ladrones que rondan a los migrantes y a la corrupta y violenta policía, para llegar a la



**Chofer de un camión cisterna les dio aventón a los caminantes.**

frontera de EE.UU. donde les esperan los rifles del ejército de Estados Unidos. La respuesta no es la “ayuda extranjera” que incrementa las ganancias de las empresas norteamericanas, ni la construcción de algunas fábricas maquiladoras que paguen salarios de hambre que sólo incrementen la pobreza, sino derrotar el dominio imperialista de EE.UU. en América Latina, que políticos norteamericanos tanto conservadores como liberales (como el ex secretario de estado de Obama John Kerry) denominan despectivamente como “nuestro patio trasero”. Esto sólo puede ser realizado mediante una revolución socialista, que se extienda por toda Centroamérica, que era un solo país hasta que fue dividido por emisarios norteamericanos en el siglo XIX.

Honduras es, efectivamente, una neocolonia yanqui (era la arquetípica “república bananera” gobernada por la United Fruit Company), donde todo es decidido por Washington. El México semicolonial también se encuentra bajo la bota del imperialismo, lo mismo si es gobernado por un populista burgués como el presidente electo Andrés Manuel López Obrador y su Morena (Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional), o por el libremercaderista de línea dura Enrique Peña Nieto, Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), partido que gobernó al país ininterrumpidamente al país durante siete décadas con mayor o menor sumisión al imperialismo norteamericano (casi siempre mayor). Esto es particularmente cierto en el caso de la política migratoria. Mientras que EE.UU. deportó a unos 294 mil inmigrantes provenientes de El Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras desde 2015 hasta septiembre de 2018, en el mismo período México deportó a 436 mil migrantes provenientes de “triángulo norte” de Centroamérica. Por sus servicios como amortiguador y policía fronteriza de Estados Unidos, México ha recibido miles de millones de dólares del departamento del tesoro de EE.UU. (*El Universal*, 21 de octubre). Y ahora la policía federal ha vuelto a la carga con el arresto de cientos de migrantes en la frontera sur.

El Grupo Internacionalista en México ha combatido desde que se formó en contra de la represión antiinmigrante, llamando por derechos plenos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes. Así, inmediatamente después del brutal ataque del 19 de octubre de la Policía Federal contra la caravana, el GI se unió a los maestros con conciencia de clase de la combativa Sección XXII de la CNTE para organizar una movilización de solidaridad en Oaxaca con el llamado a favor de “Acciones obreras para defender a los inmigrantes centroamericanos”. El 21

de octubre, la asamblea estatal del magisterio oaxaqueño aprobó una moción que dice en parte: “La sección 22 de trabajadores de la educación brinda su respaldo a la caravana de migrantes centroamericanos, por lo que movilizará a los trabajadores de sus filas para acompañar y respaldar a dicha caravana en su paso por los estados donde la CNTE tiene presencia, llamando al resto del movimiento obrero a sumarse y a defender el paso de esta caravana.” Las acciones de defensa incluían el llamado a los trabajadores de la salud para que organizaran brigadas médicas para ofrecer atención a los migrantes. La moción concluye: “Rechazamos todo racismo y xenofobia azuzada por la burguesía mexicana, lacaya del imperialismo norteamericano. ¡Déjenlos entrar! ¡Ni ilegales ni criminales, los migrantes son trabajadores internacionales!”

Ahora Peña Nieto promete asilo y empleos a los miembros de la caravana si se registran ante las autoridades migratorias mexicanas. Los organizadores de la caravana han rechazado dicha propuesta. López Obrador también les ha ofrecido trabajos en la construcción del Tren Maya en la Península de Yucatán. No es casualidad que esto mantenga a los hondureños en la parte sur de México, lejos de la frontera con Estados Unidos. En la protesta del 24 de octubre, una vocera del Grupo Internacionalista enfatizó que la represión contra los inmigrantes no va a cesar bajo el go-

bierno de AMLO, al que muchos izquierdistas y maestros están apoyando. “AMLO ha repetido una y otra vez que no se confrontará con Trump sobre la cuestión de los migrantes”. Nuestra camarada enfatizó que la lucha por plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes debe ser parte de una lucha revolucionaria, señalando que este elemental derecho democrático fue implementado por la Revolución Francesa de 1789, la Comuna de París de 1871 y la Revolución Bolchevique de 1917. Nuestra camarada añadió:

“Somos ciudadanos del mundo y luchamos por un planeta en el que las fronteras nacionales sean trascendidas. Aunque hoy en día no podemos simplemente abolir las fronteras, luchamos en contra de todo ataque racista y de las excluyentes leyes migratorias. Hacemos un llamado al movimiento obrero a movilizar su fuerza para barrer a los grupos para policíacos antiinmigrantes y a tomar las calles para detener las deportaciones. Demandamos: Cerrar los campos de detención, libertad para los migrantes reclusos tanto en Estados Unidos como en México.”

La vocera del GI concluyó con un llamado a “romper con todos los partidos capitalistas y a construir un partido obrero sobre la base de un programa revolucionario e internacionalista.”

Mientras la caravana centroamericana se aproxima a la frontera con EE.UU., Trump intensifica su ofensiva antiinmigrante y los demócratas guardan un silencio sepulcral al respecto e intentan cambiar de tema. Todos los partidos burgueses son enemigos de los trabajadores inmigrantes, a los que los capitalistas sobreexplotan de manera brutal. Al defender a nuestras compañeras y compañeros migrantes, la clave radica en movilizar el poder de los trabajadores, no sólo de palabra sino en los hechos. Somos una clase internacional. Tenemos el poder de poner alto a racistas como Trump y a los cazadores de esclavos modernos de la policía migratoria. Pero para usar ese poder, debemos forjar una dirección basada en el programa de Lenin y Trotsky de la revolución socialista internacional. ■

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¡Déjenlos entrar! ¡Asilo para los refugiados!

¡Plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes!

## La caravana de los desposeídos

Mientras las elecciones intermedias norteamericanas se acercan a la recta final, el xenófobo presidente Donald Trump recurre a una nueva táctica para su campaña normal de miedo y mentiras: azuzar la histeria en torno a la inminente invasión que realizaría una caravana de inmigrantes procedentes de Honduras. Se ha informado que está preparando una declaratoria de emergencia nacional (!), mientras que el Pentágono alista unidades en activo del ejército (no de la Guardia Nacional) para que patrullen la frontera sur con México. Con esto Trump lograría que el miedo sea un factor activo hasta el día de las elecciones (el 6 de noviembre), además de que le da la oportunidad de cambiar la política de EE.UU. con respecto al status de los refugiados por medio de una orden ejecutiva (un decreto), en violación de las leyes del país y de los tratados internacionales. El jefe imperialista ordenó a los gobiernos de México, Guatemala y Honduras que detuvieran la caravana o se atuvieran a las consecuencias. También intensificó su retórica antiinmigrante, al declarar que hay entre los miembros de la caravana “bad hombres” y un “alto porcentaje” de “criminales”, así como “personas de Medio Oriente” y “terroristas”. Esto, sin embargo, no ha detenido a los más de 7 mil migrantes que marchan a paso constante hacia el norte, mientras que ahora se está formando otra caravana.

Seamos claros: los migrantes que han decidido arriesgarlo todo para emprender la onerosa caminata de 4,700 kilómetros desde San Pedro Sula hasta Tijuana, lo hacen para huir de la violencia mortífera y de la pobreza extrema *made in U.S.A.* Los acuerdos de “libre comercio” han devastado la economía hondureña, además de las pandillas que aterrorizan a la po-

blación de las ciudades se originaron en Los Angeles. El gobierno derechista de Honduras, que actúa como el del republicano Trump, es producto del golpe de estado que en 2009 maquinó el gobierno demócrata de Barack Obama. La Liga por la IV Internacional y sus secciones, el Internationalist Group/U.S. y el Grupo Internacionalista/México han hecho el llamado a dar la bienvenida a la caravana, exigiendo *¡asilo para los refugiados y plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes!* Además, como en todos los casos, intentamos llevar a la práctica nuestro llamado. El Grupo Internacionalista envió a un activista-corresponsal para acompañar a la caravana desde su arribo al territorio mexicano, mientras que el local de Oaxaca del GI realizó una manifestación de solidaridad en conjunto con la Sección XXII de la Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE).

Además de ser usada por el racista de la Casa Blanca como un ardid electoral, que los demócratas intentan esquivar a toda costa, la *caravana de los desposeídos* de Centroamérica representa una tragedia humana que ilustra la brutal realidad del capitalismo en decadencia. Es también una batalla política de primer orden en contra de los imperialistas norteamericanos, que



La caravana entra México después de vencer la brutal represión de la policía federal.

están dispuestos a usar sus fuerzas armadas para proscribir a las víctimas de los estragos que ellos mismos han producido, exactamente del mismo modo en que sus contrapartes europeas dejan que los inmigrantes africanos se ahoguen en las aguas del Mar Mediterráneo. En ésta, lo mismo que en toda batalla de clase, no hay neutralidad. O se permite a los migrantes que entren, o no. Nosotros decimos: *¡déjenlos entrar!*

Cuando la caravana llegó a la frontera mexicana en Ciudad Hidalgo, Chiapas, fue recibida en el puente que cruza el río Suchiate con una barrera de 200 policías federales, enviados por el presidente Enrique Peña Nieto en cumplimiento de las órdenes

de su jefe imperialista. Bajo un cartel que dice “Bienvenidos a México”, la policía disparó gas lacrimógeno a la multitud, que era encabezada por mujeres y niños. Al día siguiente, cuando cientos vadearon el río para cruzarlo, jóvenes de la caravana derribaron la reja en la frontera y la procesión se dirigió hacia la siguiente ciudad en su travesía, Tapachula. En contra de lo que dicen Trump y su marioneta, el presidente hondureño Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, los caminantes insisten en que nadie les instigó a dejar Honduras. “Ya no aguantamos eso”, dijo un joven de 24 años a nuestro camarada en

Tapachula. Con una hija, madre y hermanas que mantener, es el único de su familia que tenía trabajo, hasta que fue despedido. Como escribió nuestro camarada:

“La verdad es que no tuvo que pensárselo mucho para abandonar Honduras, el segundo país más pobre del continente donde el setenta por ciento de la población es pobre, donde ni el diez por ciento tiene estudios superiores y después de los treinta años es casi imposible conseguir empleo, para ya no hablar de un sistema público de salud devastado. Y, como él, todos los que vienen en la caravana: desempleados, jornaleros agrícolas, albañiles, campesinos arruinados, profesionistas que no encuentran trabajo, autoempleados –empresarios, según el presidente hondureño–, niños que no cumplen 15 años, familias enteras con bebés. Huyen del hambre, del desempleo, de la delincuencia y del gobierno.”

Cuando los inmigrantes abandonaron Tapachula para dirigirse a la siguiente escala, Huixtla, coreaban la consigna “Los migrantes no somos criminales, somos trabajadores internacionales”, haciendo eco de la pinta que se encontraba en el muro fronterizo entre Tijuana y San Diego y que fue construido por Bill Clinton. Pero más que un acto político o una migración largamente planeada, la caravana es un éxodo. De hecho, muchos de sus integrantes llevan sus biblias, y los organizadores informales periódicamente han calmado a la gente haciéndola rezar. No son pocos los que han comparado su odisea con el relato bíblico de la salida de Moisés de Egipto. Para algunos esto incluye la ilusión de que esto podría conmovir el corazón de Donald Trump para que les abra la puerta hacia una vida mejor. Pero la mayor parte sabe que les espera una dura travesía. Una mujer de 32 años que tenía una tiendita ya no podía

*sigue en la página 23*



Los caminantes descansan en Huixtla, Chiapas después de hacer el recorrido de 26 km. desde Tapachula. Más fotos de la caravana en: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/internationalist4/>