

For Workers Action to Defend the Caravan Border Flashpoint in the Racist War on Immigrants

Kim Kyung-Hoon/Reuters



We Say: Let Them In – Free Them All – Let Them Stay!

A migrant mother and her children run to escape from tear gas grenade fired into Mexico by the U.S. Border Patrol.

**Full Citizenship Rights for
All Immigrants! Asylum for
Refugees from Imperialist War,
Terror and Devastation!**

**Mobilize Workers to Smash
the Democrat-Republican
Deportation Machine!**

On November 25, the war on immigrants reached a flashpoint on the border between the United States and Mexico. In two dozen cities around the U.S. there were demonstrations of solidarity with the caravan of migrants from Central America, mainly from Honduras, that has arrived at the border city of Tijuana. Meanwhile, hundreds of members of the caravan tried to enter the U.S., only to be repelled by joint action of the Mexican and U.S. immigration police. The U.S. Border Patrol fired scores of tear gas grenades into Mexico. But instead of protesting this blatant act of imperialist aggression, the servile Mexican government arbitrarily arrested several dozen migrants who sought to get around the police barricade. The next day, a photo of a fearful mother and her bare-

foot children in diapers running from the gas was on front pages around the world. It summed up the plight of desperate migrants who had trekked 3,000 miles only to run up against a wall at the border (not the one Republican Trump wants to build but the one already built by the Democrat Clinton three decades ago).

The dramatic clash between this caravan of the dispossessed and the racist immigration policies of the United States, under both capitalist parties, came as hundreds of marchers headed toward the border that morning. For the last ten days they had been stuck in the Benito Juárez refuge in Tijuana, literally a stone's throw from the U.S. They were first blocked by Mexican federal police who formed a wall with riot shields at the entrance to a walkway across the Tijuana River. The crowd then turned and many went below the bridge to cross the stream on a narrow footbridge. When Mexican police closed off the roadway on the other side, the crowd turned and, finding a hole in the barriers, once more rushed toward the border, where they were again blocked. Meanwhile, at the crossing point

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Break with All the Bosses' Parties and Politicians!

Midterm Elections: No Win for Working People

So the Democrats regained control of the House of Representatives in the midterm elections, while the Republicans held onto the Senate. A "blue wave"? Hardly. And it's no gain for poor and working people. The capitalist party that has presided over most of U.S. imperialism's wars for the last century, the party that under Barack Obama shoveled out \$16 trillion dollars (that's \$16,000,000,000,000) to bail out banks and corporations following the 2008 Wall Street crash while millions were being evicted from their homes, managed to update its image by putting more "diverse new faces in (some) high places." This is a "victory"? That's what the liberals and various "moderate" left groups are proclaiming. Not in our book.

Meanwhile, Democratic House leader Nancy Pelosi has called for bipartisanship and finding "common ground" with the Republican Party of reactionary bigot Donald Trump. Big surprise! With the capitalist government divided between the Republican-controlled White House and a split Congress, the likely outcome is more Washington deadlock ... and frustration all around. Democrats won't be able to get

anything passed, while Republican right-wingers may be stymied in their plans. It could all come to a head with a government shutdown right before Xmas. Trump says he wants it, he'll own it, anything to get his border wall. In this perilous period, it is key to *unchain the power of the workers and oppressed from the bosses' Democratic Party*.

Otherwise, it'll be more of the same old, same old, in which we're always getting screwed.

The lead-up to the midterms dramatically highlighted dangers posed by the deep-going rot of American capitalism and its two-party political system, of which Trump is a virulent product. As he aimed a torrent of hate-mongering racism and threats against the Central American "migrant caravan" and ordered troops to the border, murderous attacks and provocations by racists, anti-Semites and fascist groups occurred from Pittsburgh and New York to Louisville, Kentucky and Portland, Oregon. (See "Mobilize Workers Power to Stop Fascist Terror!" *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018.)

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**Let Them In! Asylum for Refugees! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!
For Workers Mobilization to Defend Migrants Against Racist Attacks!**

With the Caravan of International Workers

By Ulises Méndez

Editor, *Revolución Permanente*

The following article is translated and excerpted from a supplement to El Internacionalista distributed at the November 25 actions in solidarity with the Central American caravan. The full article is on the internet at: <http://www.internationalistorg/caravaninternationalworkers1811.html>

“And the ‘better life’ that Juan Orlando promised, where is it?” angrily asks Antony Álvarez, one of the thousands of young Central Americans, most of them Hondurans, who make up the caravan which is seeking to reach the southern border of the United States. We are chatting while walking on the highway between Tapachula and Huixtla, Chiapas, the day after the caravan entered Mexico. He is referring to Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, known as JOH, who a year ago imposed his reelection as president of Honduras with riot clubs, gas and bullets. Even before then, the country was battered by sky-high levels of poverty, disappearances and murders by the police, and one of the highest homicide rates in the world. It’s the aftermath of the coup d’état of 2009, carried out with Washington’s blessing. Today its fruits are being harvested, causing fear, and sowing rage.

“We were looking for a way to get ahead in Honduras,” Antony remarks, “but you can’t, that’s why we decided to emigrate. You can’t live there any longer. I can’t keep on seeing my family suffer from hunger. We can’t stand it anymore. We want to get ahead, we want another life.” As for the “better life” that the “reelected” Honduran president promised during the election campaign, “we’re going to have to look for it on our own, because there isn’t any back there.”

He’s 24 years old, with a three-year-old daughter and his mother, and his sisters who can’t find work; he was the only one who had a job, as an employee of Diunsa, a department store, but they laid him off after working there for three years. So when he heard on TV that a caravan was heading to



Caravan participants hitch a ride on the road to Huixtla, 21 October.

the United States from San Pedro Sula – the industrial center of Honduras – he notified his friends on Facebook and called up the closest ones by phone.

Actually, it didn’t take a lot of thought to decide to abandon Honduras, the second poorest country of the Western Hemisphere, where 70% of the population is poor, where not even 10% have higher education, and where if you are over 30 it is almost impossible to get a job, not to mention the devastated public health system. The others on the caravan are like him: the unemployed, agricultural day laborers, construction workers, ruined peasants, professionals who can’t find work, the self-employed – businessmen, according to the Honduran president – children under 15, whole families with babies. They are fleeing from hunger, unemployment, crime and the government.

In all of Latin America, only Haiti is poorer than Honduras: more than 65 percent of the population officially lives in poverty, 19% in extreme poverty, on less than \$2 a day. It has the highest levels of economic inequality on the continent, as the poorest 40% of the population receives only 10% of the gross domestic product while the richest 10% receives 40% of the GDP. The level of underemployment is up to 60%. Agriculture, the main economic

activity, suffered a setback after the collapse of international market prices for bananas and coffee. Not to mention the devastation wrought by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, which led to the destruction of the infrastructure built up over the previous 50 years, of crops, and thousands of people dead and disappeared; and the looting of the country by U.S. and Canadian mining companies that are stripping the native population of their resources.

To that we have to add the ravages of the civil wars, coups and imperialist-imposed authoritarian governments that have beset the “northern triangle” of Central America over the last four decades – that is, for the entire lives of the marchers on the caravan. The death squads of the 1980s were followed by the *maras*, gangs begun by deportees from the United States, like MS-13 and the 18th Street Gang. These gangs could not operate without the backing of the armed forces and the ultra-corrupt police, both armed by the U.S. After the June 2009 coup, which got the green light from the government of Barack Obama, there was a wave of disappearances and homicides, reaching the level of 86 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2011. Even after falling to half that level (43 per 100,000) last year, Honduras is still one of the deadliest countries in the world. Then came the November 2017 election, when protests against the blatant electoral fraud were brutally repressed. (When the opposition candidate was ahead, they simply stopped announcing results for 36 hours.) There were at least 22 civilians killed, and more than 1,300 arbitrary arrests, according to the United Nations, many more according to the opposition. Shortly thereafter, the first big caravan of 2018 departed.

“We Are Not Criminals, We Are International Workers”

At this point everyone is trying figure out what’s going on with the caravan, how it could be that one caravan among the many that head north from Honduras – at least 30 in the last 15 years – which began

with some 600 or 700 people now numbers some 7,000 upon reaching Chiapas, while hundreds more are on the way, trying to catch up. The Honduran government has tried to pin the caravan on Bartolo Fuentes of the Liberal and Refoundation Party (Libre), a group of the “progressive” bourgeoisie which arose after the 28 June 2009 coup which overthrew the Liberal landowner president Manuel Zelaya.

Juan Orlando Hernández even said that the caravan was convened by “radical left groups,” but that has nothing to do with it either. By going in a caravan, participants are able to protect themselves to a degree against organized crime – the thieves, kidnappers and rapists – and the fearsome Mexican immigration police before running into the atrocious U.S. *migra*, as well as against the xenophobia, class and race prejudice of people who view them with suspicion as they go through their communities. This is one way to get to the north; the others are *La Bestia*, the dangerous cargo train that leaves from Arriaga, Chiapas, and, if you have enough cash, the *coyotes* (smugglers).

Unlike previous caravans, which went unnoticed, except by the towns and villages they passed through, the caravan last spring and now this one have gotten an unprecedented boost from Donald Trump via his Twitter account, which he had used to stir up his voters against the “immigrant danger” drawing closer and closer to the border. This rhetoric, incidentally, exposes the servility of the Mexican governments, both the outgoing and the incoming.

Notwithstanding the slogan they have taken up on their journey, “migrants aren’t criminals, we are international workers,” the caravan is far from being a march with radical leftist or revolutionary ideology. In fact, what is striking is the religious connotation they give to it. Right from the start, in Honduras, they compared the growing caravan to the biblical exodus led by Moses. Roberto Soriano, who went to the United States six years ago, when he was

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Against Officially Sponsored Xenophobic Attacks

Mexico: For Workers Action to

Defend Immigrants!

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants – Asylum for Refugees!

Break with all Bourgeois Parties and Politicians!

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The following article is translated from a supplement of El Internacionalista distributed at the November 25 demonstrations in solidarity with the caravan of migrants from Central America.

NOVEMBER 24 – After travelling 3,000 miles from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, to Tijuana, the first members of the Central American caravan arrived at Mexico's northern border. At present there are more than 5,000 migrants in the city, and another 2,000 are expected soon. That does not end the exhausting pilgrimage they undertook in order to flee the endless poverty and violence of their homelands. Now they confront a wall fortified with concertina wire and patrolled by 8,000 soldiers of the U.S. Army and National Guard, with orders to "shoot to kill" to prevent them from setting foot in the U.S. On the Mexican side of the border, they face the threat of attacks by xenophobic mobs egged on by Tijuana authorities and whipped up by the media, along with raids by municipal police and agents of the National Immigration Institute (INM, disparaging referred to, as is the I.C.E. immigration police in the U.S., as *la migra*).

A week before the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (universally known by his initials, AMLO) takes office, many (including in the Mexican left) have placed their hopes in this bourgeois populist politician. They are mistaken. AMLO and his National Regeneration Movement (Morena) are by no means the friends of migrants. As a speaker of the Grupo Internacionalista noted, "AMLO has said over and over that he won't clash with Trump over the question of immigrants" (see our article, "The Caravan of the Dispossessed," *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018). Now we have concrete proof: today a spokesman for the White House announced that the administration of Donald Trump and the incoming Mexican government have agreed that anyone seeking asylum in the United States must remain in Mexico until a court issues a ruling on their asylum request.

Tomorrow's *Washington Post* (25 November) quotes the statement by Mexico's incoming interior secretary (equivalent to the U.S. attorney general) Olga Sánchez Cordero that "we have agreed to this policy of Remain in Mexico" as a "short-term solution." Sánchez' subsequent non-denial denial in no way refutes this information, only denying that there is a formal agreement and that she had accepted that Mexico would be a "secure third country" – meaning that no request for asylum in the U.S. would be accepted – a proposal by Trump

AMLO Offers to Act as Trump's Border Patrol



As migrants were under assault by U.S. military and immigration police at the border, Mexican president-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador elaborated on his plan for a new military force, a National Guard, to police Mexico, before a mobilization of 32,000 troops.

that even outgoing Mexican president Enrique Peña Gómez resisted. The plan was reportedly worked out in a meeting between Mexico's incoming foreign minister Marcelo Ebrard and his U.S. counterpart, Mike Pompeo. What was agreed to, if not (yet) formalized, is that *Mexico will serve as a holding pen for refugees* requesting asylum, and that *AMLO's government will act as Trump's border patrol*.

According to the *New York Times* (25 November), "because of the backlog in the immigration courts – about a million cases – these individuals would most likely wait for years in Mexico." Thus Mexico, a semi-colonial country, will be – even more than it already is – a border retaining wall to impede immigrants from Central and South America, as well as Africa, from entering the imperialist colossus of the north. These are the bitter fruits that the opportunist leftists who greeted AMLO's victory are harvesting. The Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico and the Internationalist Group in the United States, sections of the League for the Fourth International, call, as an elementary act of international workers solidarity, to *let them in* (both in Mexico and the U.S.) and for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*.

Meanwhile, on the night of November 14-15, a mob of enraged residents of the beach community of Playas de Tijuana set upon a group of migrants camped out around the lighthouse. With shouts, threats and blows, the residents of this well-to-do Tijuana neighborhood spewed out their bourgeois hatred against the marchers. They demanded that the municipal police and the Grupo Beta (riot squad) of the infamous Mexican *migra* evict the Central American immigrants from "their" city, that they be arrested and deportation pro-

ceedings against them begun. The following afternoon, in a TV interview that was broadcast nationwide, the mayor of Tijuana, Juan Manuel Gastélum, of the PAN (the rightist National Action Party) clearly expressed the xenophobic sentiment of the local ruling class: "We want Article 33 of the Constitution applied to them [the migrants]" – in other words, that they be peremptorily expelled from the country.

The filthy mayor labeled the members of the caravan a "horde," and suggested that they have no rights at all, because "human rights are for upright humans" (*La Jornada*, 16 November). Gastélum's remarks were in the same vein as the statement in the fall of 2016 by the racist and xenophobic senator Marco Antonio Blásquez of the PT (Labor Party), an ally of president-elect López Obrador, that the hundreds of Haitian migrants blocked at the border should be thrown out of Tijuana and Mexicali, calling on then-president Enrique Peña Nieto of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) to "clear out the areas and localities" that had been "invaded by migrants who are completely alien and, as we have seen, don't even try to integrate themselves into our community." At that time, the Grupo Internacionalista organized a tri-national protest – in the United States, Mexico and Brazil – calling to "let them in" and denouncing any deportations.

The height of the hostility faced by the Central American marchers in Tijuana came on November 18 when a demonstration called by the immigrant-bashers at the statue of Cuauhtémoc in the center of Tijuana decided to march on the Benito Juárez refuge to throw out the migrants on their own. These threats must be stopped cold. We must sweep away the racist and xenophobic scum

whipped up by the Mexican bosses! Meanwhile, the mayor keeps threatening the immigrants. Just yesterday he suggested that he would not "spend the money of the people of Tijuana" to attend to the migrants, and declared a "humanitarian crisis." At the same time, local officials announced that 108 Central American migrants had been arrested for "administrative infractions" (including for "causing disturbances" when they defended themselves against attack), and hence would face deportation proceedings.

One of those detained was Víctor Mejía, a correspondent of *Izquierda Diario*, an internet outlet affiliated with Left Voice in the U.S. Mejía was arrested in the early morning hours of November 21 as he was covering the arrival of buses at the Benito Juárez refuge. After being held incommunicado, he was sent to the *migra* offices in Mexico City. Today, Mejía is being held by the INM in Chiapas, soon to be deported. Yesterday, in a protest demonstration called by the Movimiento de Trabajadores Socialistas (MTS), our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista carried placards demanding that Víctor Mejía and all the detained immigrants be released.

It is the duty of Mexican working people to use our social power in defense of our working-class sisters and brothers from Central America. In the face of the threat of deadly violence whipped up by the Baja California bourgeoisie and spearheaded by fascist elements, what is needed are *workers defense guards* of defenders of democratic rights to protect the immigrant shelters and *massive workers mobilization to crush the attackers*. Teachers, telephone workers, agricultural laborers and the hundreds of thousands of workers in the enormous area of *maquiladora* (free trade zone) factories should organize to repulse the attack orchestrated by the bosses who exploit them every day and repress them when they dare to resist.

The working class is a single international class. The migrants, as they themselves put it, *are not criminals but international workers*. The caravans of the dispossessed keep on forming, day after day, with the intent of marching to Mexico and on to the United States. This enormous human tragedy cries out for the working people of Mexico and the U.S. to mobilize in defense of those who have nothing and who are flocking to an exodus leading them right up to the barriers imposed by the Mexican bourgeoisie and their imperialist masters. To organize the defense of the immigrants against the racist violence, what is needed is a revolutionary, internationalist leadership of the working class, capable of combatting the poison of bourgeois nationalism and the scourges that go with it. What's needed, in short, is a revolutionary workers party which acts as a tribune of the people, organizing the defense of all the oppressed, and which unites the struggles of the working people across national borders with the perspective of international socialist revolution. ■

Pablo Salazar/El Heraldo de México

For International Workers Solidarity! Let Them In!

Central American Caravan:

The Left Caught Between

Chauvinism and Liberal Utopianism

From the moment he launched his presidential campaign, riding down the escalator at the opulent Trump Tower in New York City to denounce Mexican immigrants as drug traffickers, criminals and “rapists,” the racist chief of U.S. imperialism has demonized poor people from south of the border. Figuring that this vile appeal got him elected in 2016, Donald Trump spewed it out again in the 2018 midterm elections, scaremongering about a pending “invasion” by a caravan of Central American migrants. And now he is threatening to shut down the U.S. government unless the Congressional Democrats agree to “border security” – namely, The Wall. So true to form, Democrats Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi offered to do a deal – as they did on DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

Frustrated by his inability so far to get billions for his “big, beautiful” border wall, Trump has claimed that caravan members include “criminals,” “unknown Middle Easterners,” “tough, tough people,” “bad people,” that “you’re going to find MS-13” gang members among them, and that “people are pouring into our country, including terrorists.” Meanwhile, the vice president, Mike Pence, declared that the caravan “was organized by leftist organizations and financed by Venezuela.” Promptly on November 7, the day after the vote, the tweets about the terrifying caravan suddenly ceased. But, in the meantime Trump dispatched some 5,900 active-duty soldiers to the border to prepare for the “invasion,” joining 2,100 National Guard troops already there.

Moreover, on the same day that Pentagon chief James Mattis was telling reporters that the troops on the border would be unarmed, the *Military Times* (20 November) reported that Trump issued a shoot-to-kill order. This was embodied in a presidential “decision memo” with an accompanying “cabinet order” from White House chief of staff John Kelly, specifically authorizing a military “show or use of force (including lethal force, where necessary), crowd control, temporary detention” and other police actions which the armed forces are forbidden to undertake on U.S. soil. Five days later, Border Patrol agents were indiscriminately firing dozens of tear gas grenades over the fence into Mexico, threatening caravan members, including mothers and small children seeking to enter the U.S. to apply for asylum.

Today, thousands of Central American caravan members are stranded at the border in Tijuana, Mexico, blocked from entering the U.S., vilified by Trump who has issued a shoot-to-kill directive to U.S. troops stationed there (along with thousands more Border Patrol and Customs and Border Protection police), and subjected to what are in fact chemical weapons shot into Mexico. The large majority of the caravan members



U.S. military deployed at the border in San Ysidro with shoot-to-kill orders.

are from Honduras, many fleeing from violence by the U.S.-backed Honduran puppet government, U.S.-armed Honduran police and police-protected gangs which were deported and imported from Los Angeles. And now a seven-year-old Guatemalan girl, Jakelin Amei Rosmery Caal, has died in Border Patrol custody. In view of the persecution and desperate condition of these migrants, victims of the depredations of U.S. imperialism, we demand:

“The Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico and the Internationalist Group in the United States, sections of the League for the Fourth International, call, as an elementary act of international workers solidarity, to *let them in* and for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* (both in Mexico and the U.S.).”

–“Mexico: For Workers Action to Defend Immigrants!” *The Internationalist*, 24 November

The LFI likewise calls for *asylum for the refugees* and for *workers defense of the caravan* as well as for *workers mobilization to stop deportations* and to *defend immigrants against racist attacks and official repression*. We have fought and continue to fight for this to be put into practice, with comrades accompanying and reporting on the caravan as it entered Mexico and then at the Mexico/U.S. border; working to mobilize workers solidarity among transport, education and other workers on both sides of the border, etc.

We also call to *drive out and shut down I.C.E. jails* (concentration camps for immigrants). We fight to *unionize undocumented workers*. We *oppose all racially, ethnically or nationally discriminatory/exclusionary immigration policies*, and insist that “there can be no equitable immigration policy under capitalism.” In calling for full rights for immigrants, we underscore that “this simple democratic right has only been realized through revolution – in the French Revolution of 1789-99, by the Paris Commune of 1871 and in the Russian October Revolution of 1917” (see “Italy: The Refugee Crisis and Capitalist Barbarism,” *The*

Internationalist No. 44, Summer 2016).

The fate of the members of the Central American migrant caravan is posed point-blank at the focal point of U.S. politics today. Trump, of course, is adamant that “they’re not coming into this country,” and he’s delighted that they’re at the border to be scapegoats for his xenophobic (immigrant-bashing) tirades. He accuses the Democrats, as he did in a December 11 tweet, of opposing “border security” and “want[ing] Open Borders for anyone to come in.” This is, of course, absurd. Not only does their election platform call for “immigration reform” that “improves border security,” the bill backed by House Democrats to grant residency to DACA recipients calls for expanding technology for border surveillance and “physical barriers.” It also calls for \$110 million a year in grants for collaboration between I.C.E. and local police, which Democratic politicians in “sanctuary cities” claim to oppose.

As for the border wall, in 2013 every Democrat in the Senate voted for an “immigration reform” bill that would have provided \$40 billion for “border enforcement,” including deploying thousands more border cops and building 700 miles of border fence. In 2006, a majority of Senate Democrats (including Schumer, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama) voted for George W. Bush’s Secure Fence Act that built 650 miles of barriers along the 2,000-mile border. *And the existing wall in the Tijuana-San Diego sector that the Central American migrants sought to climb over, squeeze around, go under or sit atop was built under Operation Gatekeeper, ordered by Democrat Bill Clinton in 1994*, as were fences built by Clinton under Operation Hold-the-Line in El Paso and Operation Safeguard in Arizona. It was the Democrats who decisively escalated the militarization of the border.

And, of course, there is the fact that Democrat Barack (“deporter-in-chief”) Obama expelled more immigrants from the United States than any U.S. president

in history. But it’s not just the “corporate Democrats” beholden to Wall Street. Social-democratic-flavored liberals like Senator Bernie Sanders and Congresswoman-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), whose election was hailed by virtually the entire left, uphold the “need to make sure that our borders are secure,” as AOC declared on CNN – even as she called to “abolish I.C.E.” and replace it with the previous incarnation of *la migra*, the Immigration and Naturalization Service. As we have emphasized, it will take nothing less than a socialist revolution to sweep away capitalism’s immigration police forces and the racist policies they enforce (see “Smash the I.C.E. Gestapo with Workers Revolution!” *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018).

In short, *all the bourgeois (capitalist) parties are enemies of immigrants*, including such minor parties as the Greens (who ran the virulent immigrant-basher Ralph Nader for president).

The “Open Borders” Charade: Utopian, Reformist and Potentially Reactionary

So who does call for “open borders”? Liberal religious groups like the New Sanctuary Coalition certainly, and Pueblos Sin Fronteras, which has organized caravans of Central American migrants. Such “faith-based” groups seek to be good Samaritans aiding migrants, as do humanitarian groups like Cosecha or the Border Angels. But while theirs is not a political program, they often seek the support of liberal Democrats. On the left, the Progressive Labor Party calls for “abolishing nations” and to “SMASH ALL BORDERS” (*Challenge*, 19 December). PL’s stock-in-trade is to jazz up its everyday reformism with the anti-Marxist delusion that the working class can go straight to “Communism Now!”

More prosaic in its approach, the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) argues “The Case for Open Borders” (*Freedom Socialist*, October 2018). While blaming the ills that lead to mass migration on capitalism – which it identifies with “the profit system,” and calling for “public ownership,” which it identifies with “democratic socialism” – these reformists’ “case” says nothing about socialist revolution. The FSP says it is for “an open border policy for the United States” today, that is, spreading the illusion that this could take place under capitalist rule.

Applied to the present system of capitalist nation-states, the program of “open borders” is a species of liberal/reformist utopianism, amounting to a call on the capitalist state to abolish itself. A “democratic socialist” government based on “public ownership of banks and nationalizing the energy industry” would institute “open borders” ... with the whole repressive ap-

paratus of the capitalist state (police, military, courts, prisons) still in place? Nonsense. These is a reformist dream world which goes along with the illusion of “democratizing” capitalism – thus prettifying it. Revolutionary Marxists such as Lenin and Trotsky insisted that the destruction of the capitalist state and establishment of a workers state is the necessary prerequisite for establishing a socialist economy that can lead to a “world without borders” and “world without want,” under communism.

Other reformists who have embraced the “open borders” slogan include the New York City DSA, which last June 29, in a burst of enthusiasm following Ocasio-Cortez’ Democratic Party primary victory a few days prior, tweeted: “Abolish profit – Abolish prisons – Abolish cash bail – Abolish borders – #AbolishICE.” In the same vein, Left Voice (LV), an internet site affiliated internationally with the Trotskyist Faction, the next day posted an article “Abolish ICE, and Abolish the Border Too: A Socialist Perspective.” Trying to stake out a position slightly to the left of DSA star AOC (who had tweeted that “We have to replace ICE with an updated INS-like structure”), LV called for “No ICE, and No Nice ICE Either!” Seeking to give some intellectual heft and socialist pedigree to its position, last year Left Voice (27 June 2017) posted an article titled “Why Socialists Have Always Fought for Open Borders.”

This article is strikingly dishonest and grossly misleading to anyone interested in the Marxist program on immigration, as it relies on equating opposition to discriminatory and racist restrictions and policies with the utopian liberal/reformist call for “open borders” or “abolition of borders.” The author (Wladek Flakin) cites the resolution on immigration and emigration at the 1907 Congress of the Second International held in Stuttgart, Germany. He claims that it “categorically” came out for open borders. All one has to do is read the passages from that resolution that he cites to see that it said no such thing. The Congress called for:

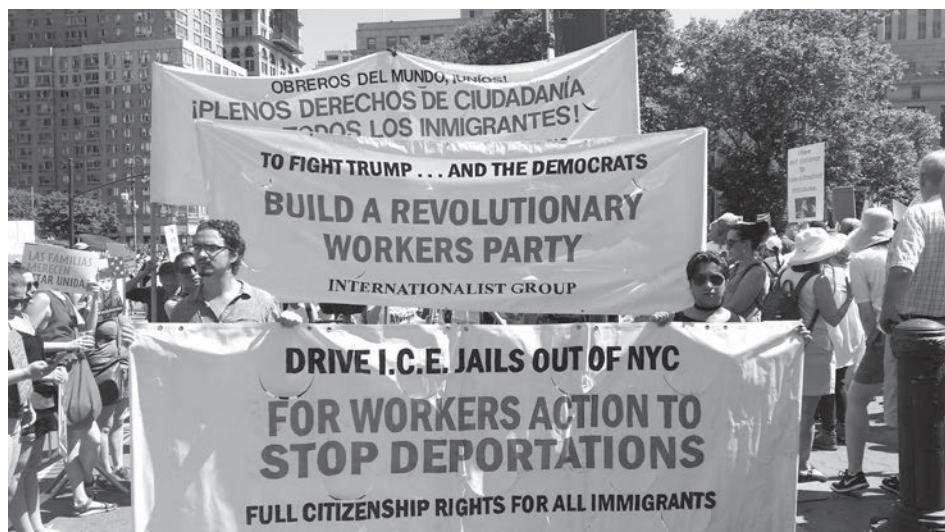
“Abolition of all restrictions which prevent certain nationalities or races from staying in a country or which exclude them from the social, political and economic rights of the natives or impede them in exercising those rights. Extensive measures to facilitate naturalisation.”

The resolution also declared:

“The congress does not seek a remedy to the potentially impending consequences for the workers from immigration and emigration in any economic or political exclusionary rules, because these are fruitless and reactionary by nature. This is particularly true of a restriction on the movement and the exclusion of foreign nationalities or races.”¹

As any reader can see, these are calls to do away with discriminatory immigration restrictions directed at “certain nationalities or races” that would exclude them or prevent them exercising the same rights as the rest of the population. This is distinct from the illusory demand to immediately do away with all borders or border controls. In fact, the 1907 Stuttgart Congress resolution calls for exactly what the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International advocate. Needless

¹ An English translation of the resolution was published by the Communist Party of Great Britain’s *Weekly Worker*, 4 April 2014.



Internationalist contingent in June 30 immigrants’ rights march in NYC.

to say, Flakin does not quote the very explicit statement by Lenin in which he insisted, against leftists who “muddled up” these questions, that a workers state would require borders that could be defended against imperialist attack:

“What does the ‘method’ of socialist revolution under the slogan ‘Down with frontiers’ mean? We maintain that the state is necessary, and a state presupposes frontiers. The state, of course, may hold a bourgeois government, but we need the Soviets. But even Soviets are confronted with the question of frontiers. What does ‘Down with frontiers’ mean? It is the beginning of anarchy.... Only when the socialist revolution has become a reality, not a method, will the slogan ‘Down with frontiers’ be a correct slogan.”

–V.I. Lenin, “Speech on the National Question” (April 1917)

Indeed, following the Bolshevik triumph, some 14 imperialist armies invaded the nascent Soviet republic in league with counterrevolutionary Whites, all of which were defeated by Trotsky’s Red Army.

As emphasized above, when we call for bringing out workers power to defend immigrants and stop deportations, when we answer Trump’s threats against the migrant caravan and exclusion of refugees with the demand “Let Them In,” we are serious about fighting to put these calls into action. The opposite is the case with left groups that call for “open borders,” which is just words for show. Moreover, if meant seriously, the “open borders” demand could even potentially have reactionary consequences under capitalism. As we noted when the Spartacist League and its press were still the voice of authentic Trotskyism, “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).

This is no fantastical prospect: some years back, a U.S. real estate developer named Donald Trump erected billboards along the Tijuana-Ensenada highway saying he would set up hotels there if only Mexico would do away with its ban on foreigners owning property near the border and its prohibition of private ownership of beaches. Open Mexico’s border and Baja California would de facto be annexed to California. Or, eliminate border controls in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and rich Americans would snap up all the eastern Antilles islands in the Caribbean for vacation homes.

In opposing all discriminatory im-

migration policies, we connect this to the struggle against capitalist rule. As we wrote in our article on the demand to “abolish I.C.E.”: “Nor can a capitalist country, except in rare circumstances, have a non-discriminatory immigration policy.” So what about those rare circumstances? For a time in the late 1800s, the U.S. had relatively few controls on immigration. Why? Because due to the rapid expansion of industry following the Civil War, the capitalist ruling class needed an army of industrial workers, and because it needed to *populate the vast areas of the western U.S. which had been stolen from the indigenous peoples and from Mexico*. And then there are the borders of Israel, open to all Jews from all around the world (unless they oppose Israeli policies toward Arabs) *in order to drive the Palestinian population off their lands*. So where under capitalism there have been relatively open borders, it is often the result of, or in order to facilitate, crimes against the oppressed.

Ask leftist proponents of “open borders” how borders could be abolished while nation-states remain and they will point to the European Union, with its Schengen Accords on freedom of movement. So what has the EU meant in practice? German financiers and industrialists have destroyed whole industries in Greece, producing massive unemployment and poverty. Meanwhile, rightist demagogues whip up xenophobic hysteria, blaming immigrants from outside the EU for the devastation caused by the global capitalist economic crisis. The solution, for any revolutionary Marxist, is not to reestablish border controls, which would further target immigrants and wreak economic havoc as capital long ago burst through national confines, or to support the EU imperialist bankers’ cartel, but rather to fight for *international* socialist revolution, from Europe to the Americas and throughout the world.

But the reality is that leftist talk of abolishing borders – like the call to “abolish I.C.E.” – is an empty slogan intended to give a “radical” cover to the opportunists’ real program of pressuring the existing bourgeois governments and vainly attempting to reform the unreformable capitalist system. Thus pseudo-socialists who talk of abolishing borders under capitalism are generally the same ones that hail the DSA and DSAer Ocasio-Cortez, who calls for secure borders. Instead of demanding full citizenship rights, reformist groups call for “amnesty,” as if the immigrants had committed some kind of crime. Instead of fighting for revolution to smash imperialism, these “progressives” call on the U.S. to respect “human rights.” And when the impe-

rialists launch wars in the name of human rights (Clinton against Serbia in the 1990s, Obama against Syria from 2014 on), many of these “democratic socialists” call for the U.S. to send more dollars and guns to the “freedom fighters.”

Spartacist League vs. Refugees, Part 2

On the other hand, there is the Spartacist League (SL) and its response to the migrant caravan. The question posed is “Which side are you on?” As we wrote in our last issue: “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!” (“The Caravan of the Oppressed,” *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018). So with the caravan of thousands of desperate migrants from Central America trapped at the border, the object of dire threats and vicious repression by the government of the imperialist United States, backed up by the servile government of semi-colonial Mexico, what shall become of them?

Here we have an ostensibly communist group, the once-Trotskyist Spartacist League, which declares that “Only Proletarian Revolution Can Sweep Away Imperialism” and proclaims “Down with Repression Against Caravan Migrants,” but *refuses to call to let them into the United States* (see “Down with Trump’s Racist War on Migrants,” *Workers Vanguard*, 30 October). Donald Trump, whipping up xenophobic bigotry, tweets that “they’re not coming into this country,” and the SL’s response is, let them have citizenship rights ... *in Mexico!* Nor is this the first time that the latter-day SL has taken a chauvinist line toward refugees. In early 2017, as thousands of protesters rushed to the airports to oppose Trump’s executive order banning Syrian refugees, chanting “Let them in!” the SL ostentatiously did not call for admitting these refugees from the depredation caused by U.S. and NATO imperialism.

The thundering silence coming from the ICL as to the fate of the caravan migrants is not accidental nor an innocent oversight. It comes from an internal dispute in the SL’s International Communist League (ICL) in 2015, when SL chairman Jim Robertson objected to an article advocating full rights for “refugees seeking asylum,” calling this “a reactionary utopian ‘open the borders’ line, reflecting a species of humanitarian liberalism.” We came across this at a leftist confab in France the following year when ICL spokesmen denounced us as “bleeding-heart liberals” for calling for asylum in the EU for Syrian and other refugees from war and persecution (see “Strange Encounters with the ICL,” *The Internationalist* No. 44, Summer 2016). We pointed out that the SL/ICL’s “no right to asylum” line was “a capitulation to anti-immigrant chauvinism,” and that it contradicted the historic Trotskyist position and the SL’s own past history calling for asylum for refugees from Central America, Haiti, etc.

So for the last several years, the SL/ICL has refused to call for asylum for any refugees, saying in internal documents that “those fleeing ‘the dislocations of war’ are not refugees in any politically meaningful sense, but rather ‘displaced persons’,” that they are “simply seeking a better, safer life.” Now, however, on the Central American caravan, *Workers Vanguard* admits that “Hondurans Flee Devastation Made in

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The Tragic Death of Byron Jacobs, Hero of the EGT Longshore Struggle

By Jack Heyman

Byron Jacobs, a fifth-generation longshoreman, was killed on the job in the Columbia River port of Longview, Washington this summer. At the age of 34, Byron was a courageous young union leader and former secretary-treasurer of Local 21 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. Some 200 people came to a vigil in his memory on the docks, and more than 500 attended a memorial service on July 6. Byron Jacobs will be remembered with admiration for the exemplary leading role he played in the monumental struggle against union-busting at the Export Grain Terminal (EGT) facility being built in Longview. That battle reverberated across the country as longshore workers, men and women, fought tooth and nail with mass actions in a class war like those in the 1930s that built the union movement.

On the night of June 28, the *ANSAC Splendor*, a bulk carrier weighing 20,000 gross tons (that is, without cargo) and almost two football fields long, was being shifted at berth from one ship's hold to another, a distance that can be a few hundred feet. The *Splendor* was flying the flag of Panama, a registry of convenience for ship owners who pay miserable wages to non-union crews, evade taxes, and circumvent environmental laws. Suddenly, the nylon spring line – some 6" in diameter – parted, like a giant rubber band snapping at half the speed of sound. One end of the line instantly killed Byron, standing 100 feet away on the dock, while the other struck Chief Mate Pingshan Li aboard the ship, who later died in the hospital. Two other workers were injured as well.

The deadly accident took place just a few berths downriver from the EGT dock. Both lives and injuries could have been prevented if a tugboat assist were used to move the ship. It was cheaper for the company to overhaul the line by hand, but riskier for the workers. Workers say

safety conditions on the Columbia River have deteriorated. In 2011, the ILWU International leadership pushed through a concessionary contract at EGT that continued this perilous trend. Not only was Local 21 fighting to maintain their jurisdiction as grain handlers, but also for strong safety provisions in one of the most dangerous jobs. The tragic deaths underscore the life-threatening nature of work on the waterfront, and the need to fight for union safety committees with the power to shut down unsafe dock operations.

Byron was a young leader with a bright future of the 200-member Longview local of the ILWU. They relentlessly picketed EGT day and night during summer heat and winter rains to stop the scabs from Operating Engineers Local 701. They rallied at corporate headquarters in Portland. At one point in July 2011 longshore workers occupied the EGT facility, sitting atop the trains. They blocked 100-car grain trains continuously with mass picketing in defiance of court injunctions, jail, police brutality and fines. Heading these militant actions were their leaders, Local 21 president Dan Coffman and Local 21 Secretary-Treasurer Byron Jacobs, his longshore son Justin's best friend. They were arrested and jailed several times, along with other local members.

Mass picketing was so effective that BNSF had stopped its trains. By September 2011 an injunction was obtained to



Police attack ILWU pickets in Longview, Washington, 7 September 2011, as they block grain train to scab EGT facility. Byron Jacobs (on tracks, in foreground) was thrown to the ground and arrested, along with 18 other unionists. Despite federal injunction, the next day 800 union supporters seized the terminal.

stop the mass picketing on the tracks and at EGT's gate. Even ILWU International President McEllrath – who is from the Columbia River port of Vancouver, Washington, some 40 miles upriver from Longview – showed up for the picketing on the train tracks. As rank and filers beckoned him to come to the front and lead the protest, he was arrested by police but released as soon as the angry longshoremen demanded they let him go. Byron was tackled and thrown to the ground for going to the defense of McEllrath (see lead photo). He was booked and released. [See "Showdown on West Coast Docks: The Battle of Longview," *The Internationalist* special supplement, January 2012.]

The next day, September 8, hundreds of enraged longshoremen in the Northwest ports who had seen the police attack on ILWU members and McEllrath walked off the job, shutting down the major ports of Seattle, Tacoma and Portland. They headed to Longview. Byron was in the forefront as longshore workers stormed EGT. News media reported grain being dumped, a guard shack destroyed and terrified security guards fleeing. A reign of terror by the state ensued. Union members were arrested by police and Sheriff's deputies walking down the street day and night. Local 21 Vice President Jake Whiteside was arrested at his church in front of his family. Longshore worker Shelly Porter reported that police had bashed her head against her car at home and arrested her as her children looked on in horror as she was dragged away. Still union resilience remained defiant.

Two weeks later, on September 21, eight members of the Women's Auxiliary, wives of the strikers, sat down on the tracks with Coffman. Police and hired company goons roughly manhandled and arrested them. They'd been met with lines of cop cars, police armed with high-powered rifles and a SWAT riot

team in black armored gear. Byron was surprised to his wife Megan in the sit-down protest. When he led others to defend the women, cops held him and Local 21 activist Kelly Mueller down on the tracks and pepper sprayed them (see photo). This time Byron was sentenced to three weeks jail time. This was raw class war, as women carried on the struggle while the men were shackled with an injunction and jailed. It was a scene out of the classic film, *Salt of the Earth*, about striking miners and their wives in New Mexico made during the anti-communist McCarthy period and directed by Herbert Biberman, one of the blacklisted Hollywood Ten. Hearing of Byron's death, Doreen McNally, leader of the Liverpool, England Dockers' "Women of the Waterfront" who had waged a similar fight 22 years earlier for their spouses' dockworkers union, sent pins to his wife Megan commemorating their valiant struggle against EGT.

As Class Struggle Intensifies, Union Tops Get Cold Feet

As this class struggle intensified ILWU President McEllrath and Lael Sundet, ILWU Coast Committeeman in charge of the EGT dispute, ruled out strike solidarity action from California locals that handle 70% of the cargo on the West Coast. Sundet was a former manager for the employers' Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) on the Columbia River; he was subsequently ousted as Coast Committeeman in a vote by the rank and file. In response to support for Longview Local 21 from the San Francisco Bay Area Local 10, McEllrath sent a letter directing that "Local 10 take no action without specific authorization from me. We need to have a coordinated response to EGT dispute." No coastwide solidarity action was ever coordinated.

(It was not the first time the International leadership turned their backs on an



Local 21 activist Kelly Mueller (left) and Local 21 secretary-treasurer Byron Jacobs were pepper sprayed while being pinned down by police during 21 September 2011 arrest.

The Columbian [Vancouver, WA]

Dawn Des Brisay/Flickr



The ILWU tops dispatched officials to break up Seattle forum, at the King County Labor Hall, in solidarity with the longshore struggle against union-busting at EGT, 6 January 2012. The bureaucrats' ire was directed at the five ILWU members on the stage, and seven more rank-and-file members of ILWU Local 21 (above) at the event.

ILWU local under siege. In May 2010, in the middle of a struggle by Local 30 of Boron miners against the Rio Tinto mining conglomerate, at a General Assembly of the International Dockworkers Council in Charleston, South Carolina, McEllrath gutted a Local 10 resolution by deleting any reference to refusing to handle scab cargo.)

The leaders of Local 21, on the other hand, based their actions on ILWU's history of labor solidarity encapsulated in the old IWW slogan "An Injury to One is an Injury to All." Several traveled to San Francisco to address meetings at Local 10, despite warnings of Sundet and McEllrath. Meanwhile, as the Occupy Wall Street movement dramatically mushroomed on the West Coast, so did police repression. In late October, cops (dispatched by liberal Democratic Oakland mayor Jean Quan) attacked an Occupy encampment in Oakland. In response, 30,000 furious protesters marched to the Port of Oakland and shut it down, calling to fight against "Wall Street on the Waterfront." Byron and Dan joined in the protests and addressed Occupy rallies in Oakland. They marched in front of a banner reading "Shut Down the West Coast Ports! Support the Longview, WA Longshore Workers" emblazoned with a longshoreman's clenched fist and hook.

That day, November 2, many rank-and-file Local 10 members refused to take jobs at the hiring hall. The ILWU tops stayed in their cozy San Francisco offices rather than join the largest protest ever across the bay at the port of Oakland. These business unionists saw Occupy's actions and Local 10's solidarity as threats not only to EGT but to the PMA, their employer partners in class collaboration. They stood in conflict with Local 21 and ILWU's history of solidarity by preventing concerted coastwide and international action to support the embattled Longview longshore workers in order to maintain good relations with the PMA bosses. This treachery left activist members in the lurch, like Byron, who languished behind bars for two weeks, others longer, without the union tops bailing them out.

McEllrath became worried about Occupy's powerful mass demonstrations: "As the Occupy sweeps across the country, there is a real danger that forces outside of the ILWU will attempt to adopt our struggle as their own." Really? That's a danger?! Isn't that kind of support what the 1934 Big Strike committee called solidarity? Local 21 leaders, Dan and Byron, collaborating with Occupy and Local 10, was viewed as a threat by the International Officers. The next big Occupy action was a call for a Pacific Coast shutdown on December 12 in solidarity with Longview and against police brutality. Orders were given by union officials to keep the ports open, to cross picket lines, in violation of ILWU's Ten Guiding Principles. That day no longshore workers went across picket lines at the ports of Longview and Oakland, where both morning and evening shifts were shut down. Occupy pickets in Portland and Seattle were successful for some time but not in Los Angeles or Tacoma.

Some leftist commentators sided with the labor misleaders, accusing Occupy of substituting for the unions. Others gave Occupy almost exclusive credit for the agitation on the waterfront. Both miss the point that it was the union ranks of Local 21 and Local 10 at the point of production that shut down the ports in Longview and Oakland. Far from being super-radical adventurers threatening the unions, Occupy leaders, in keeping with their liberal, reformist and populist outlook, actually let the International leaders off the hook, saying the union tops were only trying to avoid lawsuits when in fact they actively opposed the December 12 Pacific Coast shutdown.

Meanwhile, EGT had been unable to ship grain for several months because of the effective actions organized by Longview longshoremen. The scuttlebutt was that a ship was due in January to load scab grain. Newspapers reported state and local police were being mobilized. President Obama had ordered an armed escort by a Coast Guard cutter to protect the strikebreaking ship from the mouth of the Columbia River to the EGT facility. A showdown was in-

evitable. At Local 10's November meeting, members voted to act on a request for solidarity from Longview and organize "a caravan of members and other activists" for a mass protest on the arrival of the first scab grain ship. The San Francisco Labor Council joined in. The Cowlitz-Wakhiakum Central Labor Council, which includes Longview, accepted the call by Occupy Longview for a convergence on EGT to stop the loading of the first ship. Labor councils in Seattle and Portland joined in. The ILWU International leadership was in panic.

Solidarity rallies with Longview Local 21 were called by Occupy in Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington for January 5 and 6. McEllrath flipped out, hiding behind the anti-labor laws of capital. He sent a letter to locals warning that "any disruption of work by ILWU on the West Coast docks at the same time that the Union is protesting EGT constitutes a violation of Taft-Hartley." Sundet warned that the union would face steep fines, making it crystal clear there must be a break between ILWU and Occupy. At the January 5 Portland meeting, ILWU officials read the threatening letter, after which the lights mysteriously went out, effectively shutting down the meeting. On the way to the Seattle meeting, Dan Coffman got a call saying that if he went ahead, Local 21 was on its own, facing hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines. Sundet pulled the pickets of other ILWU locals from the lines at EGT, leaving Local 21 to man the picket lines by themselves 24/7. To underscore their point Sundet sent several texts to Coffman stating "We told you not to go!" In Seattle, ILWU officials physically disrupted the meeting, denouncing the five ILWU members on the stage. Coffman called it "sabotage."

The final straw was a direct attack on the Local 21 leadership which had been summoned to ILWU International headquarters for a special "presidents' meeting." The last such meeting was called decades ago to defend two ILWU longshore officials in Seattle, Pat Vukich and Wayne Erickson, from an outrageous PMA attack. This one was different: it was a political lynching. The Local 21 officers including Byron were accused of being too close to Occupy; speaking to the press without approval of the tops; potentially cost-

ing the union "millions of dollars in fines and legal suits." They insisted, there is only one "general", McEllrath. Facing a solid front of the bosses and union tops, the Longview leaders yielded. Suddenly, after nearly a year, EGT returned to the bargaining table with ILWU. This time Washington's Democratic governor Chris Gregoire mediated. Undoubtedly it was the threat of mass mobilization that brought EGT to the table. But it was EGT and the state that were wielding the hammer.

Lesson of Longview: The Interests of Capital and Labor Are Irreconcilable

In violation of the ILWU Constitution, the membership of Local 21 never had a chance to read or have a democratic vote on the contract. It was all done top down. The anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act that McEllrath had previously warned would be used against the union he now conceded to writing it into the agreement, shamefully for the first time in ILWU history. ILWU officials (and some of their apologists on the left) claimed victory because the union was recognized as the bargaining agent for workers under NLRB. Yet the union lost key jurisdictional demands, including union manning of the control room; it lost ship clerk jurisdiction for supercargoes and jurisdiction over all labor in the port of Longview, which it had held for years. And EGT was not required to use union tugs, under the jurisdiction of the Inlandboatmen's Union (IBU), the marine division of the ILWU. Throughout the entire struggle, IBU had refused to allow tugs to move scab vessels to the EGT terminal forcing the company to bring a scab tug all the way from Louisiana through the Panama Canal up to EGT. Now IBU was left out in the cold. The employer was allowed to bypass the union hiring hall and dispatch jobs off of their own list.

Nearly every key provision of the contract contained the phrase "at the sole discretion of the employer," eviscerating any protection or serious grievance machinery. Job actions, like refusing to work in unsafe conditions, which built the union power on



Byron and Megan Jacobs with their children: (from left) Phoenix, Monroe and Harlow.

the docks, were negated as EGT could replace workers at will who were “standing by on safety,” and three job actions could now lead to nullifying the contract. No wonder safety has been so compromised. The rank-and-file newsletter *Maritime Worker Monitor* (No. 11, 14 March 2013) warned: “Concessionary contracts cannot be called a victory. The effects of the Local 21-EGT agreement will be seen in the upcoming September Grainhandlers’ negotiations.” And so it was.

In the next round of bargaining, the grain bosses demanded “me too” concessions. They locked out ILWU terminal workers in Vancouver and Portland, bringing in a scab workforce and armed scabherders, and eventually imposed a give-back contract containing many of the same provisions granted to EGT. While claiming that jurisdiction is everything, the union leaders sought a “partnership” with the bosses, who then socked it to the members. The fact is that the interests of capital and labor cannot be reconciled. What decides the outcome is the class struggle, and as Karl Marx wrote, every real class struggle is political. From the police repression against Occupy Oakland to the scabherd-

ing by the U.S. Coast Guard, those calling the shots were Democrats. No victory can be won without breaking the stranglehold of this party of the bosses and building a workers party on a class-struggle program.

Naturally, none of the EGT give-backs were reported in *The Dispatcher*, the ILWU newspaper. The “victory” story was regurgitated in various left journals, echoing the ILWU International’s media flacks. As Byron Jacobs, Dan Coffman, Kyle Mackey and so many other Longview longshore leaders had warned, the ILWU’s survival as a fighting union was – and is – at stake. They were right. The union, they said, had to take a strong stand at EGT and mobilize with ILWU’s allies, including Occupy, to fight for a union contract and job safety. Capitulation to EGT would have a ripple effect on all other contracts. The EGT contract was a betrayal of historic proportions when a decisive victory could have been won.

Two years later the PCLCD master longshore contract for the Pacific Coast was gutted in much the same manner. PMA acted like sharks smelling blood and circling their prey. To show employers they were good business unionists, the ILWU

Longshore Division officers extended the expired contract for three days. Why? To enable the employers to call in an arbitrator to rule that a port truck drivers’ picket line in L.A. was not “bona fide,” as per the contract, and order longshore officials to direct their workers to cross the picket line. This broke what had been an effective action by mainly Mexican American port truckers, many seeking to organize a union. Yet rank and file job actions showed that embers of union struggle were still alive in the ILWU. A contract was finally settled after over a year of negotiations.

Port workers like miners have been in the vanguard of many historic struggles of the working class, some won, some lost. In the great French novel, *Germinal*, by Émile Zola, a valiant miners’ strike ends in defeat, but as the hero, Étienne, leaves the mines for Paris, the author offers a ray of hope for the future of class struggle. As the miners with heads down go back to work, Zola inveighs against the capitalists: “Men were springing forth, a black avenging army, germinating slowly in the furrows, growing towards the harvests of the next century, and their germination would soon overturn the earth.”

It’s doubly tragic that a young worker like Byron Jacobs, who fought so hard for a decent union contract with strong safety provisions, would be killed on the job because of unsafe working conditions. It is ironic that his memorial was held at the Cowlitz County Expo Center next to the Fairgrounds where arrested longshore workers were held during the contract dispute.

Byron and his wife Megan and children Harlow (age 8), Phoenix (age 4) and Monroe (age 1) should be remembered this holiday season. Please donate to the Byron Jacobs Memorial Fund at the Longshoremen’s Federal Credit Union, 629 14th Ave, Longview, WA 98632. ■

Jack Heyman is a retired Oakland, California longshoreman who was active in the National Maritime Union, the Inlandboatman’s Union and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. He played a leading role in numerous solidarity struggles, and was the author of the Longshore Caucus motion that sparked the May Day 2008 ILWU West Coast port shutdown against the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and in defense of immigrants’ rights. He also wrote the motion for ILWU Local 10 to stop the fascists in San Francisco in 2017.

Byron’s Proud Family History

When the Lumbee Indians Ran Off the KKK

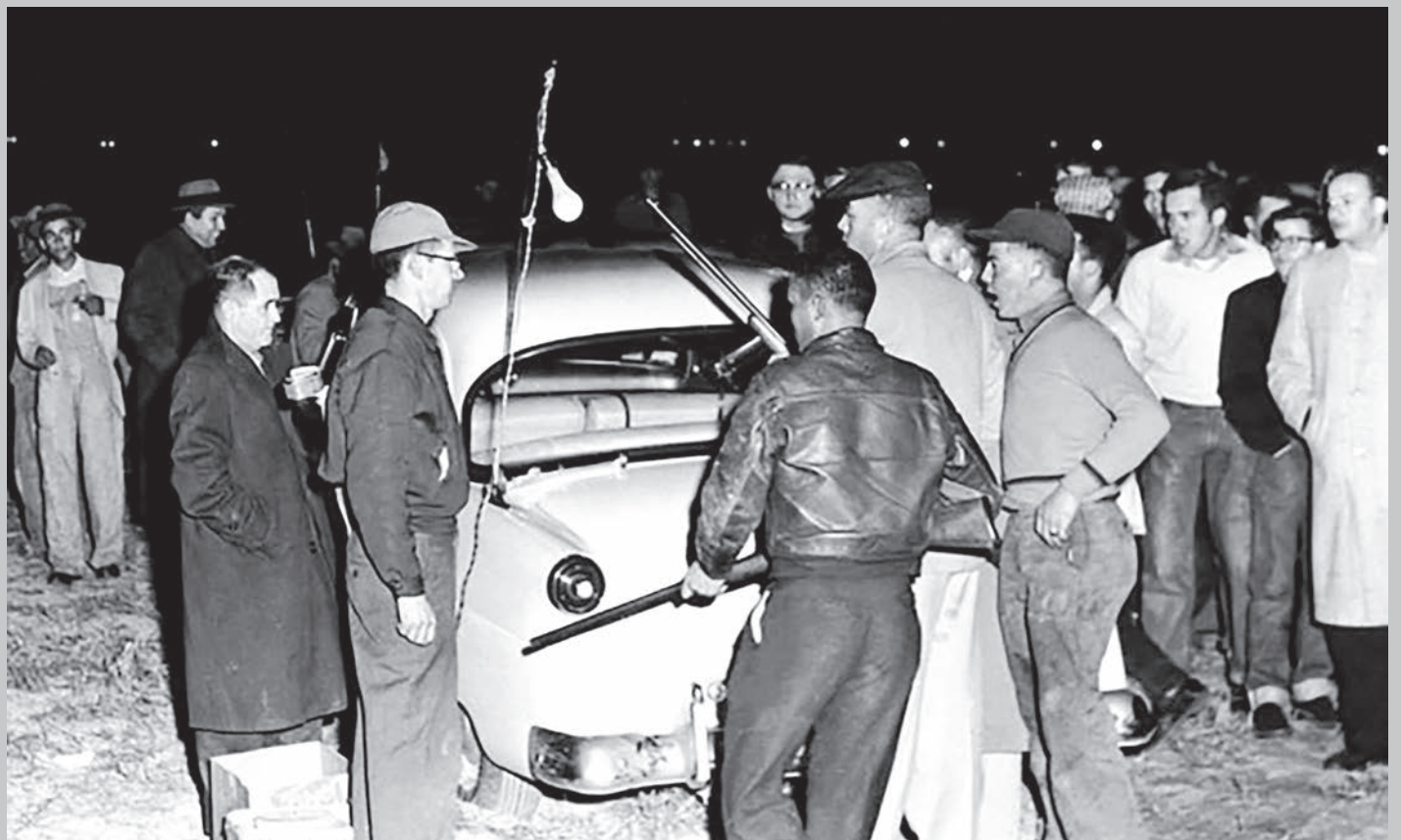
By Jack Heyman

Byron Jacobs and I developed a special relationship during my visits to Longview and his to the Bay Area during the EGT dispute in 2011. I’d just retired on January 1, after 40 years in the maritime industry, and he’d just been elected Secretary-Treasurer of Local 21. One day in Longview we were sitting in the union hall discussing strike strategy and the formidable opponents that his small local was challenging. Impressed by his courage leading longshore workers in battle on the railroad tracks, occupying the EGT facility and on the picket line during this struggle, I asked him what was the source of his fighting spirit.

Byron told me he was justly proud of his Lumbee Indian heritage. He recounted how his great grandfather participated in the armed self-defense by Native Americans that drove the Ku Klux Klan out of Robeson County, North Carolina, never to return. He gave me the gist of that history.

On the night of 18 January 1958, between 50 and 100 Klansmen marched into Robeson for a cross burning near the small town of Maxton, aiming to “put Indians in their place, to end race mixing,” in the words of Klan Grand Dragon, James “Catfish” Cole of South Carolina. But when the racists arrived, they were met by a far larger force of nearly 1,000 Indians of the Lumbee tribe, armed with rocks, sticks and rifles. The Battle of Hayes Pond ensued as a Lumbee sharpshooter shot out the single light bulb illuminating the area. Indians then chased off the Kluxers with shotgun blasts and hand-to-hand combat. Dramatic photos of the battle were published in *Life* magazine of 27 January 1958.

I had lived in North Carolina in 1954 when the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* ordering desegregation of the schools. At



Armed members of Native American Lumbee tribe (right) drive off KKK night riders in Battle of Hayes Pond, 18 January 1958.

my school in Asheboro the flag was lowered to half staff to protest the impending integration. Intrigued by what Byron had told me, I dug a bit deeper into that history.

The KKK had launched a campaign of terror across the South aimed at intimidating black people. In 1957, Klan Grand Dragon Cole, targeted a black doctor, Albert Perry, in Monroe, North Carolina. That October, the KKK held a cross burning near Monroe, followed by a motorcade into town heading to Dr. Perry’s house. But when they got there, shouting and firing off weapons, the Kluxers got a hot reception from the black armed guard, led by Monroe County NAACP president Robert F. Williams. The

concentrated fire from the guard, consisting mainly of World War II veterans, routed the Klan attackers and sent them fleeing pell-mell out of town (see Williams’ classic, *Negroes With Guns* [1962], and “Who Controls the Guns?” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013).

Hoping to recover from this humiliation, Cole decided to target Robeson County, just across the state line from South Carolina. The county was home to a uniquely mixed (but rigidly segregated) population of about 30,000 Native Americans, 25,000 African Americans and 40,000 whites. Even before the Civil War, it had been a center of black freedmen and indigenous peoples

who had managed to avoid Andrew Jackson’s murderous 1830s “Indian Removal” to Oklahoma. Many of the armed Lumbee Indians of Robeson County that ran off the Klan in which Byron’s grandfather participated were also veterans of WWII that put their military skills to good use.

The example of armed self-defense by African Americans and Native Americans played a major role in defeating the racist reaction to civil rights laws (see “Imperialist Social Democracy vs. Black Liberation,” *The Internationalist* No. 50, Winter 2017. It has continued to inspire fighters for the oppressed, including Byron Jacobs. ■

Midterm Elections...

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Trump ranted that birthright citizenship, which was established as a result of the Civil War, “has to end.” Days after the election, he attempted to end asylum rights by decree. Democrats focused on health care as a way *not* to challenge Trump on immigration. As for the “progressive” and “democratic socialist” candidates of the party of deporter-in-chief Barack Obama, they shelved previous calls to “abolish” the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (by which they meant replacing I.C.E. with something akin to the old Immigration and Naturalization Service) while pledging to uphold “secure borders.”

Right after the vote, Democrat-aligned groups organized mass marches throughout the country, reminiscent of the Democrats’ “Women’s March” of pink “pussy hats” the day after Trump’s inauguration. This time it was to protest Trump’s firing of U.S. top cop and walking Confederate monument Jeff Sessions – one of the most vicious anti-immigrant politicians in U.S. history – and in defense of former FBI Director Robert Mueller, head of the “Russiagate” investigation. Meanwhile, Michelle Obama was on NBC’s “Today” show gushing about her friendship with George W. Bush, the invader of Afghanistan and Iraq, whom she described as “beautiful” and “kind.” It all underlines, as Internationalist placards at immigrant rights and anti-racist protests have proclaimed: “*You Can’t Fight Trump with Democrats!*”

Liberal Illusions vs. Real Struggle Against Oppression

So what happened to the fabled “blue (i.e., Democratic) wave”? Pointing to the historical tendency for the sitting president’s party to lose ground in midterm elections, commentators noted the Democrats’ recapture of the House was pretty much par for the course. Moreover, when the Democrats did win both houses of Congress under a Republican president in 2006, they voted to keep funding “George W. Bush’s war” on Iraq, which continued after Obama won the presidency two years later.

In *The Nation* (3 December), John Nichols, a bellwether of left-liberal Democratic loyalism, hailed the election results as “a monumental shift in the political dynamic at a crucial moment in our history,” for having “ushered into Congress a new generation of intersectional activists.” Name-checking Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez from New York, Rashida Tlaib from Michigan (members of the Democratic Socialists of America), as well as Ilhan Omar from Minnesota, Nichols’ message was that an infusion of “diverse” Democrats marks a brave new era – when what’s needed is a struggle against the entire ruling class of racist American capitalism.

The illusion that more diversity in the staid chambers of government augurs real social change is being avidly promoted by the bulk of the “left” – and not only by those who openly advocate voting Democratic. One example: the day after the election, the Left Voice web site (part of the Left Media Project, affiliated with the “Trotskyist Fraction”) published “Five Takeaways from the Midterm Elections,” subtitled “The great protagonist: women of color.” Another piece began by enthusing over the “historic win by women and people of color,” and later reiterated that “the election of women and minorities is cause for celebration....”



Democratic Party politicians Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Nancy Pelosi.

To be clear, Marxists oppose every form of discrimination, including against members of oppressed sectors who join the ruling elite. But when leftists “celebrate” the election of *Democratic Party politicians*, whatever their race or gender, they are helping pull the wool over the eyes of the oppressed. These are capitalist politicians, who do not and cannot “represent” those whose exploitation and oppression are the bedrock of this society. The mission of these “progressive” Democrats is to co-opt, contain, control and defuse any real fight for liberation.

“Hope and Change” Rerun

History has shown this time and again. Decades before the current Congressional “generation of intersectional activists,” the white racist capitalist ruling class responded to the 1960s wave of black rebellion by putting some “black faces in high places.” Black Democratic mayors took office in major cities from Cleveland (1967) to Newark (1970), Los Angeles and Atlanta (1973), Detroit (1974) and Washington, D.C. (1979). Far from uprooting systemic inequality and oppression, their job was to keep the lid on, including by force. Philadelphia black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode carried out the infamous racist massacre of 11 black members of the MOVE commune (five of them children) in 1985. In 1990, the center of capitalist finance itself, New York City, got a black mayor, David Dinkins. Referring to “sacrifices” that Wall Street was demanding from the city’s workers and poor, Dinkins – a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) – said, “They’ll take it from me.”

Meanwhile, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) was established back in 1971 (DSA member Ron Dellums of California was a founding member); the Congressional Hispanic Caucus in 1976; the Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues in 1977. The CBC reached 48 members before the latest election, almost half of them women. Its longest-serving member is Georgia Rep. John Lewis, the former civil rights militant who tried to challenge the Kennedy White House in his censored speech at the 1963 March on Washington. Eased into the Democratic mainstream, Lewis is a symbol of co-optation into the bourgeois establishment.

All this helped pave the way for the eventual election of Barack Obama in 2008, also hailed by opportunist leftists at the time. Despite promises of “Hope and Change,” inequality continued to skyrocket as social/economic devastation and imperialist wars continued, while deportations

reached a record high and racist police terror raged on. With the aid of Bernie Sanders, followed by Ocasio-Cortez, the DSA and almost all of the left, the Democrats have been trying to recoup, and rerun new versions of “Hope and Change” ever since. So they work overtime to prevent workers, youth and the oppressed from drawing radical conclusions and breaking once and for all from the Democratic Party.

Another legacy of the Obama presidency is the close relation with the repressive apparatus cultivated by his secretary of state and would-be successor, Hillary Clinton. This helped set the stage for the Democrats’ brazen efforts to present the FBI, CIA and military as “defenders of democracy” against Trump. These go together with their depiction of Trump as a pawn of Putin’s Kremlin. But for working-class and oppressed people, their enemy is here “at home”: the capitalist ruling class of Washington and Wall Street. As the leading party in most of U.S. imperialism’s wars, the Democrats say the opposite, accusing the Republicans of going soft on “enemies abroad,” reviving Cold War imagery against now-capitalist Russia as well as the bureaucratically deformed workers states of China and North Korea.

The whole Russiagate gambit goes together with the number of Democratic candidates boasting of their careers in the CIA and the U.S. military. Several were just elected to the House, including a former CIA agent in Iraq who then went to the National Security Council (NSC); another who spent eight years in the CIA; a former top adviser to U.S. forces in Afghanistan who became director for Iraq in Obama’s NSC; the former Russia policy adviser for the Atlantic fleet, etc. Underlining her pledge to find common ground with Trump, Nancy Pelosi pointed to her long experience in the House Intelligence Committee, where “left to our own devices, we could always find our way in a bipartisan manner” (*New York Times Magazine*, 19 November).

Much Ado About Pelosi

A whole sideshow in the bourgeois electoral circus was devoted to the supposedly burning question of whether Nancy Pelosi would be Speaker of the House. Though demonized by right-wing Republicans, Pelosi wound up being endorsed for the spot by Trump himself. From the standpoint of *working-class* politics, it’s beside the point: whoever gets chosen for the post will speak for ruling-class interests. For many longtime Democratic hacks, Pelosi embodies party loyalty, the savvy arts of Congress-

sional “sausage-making” (that is, the deals needed to “get things done”) and fundraising prowess. In contrast, enthusiasts of Sanders-style Democratic renewal have long seen Pelosi as the “Democratic establishment” personified. A number of more conservative Democrats have also sought to mount a challenge to her leadership.

What is more interesting about this affair is the light it sheds on the purportedly brash, intrepid new “progressive” and Democratic “socialist” cohort incessantly hyped by the media and the self-styled left. Over and over, they claimed to be running in opposition to establishment Democrats. In the famously viral campaign video of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez she pointedly stressed, “It’s time we acknowledge that not all Democrats are the same.” A “Democratic insurgency” against the old guard was said to be underway, with “AOC” as its standard-bearer. Various supposedly Marxist groups excitedly promoted the new wave of Democrats.

Yet again, they were helping the bosses’ Democratic Party rope in the unwary. Soon enough, AOC embraced the pinnacle of the Democratic establishment in her own state, endorsing New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, as she called for “rallying behind all Democratic nominees, including the governor, to make sure that he wins in November” (*Newsday*, 16 September). So would she or wouldn’t she do the same for Pelosi? High drama ensued as the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC) held a press conference on November 12 and no one raised their hand when a journalist asked who would commit to opposing Pelosi.

Building the AOC Brand

The next day, Ocasio-Cortez appeared at a “protest” at Pelosi’s office, channeling FDR with calls for a “Green New Deal.” As for the House Democratic leader, AOC said they were there to let Pelosi know that “we’ve got her back in showing and pursuing the most progressive energy agenda that this country has ever seen.” Pelosi said she was “deeply inspired by the young activists,” to which AOC responded “Thank you @Nancy Pelosi.” Shortly after, CPC leaders announced their support for Pelosi, in exchange for her pledge to help get “progressives” more spots on “key exclusive committees – including Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, Appropriations, Financial Services and Intelligence.” On November 21, AOC formally announced that Pelosi “can count on my support” for the Speaker of the House position.

Aided by non-stop news coverage, Ocasio-Cortez continues to assiduously build her brand. While Fox News and other reactionaries try to caricature her as a clueless ingenue, AOC is smart, astute and hard-working – for the capitalist Democratic Party. Since her arrival in Washington, her use of Instagram to stay connected with her base has featured in the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker* and the *Washington Post* (16 November), which called it “revolutionary.” In this ongoing video selfie show she revs up excitement for the inside workings of government, sprinkling in millennial-themed references and vignettes on everything from *Harry Potter* to making mac and cheese.

It’s all part of the job, as was her reaction to the death of John McCain in August. Since entrée to U.S. imperialism’s Congressional club required joining the bipartisan paeans of praise, she went on Twitter to

proclaim the Republican war criminal and all-purpose bigot “an unparalleled example of human decency and American service.” Ocasio-Cortez is forthright about the fact that her goal is to revitalize the Democratic Party so it can more effectively administer the capitalist system. Meanwhile various opportunist left currents are pretending it’s somehow all about socialism. It’s not.

Working-Class Independence vs. Class Collaboration

Political independence of the working class is the keystone of Marxist politics. We Trotskyists fight for labor and the oppressed to break from the Democrats and all capitalist parties and politicians, and to forge a class-struggle workers party to fight for socialist revolution. This requires telling the truth to the masses, and opposing the full range of opportunist outfits that, because they tail bourgeois politics, do the opposite.

The day after the midterms, the tone was set for such groupings by the DSA’s National Political Committee, whose statement began: “Yesterday democratic socialists fought and won inspiring election campaigns across the country, representing the rebirth of the American socialist movement after generations in retreat.” Short on honesty, but not on chutzpah, it went on to claim these campaigns in and for the oldest bourgeois party in the world – the Democrats – are “a working-class movement for social justice.” It did accurately note: “We are building a pipeline from local positions all the way to national politics.” The appended list of DSA-endorsed elected officials includes a Library Trustee in Ypsilanti, a judge, assorted members of local rent boards, “advisory neighborhood commissions” and Democratic state committees (though no municipal dog-catchers seem to have made the cut). It is all in line with the title of our pamphlet, *DSA: Fronting for the Democrats* (February 2018).

Staking out niches a bit more to the left on the social-democratic spectrum are Socialist Alternative (SAIt) and its sibling rivals of the International Socialist Organization (ISO). These groups are old hands at tailing the Democrats, celebrating the advances of whichever of their candidates generates the most illusions at the moment, and combining this with helpful “socialist” helpful advice and “constructively” mild criticism. The DSA’s exponential growth has made them desperate to stay relevant.

In the lead-in to the midterms, a long SAIt piece on “The Coming ‘Blue Wave’ and Growing Radicalization” (*Socialist Alternative*, 5 October) was chock full of enthusiasm and suggestions for the “progressive challengers to the establishment.” It bragged that “Socialist Alternative called for votes by registered Democrats for Ocasio-Cortez and [Julia] Salazar and we were active in their campaigns.” (Salazar is a DSA member who won the Democratic primary and subsequently the election for a seat in the New York State Senate.) It called on “Ocasio-Cortez and DSA in particular” to “play a key role” in “turning the programs of left progressives and socialist candidates into real fighting campaigns.” SAIt leaders have pitched their ever more blatant adaptation to Democrats as one clever “tactic” after another. SAIt is a vivid case of how, in opportunist politics, “the mask becomes the face.”

After the elections, SAIt’s “socialist Seattle city council member,” Kshama Sawant, wrote an open letter (9 November) to Ocasio-Cortez, Salazar and Rashida

Tlaib, to congratulate her “sisters,” together with “other newly elected socialists,” stating: “Your elections represent a significant step forward for the U.S. working class” and a defeat for “the establishment.” Sawant did admonish: “Alexandria, it is deeply unfortunate that you have endorsed Andrew Cuomo – a thoroughly rotten representative of the establishment,” adding that “you should not repeat this error in supporting Nancy Pelosi” (no luck there, Kshama). Addressing all three DSAers, she wrote that “we do not agree with your decisions to run as Democrats.” No matter – “despite these differences ... we can and should work together to build a sustained movement.... But today let us celebrate your elections and prepare to make use of them in the tumultuous struggles ahead.”

Much the same recipe was served up by the ISO’s Alan Maass in “Six Socialist Takeaways from Election 2018” (*Socialist Worker*, 7 November). “Coulda been, shoulda been,” he began. “The 2018 midterm elections should have been a ringing repudiation of Donald Trump and the Republican Party. And if not for the dismal state of U.S. ‘democracy’ and the two-party system, it would have been.” Still: “The success of socialist candidates [*sic*] this year has been a big theme in mainstream news coverage. Ocasio-Cortez’s primary victory in June inspired people around the country....” And “like Bernie Sanders before them,” Maass wrote, AOC and fellow DSAer Tlaib are “helping to inject socialism into mainstream politics after an absence for many generations.”

At this point the recipe called for that dollop of advice and admonition, as he outlined an “important discussion about the new DSA officeholders.” Despite the “great pressure to adapt to the conservatizing routines of Congress,” Maass wrote, “there will be important new opportunities to use their position in Congress to project the demands of social movements and struggles, along with the politics of socialism.... Everyone on the left needs to be part of discussing what can be done to take advantage of the opportunity.” So the ISO, like SAIt, helps the DSA market the idea that these Democratic Party politicians represent “the politics of socialism.” And seeking its slice of the action, it urges the entire left to join in class collaboration with these bourgeois politicians.

Those who prefer tailism and class-collaborationist appeals with more erudite Marxist and ostensibly “Trotskyist” airs can turn to the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) of Alan Woods and the late Ted Grant. It laments that “Bernie Sanders – with his mass base of supporters, contributors, and voters – could have built a mass working-class socialist party.” Still, today “DSA is not a mass party, but ... is in a unique position to use its rising profile to put forward bold socialist policies and the need for a break with the Democrats...” (*Socialist Revolution*, 7 November). There follows a long set of suggestions for the DSA on how to do this, not to repeat the “mistake” of running as Democrats, and so on.

The same tack was taken last summer by Left Voice (28 July) when it oh-so-helpfully suggested to the DSA’s Julia Salazar that she “run as a socialist, putting the hundreds of DSA members who are canvassing into dialogue with those who are disillusioned with the two-party system.” Pointing to SAIt’s Kshama Sawant as “an important example that independent politics

[!] are possible,” LV asked the DSA not to endorse any Democrats – a bit like asking the pope to quit giving mass. What’s striking about these near-identical appeals from the various “socialist” and left opportunists is that they all see themselves as playing in the same ballpark as the DSA Democrats. They are, and the name of the game is *class collaboration*.

As we noted in our article “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to the Rescue of the Democratic Party” (*The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018), events have thoroughly refuted the claims, by leftists tailing the DSA, that the group’s influx of new members was radicalizing it “in a process that would push it away from and eventually out of” the Democratic Party. We wrote, “The scientific Marxist term for this is: bullshit.” In reality, “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.”

“Mainstreaming socialism” means burying social struggles in the Democratic Party graveyard. The fight to break the bipartisan capitalist stranglehold on U.S. politics will not be advanced by shifty maneuvers and excuses for tailing the Democrats. It requires the opposite: a sharp break with all the bosses’ parties and a clear fight for political independence from the bourgeoisie, to undertake the task of building a *revolutionary workers party*. As we face this period of heightened dangers and challenges, helping tie working people and the oppressed to the class enemy is not a “mistake” but a crime. To defend their most basic rights and needs, *class struggle* is the urgent order of the day. ■

Caravan and Left...

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USA” and that “Those in the migrant caravan are attempting to escape the destitution and pervasive violence plaguing Central America as a result of U.S. imperialist subjugation and the corrupt and repressive rule of the local bourgeoisies.” It recognized that “economic ruin” resulted from the Central American Free Trade Agreement, that “criminal gangs have mushroomed” under successive governments “propped up” by the U.S. But having said all that, *the SL still doesn’t call to let them in, which means to keep them out*.

When we polemicized against the SL over this last year in our article, “Spartacist League vs. Refugees” (*The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017), the SL responded with an incendiary diatribe, “IG Big Liars Smear ICL on Immigration” (*Workers Vanguard*, 7 April 2017) accusing us of “slinging slanders” whose “purpose is to incite and justify violence against us.” The Internationalist Group opposes violence on the left and has never incited or justified violence against the SL/ICL – on the contrary, we have defended its members against violence, censorship and threats. As for us “lyingly” claiming that the SL/ICL “oppose calls for asylum for Syrian refugees,” their own article confirms that they don’t call to “Let Syrian Refugees In,” as we do, because “there are millions more fleeing U.S. wars and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq and the imperialist devastation of Libya, to name but a few....” So since U.S. imperialism has forced millions to flee, these fake-Trotskyists refuse to call for those desperate refugees on its doorstep or in the ocean

to be let in?!

And now, even after stating that the Hondurans and other Central American migrants in the caravan were “desperately fleeing” the “devastation made in USA”; after saying they were “attempting to escape the destitution and pervasive violence plaguing Central America” due to “U.S. imperialist subjugation” and the “repressive rule of the local bourgeoisie” (which does *nothing* without permission from Washington); after admitting that “U.S. imperialist pillage” produced “economic ruin” that “reduced the peasantry to abject misery, forcing millions to migrate” – after all that, *the SL still refuses to call for asylum or just to let them in*. For the cynical SL/ICL of today, proletarian solidarity means nothing – and their attempts to evade, deny and obscure the most urgent duties of that solidarity against their “own” imperialist rulers are an insult to the internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky, and a repudiation of the revolutionary program the Spartacist tendency upheld for three decades.

In refusing to call for asylum for refugees from Syria, and now from Central America, the SL/ICL actually performs the same sleight-of-hand as the Trotskyist Fraction, dishonestly equating opposition to discriminatory immigration laws and calls for asylum for refugees with liberal/reformist talk of “open borders.” (“Although the IG denies it, their position is but a species of the ‘open the borders’ call raised by many on the reformist left from Europe to the U.S.,” says WV.) But while the centrist TF wants a no-borders fig leaf as a cover for its tailing “democratic socialists” whose candidates call for secure borders, the centrist ICL uses the same straw man argument in order to sidle up to xenophobic reactionaries.

The ICL’s “no asylum for refugees” line is part of a broader capitulation to imperialism that has come to dominate their increasingly erratic, rightward-moving politics. This was reflected in the ICL’s wild enthusing over “Brexit” – the English-chauvinist campaign for Britain to leave the European Union – in a referendum that was an orgy of anti-immigrant racism, fought out over how best to exclude foreign-born workers (see “ICL: The Main Enemy Is in Brussels,” *The Internationalist* No. 44, Summer 2016). The same line was behind the ICL’s equating of opposition to the EU’s “Dublin III” procedure (to fast-track deportations by sending refugees back to the country of entry) with “open borders.” In fact, the only time the ICL called for admitting any migrants recently was a *Workers Vanguard* (4 November 2016) article on Haitian migrants in Tijuana, saying “Let them in!” But not Central Americans caught in the same limbo today.

Why not? Clearly, one reason has to do with the fact that in late October 2016, the Internationalist Group/U.S., the Grupo Internacionalista/Mexico and the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, sections of the League for the Fourth International, called a tri-national protest against the Obama administration’s refusal to let thousands of Haitian migrants into the U.S., even in the wake of Hurricane Matthew. Although it was expressly invited to participate, the SL/U.S. was a no-show. WV’s article served to cover up this abstention. But what reasons did they give for uncharacteristically calling to let Haitians in? There was the “the racist targeting of Haitian migrants by the Obama adminis-



U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) riot cops (in black) and military seal off the San Ysidro port of entry while desperate migrants sought to enter.

tration ... pandering to anti-immigrant sentiment in the run-up to the U.S. elections.” Is this somehow different from the situation with the migrant caravan today? The same kind of racist targeting was directed against Hondurans leading up to the 2018 midterm elections.

There was the fact that Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians was canceled at the same that Haitians were being excluded, even though conditions in Haiti were just as desperate as before. Here, too, there is a direct parallel: TPS for 89,000 Hondurans was canceled in May 2018, just after the last caravan reached Tijuana. There was the history of U.S. “imperialist plunder” of Haiti. Ditto for Honduras. The main difference is that Haitians were “uprooted by the succession of natural disasters ... that have ravaged their impoverished homeland” following the January 2010 earthquake. So for the ICL, escaping the results of natural disasters justifies letting migrants in, but not fleeing the disastrous conditions created by imperialism – is that it?

But there’s more to it than that. The 4 November 2016 WV article notes:

“It was to shore up this bloody occupation force that President Obama dispatched 20,000 combat troops in the guise of a ‘relief effort’ soon after the 2010 earthquake. U.S. officials also ordered a naval blockade of Haiti to prevent the desperate population from fleeing to the U.S.”

Quite true. What WV’s account left out, however, was that *the SL/ICL shamefully supported the U.S.’ 2010 invasion and occupation*, while vociferously lambasting those who opposed it, particularly the IG. And *the SL/ICL was silent about the naval blockade* preventing Haitians from fleeing to the U.S.

We denounced the SL/ICL’s grotesque support for imperialist occupation in the guise of disaster aid as a quintessential case of what Lenin called *social-imperialism*, a *betrayal* of Marxism, of the Haitian masses and of working people the world over. After three months of ranting slanders and smears against us, regurgitating the lies of the imperialist media and the Pentagon about the U.S.’ supposed humanitarian mission in Haiti, suddenly they flipfopped and *admitted that the IG was right after all, the ICL had indeed committed a social imperialist betrayal*. But then, after what turned out to be a hollow confession and act of contrition, they went right back to denouncing those who stood

fast in upholding the internationalist program of Trotskyism. Yet the class struggle is not the Catholic church: no matter how many “Hail Lenins” you recite, supporting “your own” bourgeoisie as it enforces imperialist domination at gunpoint is a mortal blow against any pretensions to represent “revolutionary continuity.”

Still, that’s not the end of the sordid story behind the SL/ICL’s refusal to call for asylum for refugees from the wars, terror and deprivation unleashed by imperialism. The 2 November 2018 *Workers Vanguard* article about the Central American caravan notes that “conditions for Honduran workers and the urban and rural poor have grown even more dire since 2009 when then president Manuel Zelaya was toppled in a coup engineered by a section of the national bourgeoisie and headed by a general trained at U.S. imperialism’s notorious School of the Americas.” But just as in 2016 WV failed to mention that it had supported the U.S. invasion of Haiti, in 2018 it left out that *for more than a year after the 2009 coup in Honduras, the SL/ICL refused to denounce it*, arguing internally that the Obama regime was not behind it – which it most emphatically was, as was clear at the time.

As we pointed out in “Honduras: The First Coup of the Obama Administration” and other articles in *The Internationalist* No. 29 (Summer 2009), and in “For Revolutionary Workers Struggle Against Coups in Central America,” (*The Internationalist* No. 30, November-December 2009), the Obama administration was up to its neck in preparing the coup that ousted Zelaya. The plotters traveled to Washington to get a green light from Hillary Clinton’s State Department, which recommended that they get the Honduran Supreme Court on board to give it a veneer of “legality,” which they did. We noted in a polemic about the SL/ICL’s social-imperialist line on Haiti, that “it is curious indeed that WV has not seen fit to print one word, much less an article, against the recent U.S.-backed Honduras coup” (“SL Twists and Turns on Haiti” [9 April 2010] in *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010).

That complicit silence was no accident, as ICL internal documents prove. A year after the coup, and in response to the IG, the ICL’s highest leading body, the International Secretariat, on 10 July 2010 unanimously voted that: “The I.S. and SL/U.S. leadership wrongly either ignored or were indifferent to the 29 June 2009 coup in Honduras – with comrades arguing as

though we had ‘no side’ because the coup represented in-fighting between two bourgeois camps.” A second, unanimous, motion added:

“Their [U.S.] boot prints were all over the plotting against Zelaya. It seems quite clear, especially in light of this discussion, that the party’s response to the Honduras case reflected an accommodation to American imperialism and was a precursor to the betrayal of supporting U.S. troops in Haiti.”

Yet this straightforward statement raised the hackles of the top leadership of the ICL, including its now official leader, Coelho, who had earlier written that “I disagree with the thrust of the arguments that the Obama administration was directly behind the Honduran coup.” So after two months of furious finger-pointing, *the motion recognizing the ICL’s “accommodation to American imperialism” over Honduras and that it was a “precursor to the betrayal” in Haiti was rescinded*.

Then, after two more months and more than 120 pages of internal documents back and forth, an ICL international conference decreed it to be “false” to say that its leadership ignored or was indifferent to the 2009 coup, even though it “did not write an article about the coup against Zelaya for more than a year.” Moreover, it argued that the U.S. only “helped set the stage for Zelaya’s ouster, with the Obama White House subsequently propping up the coup government.” So the ICL amnestied the Obama administration of having given the green light for the coup, accepting cover-up lies by the U.S. ambassador as good coin, and amnestied itself for not having denounced it. Not coincidentally, the ICL line that the U.S. was not responsible for the coup itself (which, if you read the WV article on the caravan carefully, it still maintains) is precisely the position of the liberal Democrats who want to amnesty Obama.

The Internationalist wrote in response to the ICL’s shamefaced “repudiation” of its admittedly social-imperialist betrayal over the 2010 U.S. invasion of Haiti that “your explanations of why and how your fundamental betrayal came about don’t hold water. You admit to the crime, but fail to give a serious explanation of the reasons for it. And that virtually guarantees it will happen again. This isn’t the first time that the SL/ICL bowed to the pressure of its ‘own’ ruling class, nor the first time you have smeared the IG/LFI for our revolutionary opposition to U.S. imperialism.”² And it has kept on happening. The SL/ICL’s 2010 amnesty of the Obama administration of responsibility for the 2009 Honduran coup (and its self-amnesty for not having denounced that) is a continuation of its capitulation to U.S. “human rights” imperialism over Haiti.

The stage was set for its Haiti betrayal long before, when in response to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan after the 11 September 2001 attacks it dropped its long-standing call for the defeat of “one’s own” imperialism, and accused the IG of “Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism” for upholding that fundamental Leninist policy.³ As for chauvinism, the SL’s refusal to defend the right of the Sioux

² See “Open Letter from the Internationalist Group to the Spartacist League and ICL” (8 May 2010) in *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010).

³ See “ICL Refuses to Call for Defeat of U.S. Imperialism, ‘Anti-American’ Baits the IG,” *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001.

Indians of Standing Rock, North Dakota to ban an oil pipeline crossing their tribal lands, potentially polluting their water supply – on the spurious grounds that those lands had already been removed from Indian control by the second Fort Laramie robber treaty of 1868 – is a prime example.⁴

And then there is the latest iteration of the ICL’s phony self-criticisms, its conference document “The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra” (*Spartacist* No. 65, Summer 2017), declaring that it had a “chauvinist” position on the national question for 40 years, even as it cynically continues to proclaim itself the revolutionary vanguard. (Not a word about Haiti, of course.) In this bombastic and blatantly revisionist document, the ICL embraces bourgeois nationalism and rejects Lenin’s proletarian internationalism, while falsely claiming to fight for Leninism, in terms virtually identical to those used by sundry other opportunists. The prime example of “flagrant manifestations of chauvinism in the ICL” that the document gives in order to justify its new embrace of bourgeois nationalism was said to be over “applying self-determination to oppressed white people in economically advanced countries of North America and Europe.” But note, they’re not talking about the democratic right of self-determination.

On the contrary, in that document, the ICL leadership, “guided by comrade Coelho,” calls for support for “establish[ing] French as the only official language of government, services and large companies” in Quebec, thereby imposing it on immigrants, and for similar laws to impose Catalan on immigrants and the largely Spanish-speaking working class in Catalonia. It cynically claims that this is “an extension of Lenin’s struggle for the equality of languages” – even though the Bolshevik leader explicitly and emphatically opposed the imposition of *any* official language.⁵ As for non-white peoples of non-imperialist nations, the ICL took its pro-imperialist abandonment of the call for independence for Puerto Rico a step further by arguing that it would support outright annexation (statehood) of this U.S. colony! It is in line with this pattern of capitulation to U.S. imperialism that the SL/ICL refuses to call to let desperate Central Americans fleeing “devastation made in USA” and demonized by the racist xenophobe Trump into the U.S.

The ICL’s gyrations over Haiti and Honduras show an organization that has long lost its Marxist bearings, spinning about like a whirling top, but repeatedly coming to rest on a position of support (open or de facto) to imperialism and national chauvinism. Against the liberal delusions of “open borders” under capitalism spread by social-democratic reformists and the chauvinist “no asylum for refugees” policy of the ex-Trotskyists, a genuine struggle for immigrants’ rights can only be based on a program of international socialist revolution. That is what the Bolsheviks Lenin and Trotsky fought for a century ago as the newly formed Soviet workers state proclaimed full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers, and as the League for the Fourth International continues to fight for today. ■

⁴ See “Spartacist League: Land Surveyor Socialists,” *The Internationalist* No. 46, January-February 2017.

⁵ E.g., in V.I. Lenin, “Liberals and Democrats on the Language Question” (September 1913).



Internationalist Group at demonstrations of solidarity with the migrants' caravan at the Mexican border, (left) and in New York City (right), November 25.

Flashpoint...

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for freight trains (to the east of the San Ysidro highway port of entry to the U.S.) migrants pried open a section of the wall. In both locations there were not only young men but mothers carrying young children and strollers, while videos show a man in a wheelchair, all anxious to reach the border so they could apply for asylum.

Right-wing media in the U.S. naturally played up this despairing rush as an attempt to “storm” the border, in line with Trump’s xenophobic twitter barrage about a mythical “immigrant invasion.” Border Patrol riot police fired off round after round of tear gas over the wall into Mexico. So whose border was actually being attacked? This chemical weapon, formally banned in war but regularly used by cops against protesters, was being indiscriminately used on people in another country. Squads of active duty U.S. Army and National Guard troops stood at the ready. CBP (Customs and Border Protection) police closed the San Ysidro entry point for several hours, while the racist U.S. president tweeted that he would “CLOSE our Southern Border” if necessary. A few dozen migrants made it through to the U.S., where the Border Patrol announced it had arrested 42. On the Mexican side, the government of outgoing president Enrique Peña Nieto said that it had detained and deported 98 migrants. More than 100 Mexican federal police were posted around the Benito Juarez refuge, turning it into a veritable prison.

Meanwhile, Mexico’s president-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador (who took office on December 1) was at the main military base in Mexico City in an unprecedented meeting with 32,000 members of the armed forces, including 5,000 officers and 102 generals and admirals. There he presented the constitutional amendment of his National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) enabling the military to police the country. (For years, army and navy forces have been used in the “drug war” without any legal basis.) AMLO’s plan would establish a National Guard, initially composed of 60,000 members of the military police, naval police and federal police, that would then be expanded to include other soldiers and new recruits to cover the entire national territory with 266 regional commands. Thus the president who in the previous (2012) election posed as the harbinger of a “loving republic” (*república amorosa*) is now proposing a sharp increase of military power in what is already a semi-bonapartist regime. Central American immigrants may be the first to feel the brunt of this

beefed-up repressive apparatus.

In the U.S., Internationalist contingents participated in caravan solidarity demonstrations at the border in San Ysidro (south of San Diego, California) as well as Portland, Oregon and New York City. Our leaflet, including the account by our activist-reporter (see “With the Caravan of International Workers”) who joined the caravan as it entered southern Mexico, declared: “The Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico and the Internationalist Group in the United States, sections of the League for the Fourth International, call, as an elementary act of international workers solidarity, to *let them in* and for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* (both in Mexico and the U.S.).” It also called for *asylum for refugees* and denounced the offer by incoming Mexican government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador to act as Trump’s border patrol, turning Mexico into a holding pen for asylum seekers. It added that, in the face of the xenophobic attacks whipped up by the Tijuana bourgeoisie, “what is needed are *workers defense guards* of defenders of democratic rights to protect the immigrant shelters and *massive workers mobilization to crush the attackers*” (see “Mexico: For Workers Action to Defend Immigrants!”).

Although immigrants’ rights groups such as Cosecha and the New Sanctuary Coalition had talked optimistically of bringing 15,000 people to the border to greet the caravan, the demonstrations in various cities were notable for their small size, ranging from a few dozen to a few hundred participants. This contrasted sharply with the mushrooming protests last June when tens of thousands of people came out to protest the separation of families and jailing of youth in cages at the border. The obvious reason for this difference was that in June liberals like moveon.org, the Resistance, Indivisible, the Women’s March and other Democratic Party front groups went all out to organize protests, while under fire from Trump’s fear-mongering about the Central American caravan, the Democrats were ducking for cover. In San Ysidro, where some 400 marchers went from Larsen Field to the border and back (considerably less than the 1,000 claimed by organizers), speakers went on about the racist Trump, while giving the Democrats and “deporter-in-chief” Obama (who deported over 8 million people) a pass.

In sharp contrast, the Los Angeles local of the Internationalist Group was present with a banner calling for “Workers Action to Defend the Caravan – Let Them In! Asylum for Refugees! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!” The banner of Transport Workers Against Deportations called to “Unionize Undocumented Workers!” while

our signs denounced the “Deportation Machine of Democrats and Republicans” and declared that “Pressuring the Democrats is a Dead End – Build a Workers Party to Fight for Socialist Revolution!” The banner of Transport Workers Against Deportations called to unionize undocumented workers. In Portland, where the turnout was tiny, comrades carried the banner of Class Struggle Workers – Portland calling for “Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants – Break with Democrats and Republicans – Build a Class Struggle Workers Party.” In New York City, where some 200 people gathered at the NY Public Library, an IG banner called for “Workers Action to Stop Deportations” and to “Drive I.C.E. Jails Out of New York.”

After marching to the Mexican consulate, a speaker went on at length on the six demands put forward by the Migrant and Refugee Solidarity Coalition. While denouncing the “racist anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Administration” and calling for “freedom for incarcerated migrants and free movement for asylum seekers,” it also demanded:

“The US government must publicly acknowledge a) its role in Honduran Coup in 2009, b) that the Honduran government is a US supported dictatorship, and c) recognize the political and social crises throughout Central America as caused by US foreign policy.”

This is an absurd call on the imperialist tiger to change its stripes. The speaker did say that a Democratic administration gave the green light for the 2009 coup, while lamenting the unfulfilled “promise” of 2008 (i.e., the election of Barack Obama). Interestingly, the call to “Abolish I.C.E.” which was all the rage last summer was hardly mentioned, if at all. As we noted then, the liberal Democrats and their reformist left camp followers wanted to dabble in a little radical-sounding rhetoric, while in the concrete seeking to return to the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), an earlier incarnation of *la migra*, and calling for “secure borders.”

An Internationalist Group banner, in contrast, declared: “Smash I.C.E. Gestapo with Workers Revolution,” and “You Can’t fight Trump with the Democrats – Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!” Speaking at the consulate,

comrade Lucio of Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (TIC) stressed that:

“These caravans are a consequence of the political situation caused by the attacks of U.S. imperialism in Central America. Those policies have been implemented by the Republican and Democratic parties. We call on the workers to break with those bourgeois parties. We also say that this government [pointing to the Mexican consulate] is complicit with what’s happening to the Central American immigrants. We call to break with all those parties, including the PRI, PAN and PRD, and also MORENA. We say that the only way to stop this is with a party of our class, that defends our interests, which defends the interests of women, of gays, of lesbians, of blacks, of the peasants, of the Indians. And to those baby-snatchers, we say that we will smash them with a social revolution. We need such a party on both sides of the border. We are not illegal, nor criminal, we are international workers!”

Various pseudo-socialists bandy about utopian liberal calls for “open borders” (essentially asking the capitalist state to abolish itself) while simultaneously supporting Democratic politicians such as Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (of the Democratic Socialists of America) who call for “secure borders” and replacing I.C.E. with an agency akin to the earlier incarnation of the *la migra*, the Immigration and Naturalization Service. In contrast to this opportunist double-talk, we Trotskyists oppose all racist immigration laws, along with the police forces that impose them and the bourgeois parties that write them. In demanding full citizenship rights for all immigrants, no matter how they got here, and asylum for those fleeing the devastation wrought by imperialism, we underline that defeating capitalism’s drive against immigrants can only come about through international socialist revolution. ■



Internationalists at caravan solidarity demo in Portland.

The Electoralist Campaigns of the Brazilian Left

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 this panorama full of dangers for working people and all the oppressed, what has been the response of organizations that define themselves as being to the left of the PT?

PSTU

We can dispense from the outset with the Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado (PSTU – United Socialist Workers Party), which is once again a plaything in the hands of the right. When in April the Federal Supreme Court (STF) rejected the *habeas corpus* petition of former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and the judge Sérgio Moro of Operation Lava Jato immediately ordered that Lula be jailed, the PSTU applauded this arbitrary arrest whose transparent purpose was to prevent the historic leader of the Workers' Party (PT) from being a candidate in the 2018 presidential elections. "We cannot accept the PT's argument, which defends impunity for Lula while accusing the Court of being selective," wrote these "leftist" servants of the judiciary.¹ Now PSTU presidential candidate Vera Lúcia, in an interview with CBN and Rede Globo G1 (11 September), says that "we do not think Lula should be free," even as she acknowledged the judicial selectivity that allows corrupt politicians like Alckmin (of the conservative PSDB) and others to run as candidates.

With hypocritical leftist verbiage, even talking of "socialist revolution" while admitting that "Lula undoubtedly was discriminated against" ("Lula and the Justice of the Rich," 2 September), these pseudo-Trotskyists accept that unelected judges can decide whom the population can elect and whom it can't. In the same way that the PSTU called for "Throw Them All Out" when the right was in the street demanding "Throw Dilma Out" and the corrupt Congress was preparing to oust the president, today it talks of arresting "all the corrupt [politicians]" and insists on Lula's imprisonment when only he is in jail. It is a cynical ploy to deceive the naive. As we wrote during the impeachment process, "At bottom, there is little to discuss with the PSTU, which is merely a puppet of the right-wing opposition to garner support

¹ "Supreme Court Denies Habeas Corpus and Lula's Arrest Is Ordered," statement of the PSTU, 5 April.



PCO: more Lulista than Lula.



Manuela d'Ávila of the PCdoB, vice-presidential candidate on the PT's "Brazil Happy Again" slate, along with Lula and Guilherme Boulos, presidential candidate on the PSOL ticket in a popular-front rally "in defense of democracy" in Curitiba, the headquarters of Operation Lava Jato, April 2.

from the left."² And they are marionettes of the most reactionary forces not only in Brazil where, among other things, they back the "strikes" of the military police. Around the globe, from Venezuela to Libya, Syria, Ukraine and the deformed workers' states of Cuba and China, the PSTU and its International Workers League (LIT) are lap dogs of imperialism, barking at the behest of Washington.

PCO

The Partido Causa Operária (PCO – Workers Cause Party) is more or less the opposite of the PSTU. Its newspaper headlines, "Against the Violation of the Constitution: GO WITH LULA TO THE END" (*Causa Operária* No. 1021, 6 September). When the PT went along with the authoritarian veto of Lula's candidacy by the Superior Election Tribunal (TSE), then quickly ratified by the STF, and proceeded to name the vice-presidential nominee on Lula's slate, Fernando Haddad, as its candidate for the presidency, the PCO declared: "Haddad the Candidate: The Road to Submission" (*Diário Causa Operária*, 12 September). But these Lulistas-to-the-end ignore the letter of the former president transmitting his candidacy to the former mayor of São Paulo.

In fact, the PCO is *more Lulista than Lula*. It describes the scene in April, shortly after the announcement of Lula's arrest warrant, as "thousands of people showed they were willing to react" around the country. However, "the directive from the [PT] leadership was to accept it and seek a way out by legal means." Then when "people even closed the doors of the union HQ" (of the ABC Metal Workers Union³) so he could "hole

² See "Brazil's Opportunist Left Tailing After the Bourgeois Blocs," *The Internationalist* No. 44, Summer 2016.

³ Referring to the industrial triangle between Santo André, São Bernardo dos Campos and São Caetano do Sul in São Paulo state, where many automobile and auto parts plants are located.

up in a castle," it says "the same voices, prevailed." What the PCO does not admit is that the voice that prevailed was that of Lula, who made a lengthy speech professing his faith in Brazilian justice, because otherwise "I would have called for a revolution in this country."

Lula governed Brazil for the PT for eight years in alliance with right-wing bourgeois parties on behalf of the interests of capitalists "who never in Brazil's history made as much money as they did when I was president." Then he handpicked his successor, Dilma, to continue his work. Even after the impeachment, which he denounced as a "coup," he agreed to make political alliances with the "coup plotters" and promised to reform the welfare system according to the wishes of the bourgeoisie. The PCO has several candidates running in these elections, but even while talking of resisting electoral fraud in the streets, the party continues to proclaim its support for Lula as president. The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB – Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil) opposed impeachment, whose purpose was to intensify attacks on the workers, but we have never given political support to the PT or Lula, and we don't support *Lulista* candidates, because Lula's popular-frontism



New popular front formed: meeting to present the manifesto "Unity to Reconstruct Brazil" signed by the PT, PCdoB, PDT, PSB and PSOL in Brasilia, February 20. Trotskyists call for proletarian opposition to the bourgeois popular front.

can only lead to a new disaster for the working class and all the oppressed.

PSOL

The largest group that places itself to the left of the PT, the Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (PSOL – Party of Socialism and Freedom), originated from a split from Lula's party in 2004 after congressional dissidents were expelled for opposing Lula's pension "reform" of that year, which slashed workers' rights.⁴ The PSOL is a full-fledged social-democratic party, electoralist to the core, although it has only six deputies in Congress, no senators and only two mayors out of more than 5,000 in Brazil. Its main function is to divert leftists into bourgeois parliamentarism. Its leadership is a merry-go-round of countless internal currents, among which the dominant bloc, Unidade Socialista (led by Ivan Valente's Ação Socialista Popular), always imposes its "moderate" policy on the Left Bloc (made up of the MES of Luciana Genro; the CST of Babá; Resistência; Insurgência; the Coletivo 1º de Maio; LSR (Liberdade, Socialismo e Revolução); Esquerda Marxista, etc., etc.). In addition, there are "democratic affiliations" of other tendencies. In Brazil's cities, which probably have the highest concentration of pseudo-Trotskyists per square kilometer in the world, almost all the tendencies are swimming in the swamp of PSOL.

If PSOL has functioned since its inception as a satellite of the PT, this has intensified with the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and particularly during the 2018 election campaign. PSOL presidential candidate Guilherme Boulos, the leader of the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST),

⁴ See our article, "We Don't Need a Social-Democratic 'New Party' of Disillusioned Lulistas," *The Internationalist* No. 20, January-February 2005.

was with Lula constantly up until his arrest. In fact, when Boulos joined PSOL in March, this was greeted with video messages from Lula himself and prominent PT leader Tarso Genro. The government program for the slate supported by PSOL, the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and the Vamos platform (formerly the Frente do Povo Sem Medo [Fearless People's Front]) is titled *50 Recipes from Boulos to Change Brazil*. In 120 pages of "recipes" for a land of wonders there is not a single criticism of the PT-led popular-front governments of Lula and Dilma, which with their attacks on the workers opened the door to the right. It is a program for a capitalist government to return to the supposed golden age before Michel Temer was installed in the presidency in the Palácio do Planalto.

An earlier program for the PSOL candidacy (of the Coalition Let's Go Without Fear to Change Brazil), consisting of 228 pages of fanciful "reforms," raises some mild criticism of the economic policies of the PT governments and uses more "leftist" language. This "anti-system, popular, radical and anti-conservative program" outlines "a model of national development with broad societal involvement." In reality, it only recycles the *bourgeois* politics of the "development state" dating from the mid-20th century, which are not coming back. Besides there not being an independent national bourgeoisie to implement such a program, the imperialists would not allow a challenge to their "neoliberal" policies of free trade, privatization and destruction of social programs, a policy necessary for their profits in this decaying capitalism.

Proof of the impossibility of an "alternative" economic policy within the capitalist framework as envisaged by the PSOL-PCB candidacy is the disastrous experience of the SYRIZA government in Greece. This bourgeois populist party, which calls itself a "coalition of the radical left," won the elections in 2015 with a program to resist austerity, but after five months of theatrics ended up implementing the dictates of the bankers. The PT during its 13 years running Brazil always faithfully implemented the neoliberal policies dictated by the imperialists. A hypothetical PT government with a PSOL-PCB appendage tacked on would do the same, only this time with even more insistence.

In any case, the same PSOL signed a manifesto of "Unity to Rebuild Brazil" together with the PT, PCdoB and two capitalist parties, the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) and the Democratic Labor Party (PDT) in February. The PSB coalesced the cacique (regional political boss) and governor of the state of Pernambuco, Miguel Arraes, then served as electoral vehicle for the governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Anthony Garotinho, and later for Eduardo Campos, the grandson of Arraes. The PDT, founded by Leonel Brizola with a populist ideology inherited from the Brazilian Labor Party of Jango Goulart, is represented today by the presidential candidate Ciro Gomes, who for several years was a director of the privatized National Steel Company (CSN). His vice-presidential candidate is Kátia Abreu, the "queen of the chain-saw," a faithful defender of agribusiness and head of the rural caucus in Congress. Thus the PT-PCdoB-PSB-PDT-PSOL bloc is a new *popular front of class collaboration*, which subordinates the labor movement and the left to the bourgeoisie.

The manifesto, which was further refined in July, praised "the achievements of the progressive cycle of the Lula and Dilma governments from 2003 to 2016." It pledges loyalty to the capitalist state, dubbed the "Democratic State of Law." Its talk of promoting a "culture of peace and enhancement of life" is contradicted by its promise to strengthen the repressive apparatus with the "modernization and strengthening of the Armed Forces." Its policy on "Public Security" (i.e., the police) is summarized as combining "prevention strategies" with "strategies of qualified coercion." It talks of the "emancipation of women," but says nothing about the right to abortion. It talks of "enhancement of labor", but does not promise to revoke the awful "Labor Reform." In short, its "rebuilt Brazil" will be the same old bourgeois state of capitalist exploitation, brutal repression and social oppression.

It is not surprising, then, that as the PSOL defends the PT governments of Lula and Dilma, voters prefer to vote for the PT directly, especially when thinking about casting a "useful vote" to defeat Bolsonaro. Thus in opinion polls in mid-September, preferences for PSOL candidate Boulos hovered around 0.4%. Esquerda Online (13 September), the site of the PSOL internal tendency Resistência, warns that "The Political Reform Can Cast PSOL Into Illegality." According to the publication, the constitutional amendment passed by the National Congress last year is a "hardening of the regime that will eliminate ideological parties such as PSOL, PCB, PCO and PSTU." Just how would it eliminate them? The new law has a "performance clause" which states that a slate must receive a minimum of 1.5% of the votes in elections for the House of Representatives in at least nine states in order to receive money from the Party Fund, along with and free radio and TV time. This would exclude almost all left slates. (The PSOL received 1.5% of the votes in the 2014 presidential election, the other parties much less.)

The LQB opposes this anti-democratic "reform" that certainly aims to preclude electoral campaigns of leftist parties, which are pejoratively called "midgets" by the bourgeois press. At the same time, we declare that every Marxist revolutionary should reject "public" party funding by the bosses' state. According to TSE accounting, PSOL received more than R\$12.5 million from the Party Fund in 2017 and R\$7.2 million in the first six months of 2018, plus another R\$21.4 million this year from the newly minted Electoral Fund for a total of over R\$40 million, or US\$10 million, a not insignificant sum.⁵ The anxieties expressed about possible "elimination" of PSOL come mainly from the fear of losing state funding if the vote for the slate falls below the 1.5% threshold. This underlines our warning that "a party that receives money from the capitalist state is a hostage of the bourgeoisie: its political campaign, and its very existence, depend on the good will of the apparatus which manages the af-

⁵ Sources: <http://www.justicaeleitoral.jus.br/arquivos/tse-distribuicao-do-fundo-partidar-io-2017> and <http://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/politica/noticia/2018-08/partidos-receberam-r-13-bilhao-para-financiar-campanha-eleitoral>. The PSTU received R\$2.4 million in 2017 and R\$1.3 million in the first six months of 2018. The PCO received a little over R\$1 million in 2017 and another R\$600,000 in the first half of 2018.

fairs of the bosses" ("Brazil: The Election Racket of the Bourgeoisie," *The Internationalist* No. 38, September-October 2014).

Within the PSOL there are some who are disgruntled over the campaign of Boulos and his vice-presidential running mate, Sônia Guajajara. Of the larger internal tendencies, in addition to Unidade Socialista, both Resistência and Insurgência now express full-throated support. Of the smaller currents, the LSR enthusiastically proclaims (24 August), "Let's Go with Boulos and Guajajara!"⁶ However, others like the Esquerda Marxista (Marxist Left)⁷ are more critical. EM objected to Boulos' statement that "it would be disrespectful" to present his candidacy "as an electoral alternative to Lula." It also criticizes the noxious influence of capitalist state funding on the PSOL leadership's maneuvers. Even so, EM states that "since Boulos was the candidate chosen by the party, we will be in the campaign defending our positions and making the necessary criticisms so that this candidacy is not an heir of *Lulismo*" (political resolution of the

⁶ The utter lack of a class outlook on the part of the LSR and its international tendency, the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) of Peter Taaffe, was shown by its applause for "AMLO's Historic Victory" in Mexico (2 July), that is, of the *populist bourgeois* politician Andrés Manuel López Obrador. In the United States, the LSR trumpeted "Socialist Victory Shakes the Establishment" (11 July), referring to the victory of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the *Democratic Party primary election*. The chief spokeswoman for the CWI affiliate in the US, Socialist Alternative, is Seattle city councilor Kshama Sawant, who recently *voted for the municipal police chief* (see "SAlt's Sawant Backs Seattle's Top Cop," *Revolution* No. 15, September 2018). For the CWI, as for the PSTU/LIT, policemen, the guard dogs of capital and iron fist of bourgeois repression, are supposedly "workers in uniform!"

⁷ Esquerda Marxista is affiliated with the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) of Alan Woods and joined the PSOL in 2015. Today it lectures about the need for the PSOL to break alliances with bourgeois parties, without mentioning its own long history in the O Trabalho tendency *within the PT* – when it led the *bourgeois popular-front government*. Or that in Mexico, its affiliate, Militante, was for many years part of the PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática), a bourgeois populist party. More recently, the Mexican section of the IMT, Izquierda Socialista (IS), welcomed AMLO's victory in the July 1 elections as a "political earthquake," a "tsunami" and an "insurrection at the polls" which meant a "great injection of morale, joy and confidence into their own forces." The IS characterizes the new government as "reformist" rather than bourgeois, criticizing leftists who "are upset at the triumph of AMLO," and states that "Our task, instead, is to support the progressive measures of AMLO" ("The Future Government of AMLO and the Tasks of the Marxists," 15 July). That is, Esquerda Marxista/IMT defends the same pro-bourgeois policy of Stalin and Kamenev that Lenin had to fight against in his famous "April Theses" in order to open the way to the October Revolution, whose centenary we celebrated last year.



At the height of the denunciations of corruption that dominated the bourgeois political scene in 2015-2016, the MRT campaign demanded that "Every politician should get paid the same as a woman teacher."

congress of Esquerda Marxista, 9 May). However, PSOL policy in these elections explicitly embraces the policy of *Lulismo*, and EM is campaigning for a class-collaborationist candidacy.

Undoubtedly, some will vote for PSOL thinking of Marielle Franco, the black city councilwoman who was murdered, along with her driver Anderson Gomes, due to her courageous denunciation of police massacres and the bloody military intervention in Rio de Janeiro (see "Racist Execution in Rio," *The Internationalist* No. 51, March-April 2018). Some of Marielle's close collaborators are running for office on the PSOL ticket in Rio. However, the fundamental fact is that the PSOL-PCB slate does not offer a means to express revolutionary opposition to capitalism, or even to give a strong class response to the bonapartist threat looming over the country. Every genuine Trotskyist must *oppose the PSOL candidacy* that forms part of the *bourgeois* alliance of the new *Lulista* popular front.

MRT

Another group that inhabits the wetlands bordering on the PSOL swamp is the Movimento Revolucionário de Trabalhadores (MRT – Revolutionary Workers Movement), the Brazilian section of the international Trotskyist Faction (FT), which publishes the *Esquerda Diário* site on the Internet. These right-centrists claim to have broken with the heritage of the tendency founded by Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno, from which they originated in a 1988 split, a year after the master's death. In particular, they say they reject Moreno's anti-Trotskyist strategy of fighting for a "democratic revolution," and not for socialist revolution. However, in practice, the FT and its Brazilian affiliate follow the "democraticist" and stagist politics inherited from Morenoism. They also continue its "frontist" practice of constantly making political blocs and electoral alliances. Instead of drawing a clear class line, they seek to push the policies of

the reformists to the left. Rather than fight directly to forge a revolutionary vanguard, the FT, faithful to the Morenoite tradition, always tries to position itself as a left wing of whatever is the latest movement in vogue.

In the current elections in Brazil, the MRT has rightly criticized the exclusion of Lula as presidential candidate by the action of the judiciary. “We do not support voting for the PT,” it writes, but it defends “the right of the people to decide who to vote for” (*Esquerda Diário*, 28 August). At the same time, the MRT has launched its own candidates in São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul *on the PSOL slate*, through a practice called “democratic affiliation.” Due to the undemocratic Brazilian electoral laws, they put candidates on the PSOL ticket, “without having a program in common with them” (“What Is Democratic Affiliation and Why Does MRT Use It?” *Esquerda Diário*, 6 August). However, even as it assures us that this “does not imply any political-programmatic agreement,” presenting itself in the PSOL ticket does imply certain political affinity. So naturally, at the last moment (October 5) the MRT called to vote for Boulos of the PSOL. We of the LQB, in contrast, clearly state that we do *not call to vote for this party* that is part of a *bourgeois popular front*.

If the practice of the Militant current (progenitor of both the LSR and EM currents in the PSOL) is to engage in long-term *entrism* in mass parties – reformist or even bourgeois – the trademark of the Morenoite tendency (which is the origin of the PSTU, of the MEC, CST and the bulk of Resistência in PSOL, and of the MRT) is to hitch a ride on assorted petty-bourgeois movements and strata. Thus, in Mexico, for some time the section of the FT called on the Zapatistas to call general strikes, lead election campaigns, etc. In Brazil, during the battle over impeachment, the MRT was caught between the PSTU (and the Conlutas labor federation it leads) that gave “left” support to the right-wing “Throw Out Dilma” campaign, and a PSOL that gave left cover to the dying popular front led by PT. Ultimately, the siren song of the popular front proved irresistible, and the MRT came out “against the coup.” Since there was no actual break with the parliamentary institutions, it adopted the PSOL line of an “institutional coup.”

As we wrote at the time, “The PT left (PT, PCdoB, PCO and smaller groups) has identified the offensive against President Dilma Rousseff as a ‘coup.’ In itself, impeachment does not signify a break in the bourgeois democratic ‘order.’” To be sure, the impeachment was fraudulent and was

aimed at intensifying the attacks on workers’ rights (which the PT governments had not been able to carry through to the end). But it was not the equivalent of a military takeover. Brazil has had 21 years of military dictatorship, and the removal of Dilma from the Palácio do Planalto was not the same as the overthrow of João Goulart. Pretending that impeachment by a corrupt congress, with all its low blows and dirty tricks, is the equivalent of a coup only embellishes capitalist “democracy.” The truth is that, as we wrote then, the course of the protests was a reflection of a “*sinister bonapartist revolt brewing in the repressive organs of power against civilian authority*,” and that the arbitrary arrest of Lula “was a notification on the part of the judicial and police apparatus that they were placing themselves above the representative and executive powers of the state.”⁸

That is why the LQB proclaimed at the time, “*No To Impeachment! For Workers Mobilization Against the Bourgeois Rightist Offensive – No Political Support to the Bourgeois Popular-Front Government*.” After impeachment won in August 2016, the authoritarian evolution of the regime continued under the command of President Temer. We are now in the midst of an election manipulated by the judiciary, with a ban on the candidate who would undoubtedly have been elected, with a military electoral slate (headed by ex-captain Bolsonaro and retired general Mourão) in the lead and threats from the armed forces chief of military intervention against “chaos” and to ensure “governability.” In the face of this menacing scenario, in which it can’t be ruled out that it could lead to a regime dominated by the repressive organs (military, police and judiciary), what is the response of the left? Apart from the PSTU puppets of the right wing, *the bulk of the opportunist left is lining up with a new edition of the popular front of Lula and Dilma*, the same regime that opened the way to the “coup.”

When the MRT adopts the talk of a

⁸ “For Class Struggle Against the Bonapartist Threat in Brazil,” *The Internationalist* No. 43, May-June 2016.



Petrograd Soviet, 1917. The soviets were not classless “organisms of direct democracy,” as the MRT claims, but organisms of workers democracy, which under revolutionary leadership became organs of proletarian power.

“coup,” it serves as the doorway for it to take up position in the environs of this class-collaborationist front. Of course these neo-Morenoists, because they are centrists, criticize the new PT-PCdoB-PDT-PSB-PSOL front. In an article, “A Programmatic Debate with the Platform VAMOS, Base of the Candidacy of Guilherme Boulos” (*Esquerda Diário*, 2 April), the MRT criticizes its “lack of independence” from the PT. It criticizes how PSOL uses the slogan of “Every Politician Should Earn the Same as a Teacher,” noting that “measures of radical democracy” if “taken in isolation” could even be used to breathe life into a dying capitalist regime. But the same can be said of how the MRT used the very same slogan in its own 2015-2016 campaign. In a polemic against the PSTU and PSOL, it cites the Paris Commune and Lenin’s *State and Revolution*, but in the videos and propaganda for popular consumption they presented it as an isolated measure, not a word about revolution.⁹

Or take the example of the MRT’s preferred slogan in the current election campaign: don’t pay the public debt. That this is a key issue for any fight to defend social programs and workers’ interests is clear when one considers that interest payments, amortization and debt refinancing total *almost 2 trillion reais* (about US\$500 million), or *more than 50% of the federal budget*.¹⁰ *Esquerda Diário*’s polemic against the VAMOS platform comments that measures envisaged in this platform, such as: “reversal of privatizations and nationalization of strategic sectors, or even a moderate measure like revising the interest on the foreign debt, would be met with deep speculative attacks against the national economy, capital flight, speculation against the currency, economic retaliation against Brazilian exports.” Therefore, the MRT writes, we need “a program for a revolution”. Exactly.

It’s just that such retaliatory measures

⁹ See <http://www.esquerdadiario.com.br/Campanha-Esquerda-Diario>.

¹⁰ Debt payment: R\$ 1.72 trillion, or 50.4% of total federal expenditures in 2017; R\$1.85 trillion, or 52.3% of the budgeted expenses for 2018, almost double the outlay for social assistance, social security, health and education. See <http://economiaetrabalho.com.br/2017/orcamento-com-a-divida-aumenta-r-500-bilhoes-3713-restante-do-orcamento-aumenta-r-819-bilhoes-511/>

by the imperialists would be even more forceful in the face of non-payment of the debt. When the Argentine government declared default in 2001 in order to restructure debt, international banks set up an economic boycott that did not stop until the Kirchner governments and finally Mauricio Macri agreed to pay the remaining total amount. But in the MRT campaigns in the current elections, you can watch a whole series of videos and electoral propaganda where there is no mention of revolution. The slogan is don’t pay, period. As we wrote in 2002:

“Thus in order to save the working people of Argentina from ruin, it is necessary not only to repudiate the foreign debt but also to expropriate the banks and the rest of the key companies in the country, something no capitalist government is about to do, whatever nationalist rhetoric it may employ. Even a revolutionary workers government would have enormous difficulty in the face of the inevitable reprisals by imperialism in carrying out these essential steps which require international socialist revolution.” –“Mass Upheaval Rocks Argentina, Brazilian Workers Movement Under Attack,” *The Internationalist* No. 13, May-June 2002

The MRT article criticizing the VAMOS platform refers to the “Manifesto to Rebuild Brazil” signed by PSOL together with the PT, PCdoB and the two bourgeois parties PSB and PDT. In April, the same parties signed, along with PCO and PCB, the Frente Brasil Popular and the Frente do Povo Sem Medo a “Manifesto for Democracy, National Sovereignty and Rights of the Brazilian People.” That Manifesto proclaims a “broad social front” to “defend democracy” and the “rule of law.”¹¹ Curiously, the MRT does not characterize this alliance by its proper name in the Marxist lexicon, a popular front. That would recall the lessons of how the Popular Unity of Salvador Allende, by blocking workers revolution, paved the way for Pinochet’s coup. We revolutionary Trotskyists refuse to vote for parties that are part of a popular front, a bourgeois political formation. But the MRT only refers to “a front like this,” without specifying its class character, and instead of opposing the PSOL, proposes an alternative front, such as the Front of Left

¹¹ “Opposition Parties Launch Manifesto In Defense Of Democracy” *Brasil de Fato*, April 18.



Symbols of the parties that in April signed the popular-front “Manifesto for Democracy, National Sovereignty and the Rights of the Brazilian People.”

and the Working People, or FIT, according to its initials in Spanish), in Argentina, “with a program for class independence and a government of the working people” (see our article, “The Left Front in Argentina: Reformist Electoral Cartel” at www.internationalist.org).

The Argentine FIT “points to an alternate road for the left,” writes the MRT. We’ll see. Let’s first consider the slogan of the “government of the working people” (*governo dos trabalhadores*). This is not a workers government (*governo operário*), or a workers and peasants government, which for Trotskyists (and for the Bolsheviks in 1917) represents “nothing more than the popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat” (Trotsky, *The Transitional Program*). For Marxists, the category of “working people” (*trabalhadores*) includes not only workers and poor peasants, but also broad sections of the petty bourgeoisie, and not just the poorest. In Brazil, the PT called its populist bourgeois government a “government of the working people.” Now let’s see how the MRT formulates the question. In a text analyzing the Manifesto for Democracy (*Esquerda Diário*, 19 April), it speaks of “imposing through the independent mobilization of the masses a Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly that would bring to bear the will of the exploited and oppressed majority of the country.” It then adds:

“This would be a huge step forward in the struggle for a government of the working people that breaks with capitalism, based on their organizations of direct democracy, since it would allow broad sectors of the masses to overcome the illusions they still hold in bourgeois democracy.”

This is a *stagiest conception* – first a (bourgeois) constituent assembly, later a government of the working people – as well as *democratizing*, trying to squeeze class issues into a (bourgeois) democratic framework: the soviets were organs of workers power, not just “direct democracy.”¹²

So what about “class independence”? The separation of a workers party from the parties and politicians of the bourgeoisie is the basis of all proletarian politics, as Marx underscored back in 1871. But it is only the starting point. A reformist workers party (what Lenin called a “bourgeois workers party”) may claim to be independent, competing for elections without alliances with bourgeois parties. This is what the British Labor Party and some European social-democratic parties usually do. However, in this era of decaying imperialism, when past gains are being systematically destroyed, a policy of reform is doomed to failure. Thus a reformist electoral front like the Argentine FIT cannot advance the struggles of the workers and the oppressed. That requires a revolutionary workers party, whose program is openly directed at the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the seizure of power by the proletariat and its allies. The campaigns of the Trotskyist Fraction, in contrast, are centered on democratic demands, such as their “Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly,” when it’s necessary to fight for a government based on workers councils.

All the electoral politics of the MRT, and of the FT in general, stem from this

“democratic” approach, derived from Morenoism. Instead of combatting the PSOL as an obstacle to the struggle for the socialist revolution, they make “fraternal” suggestions that it should call for non-payment of the public debt, or a constituent assembly. Or that PSOL should call for “recall of all senior posts, an end to privileges, that every politician or state official should earn the same as a teacher or skilled worker,” all in the interest of ... “a true democracy.” So there is a certain logic for MRT candidacies running on the PSOL ticket. Let’s not forget that the MRT applied for admission into the ranks of this popular-frontist and social-democratic party to form another of the more than a dozen internal tendencies. It was only left out in the cold due to the rejection by the PSOL leadership, which ever since the impeachment battle has been increasingly pulled into the orbit of *Lulaism*. The MRT seeks to pressure the popular-frontists, positioning itself one step to the left. In this way it, too, revolves around the PT, as an “external tendency of PSOL.”

The reasoning of these neo-Morenoite pseudo-Trotskyists is that brandishing a series of democratic demands would serve to reveal the limits of bourgeois democracy. But *with their democratist politics they are creating democratic illusions*. What’s true is that for most working people their present consciousness does not go beyond reforming the capitalist system, and this in the midst of a furious media campaign against “corruption.” That campaign is fanned by the corrupt bourgeois right-wing, and orchestrated by sinister forces of the judiciary and the military/police apparatus. It aims to crush the PT, worn down through 13 years in power defending the profits of the banks and the interests of the bosses to the detriment of the rights of the workers that it claims to represent. But rather than having vivid democratic illusions, working people instead tend to be disillusioned with the misleading promises of bourgeois “democracy” (what the MRT calls “democracy of the rich,” a populist, not a class formulation). To claim to rectify the system of bribes and vote buying, which are endemic in Brazilian politics, by reducing the salaries of members of Congress and judges is absurd. It will take a revolution.

Moreover, with its “democratist” campaigns, the MRT participates in the “anti-corruption” offensive *fueled by imperialism*, as do the PT, PSOL, PSTU and almost the entire left. That offensive is orchestrated by the United States, with training of judges such as Sérgio Moro (Lava Jato) and the multifaceted network of U.S.-funded consultancies, observatories and other NGOs to monitor the “transparency” of governments, issue certificates of “clean elections,” and the like. But “corruption” is inherent in capitalism. As we wrote during the *mensalão* scandal (of monthly payoffs to the PT’s bourgeois allies in Congress):

“Corruption is a constant in bourgeois politics. It is the axle grease that makes the gears of the capitalist state machinery function, so that the government of the day can serve as the executive committee of the ruling class, meshing the interests of its different factions. It particularly annoys the ‘proper’ petty bourgeoisie and social-democratic reformists because it reveals the dirty reality behind the mythology of the ‘neutrality’ of the state, providing concrete proof of how this state defends the interests of



The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista insists that the struggle for women’s rights requires class struggle against both the right and the popular-front left. Forge a revolutionary workers party!

capital, not of ‘everyone’....

“Revolutionaries are not shocked by corruption in politics, because we know that this is an integral part of the capitalist system that we combat in all its facets. We denounce all capitalist financing of a workers party, whether illegal or legal under bourgeois law, as well as opposing ‘public’ financing, which is nothing but a mechanism for controlling the recipients of the funds.”

–“Lula Against the Workers – Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!” *The Internationalist*, May 2006

Today the MRT criticizes the PT for having voted for the *Ficha Limpa* (Clean Slate) law, which was then used to bar Lula from the election contest. However, the PSOL (on whose ticket the MRT candidates are running) was the champion of *Ficha Limpa*, with PSOL deputy Chico Alencar being the staunchest defender of this law that gives the bourgeois judiciary a dictatorial power over who can be a candidate. The MRT in the past characterized the *Ficha Limpa* as a “popular achievement.” But *the MRT does not criticize the financing of parties by the capitalist government*, which gives it decisive power over the election activity of the left. And, of course, the FIT in Argentina finances its electoral campaigns with funds from the state.

As for the crowning demand of the democratic program of the MRT, the Constituent Assembly, such a bourgeois body would not solve anything of the oppression of the workers and the poor, which is a matter of *class domination*. The 1988 constitution was negotiated under the pressure of the military, and because of that pressure contains Article 142 that allows for military intervention at the request of “constitutional powers” (executive, legislative or judicial). What makes one think that in the present political conditions a new constituent assembly would result in a more democratic constitution, free of military tutelage? Or that it would prevent privatization “reforms”? Or that it would legislate the unrestricted right of women to free abortion on demand? The PT itself, in

its program of government, calls for a new “constituent, free, democratic, sovereign and unicameral national assembly.” It is an ABC of Trotskyism and the theory of permanent revolution that in our imperialist era of decaying capitalism even the most basic democratic rights can only be won by the proletariat’s seizure of power and the international socialist revolution.

And this has to be made explicit at all times. If not, as the MRT does in its campaigns, one would be peddling lies and illusions. These centrists are not naive, they don’t believe that their new imagined constituent assembly would result in such bountiful democratic conquests. What they think is that by fighting for these demands and being defeated, the masses would then become radicalized. In a recent article (“We Fight for a Constituent Assembly to Confront the Institutional Coup,” *Esquerda Diário*, 28 September), the MRT writes that seeing that “any measure really favorable to the interests of the majority of the population” is blocked would be “an experience that will advance the understanding of the need to fight for a government of the working people that breaks with capitalism.” Aside from the cynicism of appealing for something knowing that it will fail, this is a bad method. The primary reaction to such a defeat would be disappointment and demoralization.

In addition to the particular programs of the leftist parties in these elections, what stands out is the electoralist nature of their campaigns. Every two or four years, the left loses interest in workers’ struggles to instead focus on electioneering. And when a struggle arises, such as the truckers’ strike last May, much of the left approaches it from a purely electoral perspective (in this case, by dismissing the strike as a “lockout” and rightist maneuver). The axis of the “electoral” program of any authentic revolutionary Trotskyist would be to intensify the mobilization of the working people and the poor. *This* should be the powerful response to the bourgeoisie’s attacks on our rights, against the militaristic danger, and against these elections. ■

¹² On the policy of the Trotskyist Fraction of calling for constituent assemblies almost everywhere on the planet, see our article, “Trotskyism vs. ‘Constituent Assembly’ Mania,” in *The Internationalist* No. 27, May-June 2008.

Unite with Dominican and U.S. Workers to Defeat Imperialist Attack!

Revolt in Haiti Against IMF-Dictated Austerity

AUGUST 2018 – At 4 p.m. on Friday, July 6 while Haitians watched the World Cup of soccer on television, the right-wing government of Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant announced that, effective the next day, it was raising the price of gasoline by 38%, diesel fuel by 47% and kerosene by 51%. Kerosene is used for lighting and cooking by Haiti's poor, most of whom do not have access to electricity. This massive price hike would result in a huge increase in the cost of living anywhere in the world, but in Haiti, a deeply impoverished country with widespread malnutrition, it spells disaster for several million people living on the edge of survival. And it was ordered straight from Washington, where the virulently racist U.S. president declared Haiti a "shithole country."

To no one's surprise but that of Haiti's government and its imperialist overlords in the U.S., the country exploded in protest. Two days of flaming barricades rattled the tiny ruling class as angry crowds besieged upscale hotels, burned cars, gas stations and banks, and sacked a chain of supermarkets owned by the wealthiest family in Haiti. Some of the rich were evacuated from their rooftops by helicopter. In less than 24 hours, by the afternoon of July 7, Lafontant announced the "suspension" of the fuel price hike "until further notice," later confirmed by President Jovenel Moïse. But that didn't stop the popular uprising, as a general strike shut down transportation nationwide. It was the biggest upheaval in Haiti in years.

The raising of fuel prices was dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the international bankers' cartel, as part of a deal reached in February with the Haitian government for a "staff-monitored program." In exchange for promises of \$96 million in loans, the IMF demanded cuts to fuel and electricity "subsidies" and further privatization of Electricité d'Haiti, the state electric utility. These are the same brutal austerity policies that the IMF and other imperialist institutions like the World Bank and the European Central Bank have regularly imposed on countries in difficult economic straits, from Latin America to Greece.

The cynicism of the operation was stunning. In preparation, at a cost of millions of dollars the government distributed 3,000 large (65-inch) and expensive flat-screen television monitors to every senator and deputy (a little under 20 TVs each), supposedly so that in every town and village people could watch the World Cup. The Moïse/Lafontant government figured that, with all of Haiti rooting for Brazil – the powerhouse of world soccer – in its match with tiny Belgium, the masses wouldn't pay attention to the fuel price hike in the euphoria after Brazil's predictable victory. But to everyone's surprise, Brazil lost. Big miscalculation.

Within minutes of Brazil's defeat, enraged Haitians took to the streets in protest. Massive crowds erupted in the capital, Port-au-Prince, spreading to the cities of



Protesters build barricade in street of Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, on July 7 during rebellion against fuel price hikes ordered by imperialist agencies.

Les Cayes, Cap-Haïtien, Jérémie, and Petit-Goâve. Barricades of burning tires and vehicles on the roads shut down transportation. The police were ordered to suppress the upheaval, but, overwhelmed by the size and militancy of the protests, they retreated, leaving the crowds in control of the streets. International telephone and internet service was disrupted and all flights in and out of Toussaint Louverture International Airport were cancelled. A small contingent of Marines arrived to stand guard at the U.S. embassy. Several people were killed, and in coming days over 100 arrested.

As the rebellion continued the next day and the government backed down, protesters demanded more. A coordinating committee composed of transportation unions and social organizations called a general strike on July 9 and 10. Demands of the strike included: permanent suspension of the fuel price hike; reinstatement of workers fired from state-owned companies; the arrest of corrupt officials implicated in the theft of funds from the Petrocaribe program, in which Venezuela provided oil to Caribbean countries on favorable terms; and the ouster of both Lafontant and Moïse. Protesters marched on parliament, where they were stopped by police.

Meanwhile, the Private Sector Economic Forum, representing Haiti's capitalists, denounced the "barbarity" of the masses in revolt, even as it called for the resignation of the prime minister. The Haitian legislature, hoping to demobilize the protests and restore bourgeois order, prepared to remove Lafontant through a vote of no confidence. The "Core Group" of the U.S., Canadian and European ambassadors demanded that Haitians "respect the constitutional order" – i.e., the prime minister can go but the president must stay. Finally, in the midst of a heated legislative debate on July 14, Lafontant suddenly announced that he had already resigned.

But nothing has changed that will restore stability. Even after the revolt, the IMF is insisting on an end to "fuel subsidies," to be implemented more gradually.

Yet fuel prices in Haiti are not subsidized. Even at the current average price of roughly \$70 per barrel of crude oil (up sharply from \$43 a year ago), the production, refining and distribution cost of gasoline is around \$2.50 a gallon. The current price per gallon to users in Haiti is US\$3.45 (compared to \$2.99 in the U.S.). With the IMF-ordered "adjustment," that would have risen to \$4.75 a gallon, in a country where the top minimum wage is \$5.15 a day and half the population lives on less than \$2.40 a day.¹

Imagine paying almost a *full day's wage* to pay for a gallon of gasoline, or of kerosene for cooking and lighting! The fuel price increases would also raise bus fares. The *Miami Herald* (13 July) calculated that: "A domestic worker with two children, for example, who makes the daily \$4.39 minimum salary and lives in the city of Petionville, would spend almost half of her daily wages just to get the children to and from school at a cost of \$1.82." To deal with that, the geniuses at the IMF called for "compensatory mechanisms" like transportation vouchers for the poor. But Haiti has no apparatus to distribute such vouchers (which would, of course, soon be counterfeited), nor to force bus operators to accept them, which they wouldn't.

What this is all about is the financial dictators of the IMF imposing an additional tax of 85 gourdes (Haiti's currency), or the equivalent of 1 € (euro), or US\$1.30 per gallon on fuel in order to increase government revenue by US\$160 million. This is almost exactly the size of its budget deficit. Other measures could have been taken instead. An article by the Haiti Relief and Reconstruction Watch of the liberal Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, noted: "For example, last year, Haiti lost almost the exact same amount of money from tax exemptions granted to free trade zones, businesses, NGOs and diplomatic missions."² This is

¹ In contrast, in Venezuela, where there is a huge fuel subsidy, the price for gasoline at the pump is roughly US\$0.12 per gallon.

² Jake Johnston, "Own Goal: Fuel Price Increase

a deliberate, massive attack on the living standards of the poor and working people.

And increased government revenue will surely not finance "badly needed public investments and a better social safety net," as an IMF spokesman claimed. This was driven home by a report of a parliamentary investigation last November that some US\$3.8 billion in the Petrocaribe program, loaned funds from Venezuela's state oil company intended for infrastructure and other development, was mostly embezzled by Haitian politicians and officials, as well as scamming business owners. The accused include two former prime ministers. Such corruption has been business-as-usual among Haiti's rulers, but particularly since the July uprising against the fuel price hikes, an anti-corruption campaign called #petrocaribechallenge has taken off.

Already before the current revolt, Haiti was simmering with protests against rising food and transportation costs and for higher wages. As Kim Ives reported in *Haiti Liberté* (11 July), the Kreyòl watchword of the revolt was "*nou bouke*," meaning "we are fed up." Last year, garment workers' unions waged militant strikes calling to more than double the minimum wage.³ The minimum wage in Haiti is set at various levels for different types of workers – the highest rate being 350 gourdes (US\$5.15) per day, which is a little over 50 cents an hour for a ten-hour day. In 2009, Hillary Clinton, Obama's Secretary of State, directly intervened to stop a proposed increase in the minimum wage in Haiti.⁴

Wage increases have been fought by President Moïse, who is a puppet of U.S. imperialism. A banana plantation owner, Moïse was elected in a 2016 election farce (financed by the Obama administration) in which less than one in five Haitians voted, following 2015 elections that were scrapped due to massive fraud. Moïse was the candidate of the Haitian Bald-Headed Party (PHTK) and hand-picked successor to pop singer Michel "Sweet Micky" Martelly, who in his younger days was a supporter of the bloody, U.S.-backed Duvalier dictatorship (1957-86), and later continued to maintain ties to Duvalierist coup plotters.⁵ Martelly won the presidency in 2011 after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton intervened to change the election results. Clinton threatened that if Martelly was not inserted into the runoff election the U.S. would withhold relief funds – in the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake!

Martelly repaid the Clintons (Bill was designated as Haiti's colonial overseer by *Generates Crisis in Haiti*, CEPR, 11 July.

³ See "Haitian Workers Brave Repression in Fight Against Starvation Wages," *Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.

⁴ See "Haiti: Battle Over Starvation Wages and Neocolonial Occupation," *The Internationalist* No. 30, November-December 2009.

⁵ Including the late Haitian Army colonel, national police chief and kingpin of the 1991 and 2004 coups, Michel François, also known as "Sweet Micky."



Internationalist demonstrators at 2016 protest outside U.S. mission to the U.N. against deportation of Haitians.



Garment workers of SOTA union march on May Day 2018. To defeat imperialist-dictated austerity it is necessary to mobilize workers power, from Haiti to the Dominican Republic and the U.S.

the United Nations in 2009) with support to the interests of foreign investors as well as imperialist military occupation. In 2012, Martelly and the Clintons held a glitzy ceremony celebrating their “great achievement,” the opening of the Caracol industrial park, which houses textile sweatshops and was built through diverting earthquake relief funds. During the 2016 presidential election campaign, Donald Trump declared, accurately: “Hillary Clinton set aside environmental and labor rules to help a South Korean company with a record of violating workers’ rights set up what amounts to a sweatshop in Haiti.”⁶

One reason protesters could dominate Haiti’s streets for four days is that United Nations MINUSTAH troops were withdrawn last October. The 13-year (2004-17) military occupation by U.N. “blue berets,” acting as mercenaries for the U.S. under Brazilian command, was notorious not just for repression of popular struggles but also for sexual assaults against Haitian women and men. Amid the devastation after the 2010 earthquake, United Nations troops introduced cholera to Haiti in the deadliest epidemic in recent history, an ongoing tragedy that has killed almost 10,000 Haitians and sickened over 800,000. Finally acknowledging responsibility in 2016, the U.N. has provided almost no compensation to its victims.

Today the MINUSTAH has been replaced by MINUJUSTH, which has brought in hundreds of police to beef up Haiti’s National Police. Meanwhile, the month after U.N. troops departed, President Moïse refounded the Haitian Armed Forces (FADH). In mid-March, the names of the Army high command were announced, all of whom were former officers of the FADH before it was disbanded in 1995 (by U.S. occupation forces). Of the six, three were leading members of the early 1990s military junta, one was the mastermind of the notorious 1994 Raboteau massacre and a fifth helped cover it up.⁷ Now, following the July uprising, army and police commanders have been meeting with the president to plan for heavy-duty repression of the next revolt.

The United States itself has sent in troops to Haiti many times since 1891,

including the 1915-34 occupation and the 1994 invasion ordered by the Clinton administration to reinstall the former priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president – after Aristide agreed to ditch his populist program in favor of U.S.-approved “structural reform.” His Fanmi Lavalas party retains some populist tinge, but it is a party of a wing of the bourgeoisie, including Aristide. Petty-bourgeois leftists in Haiti and the U.S. have tailed after Aristide for decades. Following the January 2010 earthquake, the Obama administration sent troops again to take over Haiti while blocking Haitian refugees at sea, with Bill Clinton as U.N. plenipotentiary and de facto *gouverneur*.⁸

The July uprising staved off the imposition of the IMF-dictated fuel price hike ... for now. But given the powerful array of forces determined to keep Haiti under the imperialist boot, the Haitian masses cannot win on their own. Nor are they alone in experiencing the depredations of decaying capitalism and its “neo-liberal” policies of “free trade,” privatization and destruction of social and labor gains. In January 2017 Mexican truckers struck against fuel price increases imposed as part of an imperialist-ordered “energy reform.”⁹ And this past May, truckers in Brazil revolted against the unelected government’s attempt to raise diesel fuel prices to international levels.¹⁰ In both cases, the government backed off, temporarily.

If, however, as the Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico and the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, sections of the League for the Fourth International, called for, a powerful independent workers

⁸ Shamefully, the ex-Trotskyist Spartacist League and its International Communist League (SL/ICL) hailed the U.S. invasion as humanitarian aid. After three months of vociferously defending this grotesque support for imperialism, and denouncing the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International for our Leninist demand that the Yankee occupiers get out, the centrist SL/ICL did an about-face and agreed with our characterization of their line as a *social-imperialist betrayal*. See “Spartacist League Backs U.S. Imperialist Invasion of Haiti” (January 2010), “SL Twists and Turns on Haiti” (April 2010) and “Repentant Social Imperialists: Open Letter from the Internationalist Group to the Spartacist League and ICL” (May 2010) in *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010.

⁹ See “For Workers Mobilization to Smash the Gasolinazo!” *The Internationalist* No. 46, January-February 2017.

¹⁰ See “Brazil Truckers Strike: Oil Workers Should Take the Lead to Ensure Proletarian Leadership,” *The Internationalist* No. 42, May-June 2018.

movement had taken over leadership of the largely petty-bourgeois protests, they could have dealt a heavy defeat to the imperialist-backed privatizers. This, in turn, could have launched a proletarian counteroffensive against the privatizers and tax gougers in Washington (IMF, IADB, IBRD, World Bank) and Wall Street. Building proletarian opposition in major industrial countries is how to stop the arrogant imperialist economists from foisting their “soak the poor” policies on Haiti. But such a *class* struggle requires *revolutionary internationalist* leadership.

That should begin by joining together with workers next door in the Dominican Republic, where there have been numerous (unsuccessful) strikes against fuel price hikes, and where the gasoline price at the pump is currently around US\$4.80 a gallon. Haiti – home of the only successful slave revolution in history, overthrowing French rule at the end of the 18th century – shares the island of Quisqueya (Hispaniola) with the DR. Both have populations of around 10 million, both are mired in poverty (Haiti much more so) and both have been repeatedly occupied by the Yankee imperialists. But for Dominican and Haitian workers to unite requires a head-on struggle against the virulent anti-Haitian racism that has poisoned Dominican politics for years.

Instigated by the U.S., which brought Haitians into the Dominican Republic to work on the sugar plantations in the 1920s when both countries were occupied by U.S. expeditionary forces, Haitian immigrants and descendants of immigrants number up to a million people, one-tenth of the Dominican population. In 2015, the Dominican government began a program of deportation and enacted a racist nationality law that deprived citizenship to hundreds of thousands of Haitians. In the first six months of this year alone, 70,000 thousand Haitians were deported from the DR. In 2015, the League for the Fourth International called an emergency protest and campaigned for Haitian/Dominican workers solidarity against the mass expulsions.¹¹

Above all, it is necessary to wage the struggle against imperialism inside the United States, where there are hundreds of thousands of Dominican and Haitian immigrants. In fact, in 2017 the Haitian diaspora sent US\$2.4 billion back to the island,

making it Haiti’s single largest source of revenue. Last November, the U.S. Trump administration announced that it was stripping Haitian refugees (and refugees from Central America and Sudan) of Temporary Protected Status, forcing tens of thousands of Haitians in the U.S. to fear that they will be seized by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement cops.¹² Trump’s policy is a follow-up to Obama’s 2016 policy of stopping Haitian refugees, who had travelled from Brazil across nine countries, at the Mexican border, to be flown back to Haiti. At the time, the LFI held protests in Brazil, Mexico and the U.S.¹³

Today, the rightist majority and rightist opposition in Haiti’s legislature have yet to approve Moïse’s nominee for prime minister (Jean-Henry Céant, a former Aristidiste turncoat). The hot shots at the IMF are waiting for their next opportunity to strike. In the aftermath of the July revolt, even left populists point to the absence of, and urgent need for, “important class organizations” and a “vanguard party” to realize the potential of a “popular insurrectionary breakthrough” (*Haiti Liberté*, 29 August). But a party to lead a *proletarian* fight for a workers and peasants governments in Haiti and the DR, and for a socialist federation of the Caribbean, must be built *internationally*. As we wrote on the workers’ strikes last year (*The Internationalist* No. 48):

“In the face of the colossus of Yankee imperialism, whether the immediate struggle is against starvation wages, racist immigration laws, or repression by imperialist occupiers, the poor and working people of Haiti must not stand alone. The small Haitian proletariat must join with workers across the border in the Dominican Republic and inside the United States to wage a common class struggle. As the Russian Bolshevik Leon Trotsky explained in his theory and program of *permanent revolution*, in this epoch of decaying capitalism, even to achieve basic democratic gains, it is necessary for the working class to take power and spread the socialist revolution to the imperialist centers. At every turn, the key is to forge a *proletarian, internationalist and revolutionary leadership*.” ■

¹² See “Let Haitians Stay! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!” *The Internationalist*, January 2018.

¹³ See “Stop Exclusion of Haitians! Stop All Deportations! Occupation Troops Out of Haiti!” *The Internationalist* No. 45, September-October 2016.

Socialist Alternative Is No Place for Revolutionaries

Statement of Resignation by Alice M. (Spokane)

We reprint below the letter of resignation from Socialist Alternative by Alice M., who after joining SAlt as a high-school activist became a leading member of its branch in Spokane, Washington. SAlt, which politically supports the Committee for a Workers International led by British pseudo-Trotskyist Peter Taaffe, is best known for its Seattle City Council member Kshama Sawant and its promotion of illusions in the so-called “political revolution” of Bernie Sanders. This has led to considerable internal turmoil; see documents by former SAlt members who went on to fuse with the Internationalist Group: “An Open Letter to Socialist Alternative Oppositionists, Past and Present” and “Class Struggle Education League Fuses with Internationalist Group” (*The Internationalist* No. 52, May-June 2018). Alice M. and others have formed the Spokane Marxist Group, which has declared its sympathy with “the programmatic heritage embodied today in the Internationalist Group (IG), U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International.”

October 30, 2018

The 2018 National Convention of Socialist Alternative, held from the 20th to the 22nd of October in Chicago, has given its stamp of approval to the organization’s increasingly open support to Democratic and other capitalist politicians. Together with this, it has upheld – explicitly or through silence – other manifestations of SA’s increasingly blatant class-collaboration. The convention has definitively shown that Socialist Alternative stands on positions and actions that are completely counterposed to Marxist principles. The organization’s claims to uphold those principles are clearly and obviously false. Yet today, fighting for the principles and program of revolutionary Marxism is more urgent than ever.

I joined SA during my sophomore year

of high school, and worked intensively to help build the Spokane branch, because I had decided to devote myself to the cause of international socialist revolution. Today, however, it is clear as day that loyalty to that cause means opposing the kind of politics exemplified by:

- Socialist Alternative continuing and deepening its “Bern Turn” (promotion of Bernie Sanders’ campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination), by backing and promoting a whole range of so-called “left Democrats.” This goes together with tailing the Democratic Socialists of America’s drive to rejuvenate U.S. capitalism’s Democratic Party of imperialist war and racist police murder. All of this goes directly against the most basic Marxist principle of political independence of the working class, as discussed further below.
- The vote by SA’s Seattle City Council member Kshama Sawant to confirm the city’s new Chief of Police. The police are the armed fist of the ruling class. It is outrageous and intolerable that a “socialist” organization would vote for the head of this repressive apparatus. Upholding this vote, remaining silent on it, or just raising “tactical” objections (as SA’s former Minority Group did) can only bring discredit to socialism for workers and youth fed up with capitalism’s whole system of racist police terror. This too goes hand in hand with SA’s increasing collaboration with the Democrats.
- SA’s grotesque call during the recent national prison strike for the prisoners to unite with their jailers – to form a “unified group” with what SA calls “workers within the prisons” (socialistalternative.org, August 29). Prison guards, like the police, immi-



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.



Nuccio DiNuzzo/Chicago Tribune

gration cops, etc., are not workers but part of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state. When labor bureaucrats bring them into the unions, this is part of the subjugation of the labor movement to the bosses’ state. Instead of fighting for their ouster from the unions, SA is calling to “unite” with capitalism’s armed guardians.

These positions and actions are the opposite of everything revolutionaries should be fighting for. As shown below, they are far from isolated events. What they represent is not Trotskyism but the politics of social democracy. What the National Convention has underlined is that Socialist Alternative is no place for revolutionaries. For this reason, I hereby state my resignation from Socialist Alternative (SA) and the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) which it politically supports.

In the rest of this statement, I would like to develop these points. When I joined SA, I was won over to what I thought was an organization representing the authentic programmatic heritage of Lenin, Trotsky, and James P. Cannon, the founder of U.S. Trotskyism. I believed sincerely that the Committee for a Workers’ International was the vehicle for international socialist revolution, the twenty-first century continuation of the Fourth International (which was unfortunately destroyed by Pabloite revisionism in the 1950s).

I helped organize demonstrations, recruited, attended national functions, and did everything I could to help ensure that Socialist Alternative had an active and functional presence in Spokane. A notable example was the July 7, 2018 “No More Racist Deportations!” protest at the Spokane Intermodal Center, a joint Amtrak-Greyhound bus station. The Spokane Intermodal Center has been the site of large numbers of detentions and searches by ICE and the Border Patrol. In the face of escalating attacks on immigrants nationwide, and in accordance with the principle of international working-class solidarity, the Spokane branch resolved to act. Speaking on behalf of our branch at Spokane’s 2018 May Day march, I raised the idea of occupying the Intermodal Center bus station. This led to the organizing process for the July 7th protest.

What happened next sheds an interesting light on issues and disputes in SA. Numbering 80 people, the demonstration

in defense of immigrants culminated in a two-hour occupation of the bus station. The lead-up to this did not fit at all with the picture presented by SA leaders, that the alternative is either “sectarian” self-isolation or opportunistically tailing Democrats, the DSA, etc., as they do. The flier I wrote for the demonstration straightforwardly pointed out that “All parties of the ruling class, including the Democrats, are an obstacle to the class struggle and the defense of immigrants and must be opposed.” I was also assigned to contact other organizations; the protest was endorsed by Spokane DSA and Bridges Not Walls (a local group opposing Islamophobia), and was also attended by members of the Peace and Justice Action League and Veterans for Peace.

The protest was a small but relevant example of how militant united-front action on a principled basis is a far cry from spreading illusions in bourgeois politicians who seek to “renew” and refurbish the party that carried out a record number of deportations during the Obama/Hillary Clinton administration.

The experience provided further fuel for the reevaluation sparked over the course of 2018 as I noticed increasingly blatant expressions of an orientation and perspective counterposed to revolutionary Marxist politics. This trajectory was dramatically shown in SA’s “Bern Turn,” though as I would eventually learn, its origins go much further back.

In August of this year, I drafted a document together with a close supporter of the Spokane branch, Andrew C. (who was later denied membership on a political basis). Entitled “Revolutionary Marxism Is Based on the Political Independence of the Working Class,” it contrasted some of the most fundamental points of Marxism to SA’s policy of tailing and backing not only Democratic candidates but those of other, smaller bourgeois parties. The document was submitted for inclusion in one of the pre-convention Members’ Bulletins. However, the leadership refused to publish it (with pretexts discussed in the document’s introduction). I continue to believe that the arguments in that document are important for SA members to read for themselves.

Disgusted by SA’s fawning over Bernie Sanders and other Democrats, I looked more deeply into its history and other anti-Marxist positions. Among them:

- SA’s embrace of populist “99%” ver-

Facebook



“No More Racist Deportations” protest at Spokane Intermodal Center, July 7.

biage, which cuts against the basics of Marxist class politics.

- SA's latching on to and tailing of the renewed push for "gun control" laws, which are a weapon of the ruling class against black people above all. SA had recognized the racist, anti-labor nature of gun control. Yet SA tailed after protests, hailed by the Democrats, after the Parkland mass shooting. It advocated "limited gun control measures," stating that "The only areas where there are forcible attempts by the police to disarm people are public housing projects in the inner cities" (socialistalternative.org, 5 December 2017).
- The CWI's aiding and abetting of Yeltsinite counter-revolution in the former USSR, and subsequent failure to defend still-existing deformed workers states against imperialism.
- Class-collaborationist positions on burning issues in Latin America, exemplified today by Izquierda Revolucionaria (Mexico) supporting bourgeois populist Andrés Manuel López Obrador (IR even called on AMLO to "implement a socialist program") and Liberdade, Socialismo e Revolução (Brazil) calling to vote for the PT-led popular front. These too are violations of the key principle of the political independence of the working class and the historic opposition of the Trotskyist movement to popular fronts, which serve to chain the workers to the bourgeoisie, crippling real struggle against reactionary threats.

Earlier this year, I read "Where We Come From and Where We Are Going" (January 2018) and "An Open Letter to Socialist Alternative Oppositionists, Past and Present" (May 2018), by former SA members in New England who at the time composed the Class Struggle Education League (CSEL), which went on to fuse with the Internationalist Group (IG). I also attended the joint CSEL-IG panel at this year's Left Forum held in New York City, titled "Revolutionary Regroupment vs. 'Sanders Socialism'."

This was a wake-up call. It became clear to me that the political positions I had come to oppose were not isolated deviations, but blatant manifestations of a fundamentally anti-Marxist perspective. SA and the CWI do not represent the revolutionary continuity of the international communist movement, but its trampling in favor of movementist cheerleading for bourgeois politicians, populists, and social democrats.

Subsequent to the Executive Committee's refusal to circulate the document Andrew and I had drafted, we began to distribute it on an individual-to-individual and branch-to-branch basis to the best of our ability. After having a few conversations with comrades from different branches, I made contact with the loose, Worcester-centered opposition grouping that called itself "Independent Class Power." This group of comrades sought to oppose the SA majority's class-collaborationist turn, and submitted a number of resolutions attempting to correct the organization's orientation and perspective in accordance with their political positions.

I engaged in discussions with these comrades, but found that their perspectives had not gotten to the root of SA's increasingly rightward trajectory. These comrades, by and large, did not question SA's support

for bourgeois "third-party" candidates, including the immigrant-bashing capitalist politician Ralph Nader. Much of the opposition these comrades expressed to SA's support for Cynthia Nixon posited supporting Howie Hawkins, the candidate of the "progressive" bourgeois Green Party, as an alternative. Documents drafted by many of these comrades also accepted and supported the notion of calling on Bernie Sanders to run as an "independent," arguing that the leadership of SA had just strayed too far into the orbit of the Democratic Party. Such an "independent" bourgeois candidacy would in reality be aimed at pressuring the Democrats. But in any case, the fundamental question is not how many bourgeois parties and candidates there are, but the need for *class* opposition to *all* bourgeois politicians and parties. Again, as Marx put it (in a famous phrase discussed in our August document), the workers must never be "the tagtail of any bourgeois party."

James P. Cannon developed this point in the U.S. context. He strongly opposed the kind of approach put forward by comrades in Worcester and their supporters in other branches regarding Sanders, Nader, and other "independent" bourgeois politicians. This is some of what Cannon said, when quite a few self-described Marxists urged support for the 1948 "third-party" campaign of FDR's former Vice President Henry Wallace:

"The Wallace party must be opposed and denounced by every class criterion. In the first place it is programmatically completely bourgeois.... Its differences with the Republican and Democratic parties are purely tactical. *There is not a trace of a principled difference anywhere. And by principled difference I mean a class difference....* Bourgeois parties are not the arena for our operation. *Our specific task is the class mobilization of the workers against not only the two old parties, but any other capitalist parties which might appear.*" ("On the 1948 Wallace Campaign"; emphasis added. I would urge everyone to read the entire document, as it addresses many arguments we still hear today.)

Another opposition current emerged in SA prior to Independent Class Power: the "Minority Group" centered around Philip L. and Stephan K. The politics of this group, which left shortly before the conference, are of the same fundamental character as those held by the SA majority: class-collaborationist and opportunist. Whereas the majority holds that SA should cheerlead the DSA and "left Democrats," and perhaps send a few members into the DSA to test the waters, the Minority Group held that SA should enter/liquidate into the DSA in order to build a "revolutionary wing" of what the Worcester branch rightly recognized as an organization which has a "dream of becoming the 'Left wing' of the Democratic Party," and provide even more active and blatant support for figures such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Cynthia Nixon.

Again and again we hear the claim that tailing bourgeois candidates (whether Sanders, "AOC," Julia Salazar, etc. and/or those of bourgeois third parties) is necessary in order to "engage" with youth and workers enthused by them, drawn into the DSA, etc. This argument is a very old one, used to justify pretty much every kind of opportunism. Figures such as Ocasio-Cortez, Sanders and Cynthia Nixon giving the Democratic Party a "socialist" veneer must be *resolutely*

50,000 March in Preparation for a Strike Los Angeles: Solidarity with UTLA Teachers!



Internationalist photo

LOS ANGELES, December 15 – Some 50,000 UTLA teachers and supporters marched in downtown Los Angeles today to make clear that they are prepared to go on strike in defense of public education.

"Public education is a right – L.A. labor join this fight – all out for the teachers strike!" chanted militants from supporting unions, including the Amalgamated Transit Union and the California Faculty Association, both of which have passed union motions vowing to mobilize in solidarity with the teachers.

ATU militants wearing red union-printed shirts reading "All out for teachers strike picket lines" noted how important it is in this fight to recognize who the friends and enemies of public education really are. As they state in their union motion "the bipartisan nationwide attack that has drained resources away from public education is now led at the national level by Trump's 'voucher vulture' Betsy

DeVos while here in Los Angeles it was spearheaded by Democratic former mayor Villaraigosa and continues under his successor Garcetti."

This reality is making it harder for teachers to swallow the lie that the capitalist Democratic Party can be an ally in their struggle. Many teachers, as well as Roofers, SEIU members and others, joined labor militants from the ATU and CFA in chants looking instead to the power of the working class, such as "Teachers rights, students rights, workers rights — same struggle, same fight, workers of the world unite!" ■



Internationalist photo

opposed. To actually win honest elements away from bourgeois and reformist politics, it is necessary to, as Trotsky said, "call things by their right names," not falsely paint those politics in "socialist" colors; and to clearly and soberly explain the need to *break* definitively with the Democratic Party, and all capitalist parties and politicians, and to build a revolutionary workers party that fights for a workers government.

On Kshama Sawant's vote for the Seattle police chief, the Minority Group only raised tactical objections (such as arguing that there was "no movement for the new police chief"), as opposed to class principle. I cannot speak on the organizational and personal aspects of the factional struggle waged by the Minority Group, but as a general note I would say, paraphrasing Cannon's *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, that primacy is held by the political questions, on which there is no qualitative difference between the present SA majority and the ex-Minority Group headed by figures who were long part of SA's central leadership.

SA activists who want to fight for Marxist class politics will find themselves in a dead end if they look for the problem

simply in the way each sector seeks to apply SA's political approach. It is not possible to fight for a revolutionary alternative to class collaboration without coming to terms with the fact that the whole political approach and actual social-democratic program of SA are the root of the problem. The real alternative is fighting to bring the genuine program of Trotskyism into the class struggle.

Thus, as a revolutionary, I can no longer remain a member of Socialist Alternative. Its political line and actions actively *mislead* the working class and radical youth in a time where the crisis of revolutionary leadership grows more desperate by the hour. Marxists face a challenging and critical period. It is imperative that we put up a real fight for the workers and oppressed to break from the Democratic Party and all bourgeois parties and politicians. Marxists cannot be caught up in endless, unprincipled maneuvers. We must move *forward*.

Comrades who would like to pursue issues raised here, or to receive the August 2018 document "Revolutionary Marxism Is Based on the Political Independence of the Working Class," are invited to write me at andmc822@gmail.com. ■

CLASS STRUGGLE EDUCATION WORKERS

Chicago's First-Ever Charter School Strike Could Rekindle Teacher Revolt Nationwide

UPDATE, December 9 – At a celebratory strike rally today of hundreds of Chicago Teachers Union members and supporters, CTU negotiators declared victory, announcing they had reached a tentative agreement with the management of Acero charter schools. The deal would reportedly “align pay for educators and paraprofessionals with Chicago Public Schools’ pay scale, reduce class sizes, and include sanctuary protection for students and families” (CBS Chicago News). No details were released at the rally. If a finalized agreement, which would be subject to ratification, includes significant gains in those respects, this first-ever charter school strike would mark a significant step forward in the struggle against the union-busting offensive by these semi-privatized schools, which have been pushed by the capitalist parties and politicians, both Republicans and Democrats.

Chicago is a union town, if we don't get it, SHUT IT DOWN!” Teachers at Acero are members of the United Educators for Justice unit of the CTU, which voted at the end of October by 98% to authorize a strike. They were part of the Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff which earlier this year merged with the CTU. This makes them full-fledged members of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 1, and the power of the whole union must be mobilized to win this battle.

The CTU should IMMEDIATELY hold a mass rally of thousands of educators, staff, parents and supporters to show that the 25,000-strong membership is solidly behind Acero strikers. Charter schools have historically served to undercut unionization, especially in Chicago where the Democratic mayor and city council, school board and Chicago Board of Trade are all big charter backers. This is a strategic opportunity to display the fighting power of the union, which should be brought to bear to **bring all charter school teachers into the union.** There should be an **elected strike committee** of teacher and staff delegates from every school, including representatives of parents, students and other workers. **Extend the walkout to the International Charter Schools chain! This is the time to organize the unorganized!**

Negotiations between the CTU and Acero are reportedly continuing. Management is typically pleading poverty. Nonsense! Charters receive 8% more funds per student than public schools in Chicago, and Acero's CEO Richard L. Rodriguez rakes in a cool quarter million dollars a year. The reality is that Acero is rolling in dough. After stonewalling for months, at



Several hundred Chicago Teachers Union members in strike rally picketed the headquarters of the Acero charter school chain, December 4.

CHICAGO – At the break of dawn on Tuesday, December 4, some 550 teachers and staff at 15 charter schools affiliated with Acero Schools (formerly The UNO Charter School Network) around Chicago went out on strike. This is the first strike by charter school teachers in the United States. While nationally only 11% of charters are unionized, here teachers and staff of more than a quarter of these publicly funded but privately managed schools (34 out of 128) are organized by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). The strikers' demands include smaller class sizes (currently at 32 students per teacher!), equal pay for equal work (Acero teachers earn on average \$13,000 less per year than those in the public schools), better treatment and pay for paraprofessionals, and “sanctuary school” protections for students and families.

Some 7,500 students are affected by the shutdown. There were pickets at selected schools starting at 6:30 in the morning, and in the afternoon lines of several hundred strikers stretched for two and a half blocks around Acero headquarters downtown. At a rally at a nearby corporate park strikers chanted, “Chi-

the last bargaining session before the strike the chain released figures of an audit showing that it spent \$1 million less on salaries this year than last, despite having \$10.6 million more in its coffers and \$24 million in unrestricted cash. More than enough to drastically raise salaries and expand special education services, as the union has demanded.

But this strike is not just about cash. A key CTU demand is for more diversity in the teaching staff (although 90% of the students are Latinos and Latinas, two-thirds of the teachers are white and few are Spanish speakers). This is the result of Acero's origin in the UNO charter schools which pushed an “immersion” method of English-only instruction. The union is also calling for inclusion of “sanctuary school” provisions in the contract, which would require I.C.E. (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents to get a court order to enter the schools. This is useful but very limited “protection.” Class Struggle Education Workers has called for the formation of union-based immigrant defense committees to prevent *la migra* from coming into the schools or grabbing our students, *period*.

The CTU is calling this a “historic strike.” It could indeed reverberate around the country, rekindling the teacher revolt that spread like wildfire from West Virginia to Oklahoma and Arizona last spring, and then back to Colorado and North Carolina. A CTU press release (22 October) noted that “Average salaries for teachers at some charters is barely \$47,000—less than the average salary for Arizona teachers,” even though living costs are far higher in Chicago. And as in charter schools across the country, teachers at Acero put in hundreds of hours more than those in CPS schools. But defeating the hard-nosed, profit-minded charter bosses and their Democratic allies will be a much harder slog, especially as AFT national president Randi Weingarten is herself a Democratic Party bigwig.

Rahm Emanuel, Barack Obama's former White House chief of staff, was first elected mayor in 2011 in a campaign focused on demonizing the CTU. He pushed charters in order to break the power of the union. Emanuel's election committee was co-chaired by Juan Rangel, the CEO of the UNO (United Neighborhood Organization) charter school chain, which in turn received \$9 million in loans from the city. UNO started out as an NGO (“non-governmental organization”) closely linked to the Chicago Democratic Party machine. It was hired as a consultant when New Orleans public schools were turned into charters under former CPS CEO Paul Vallas following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. But in 2015 Rangel had to step down as a result of a securities violation conviction, and UNO was rebranded Acero.

The Acero strike could be the impetus for organizing all charter schools in the Chicago school system. It is vital that the striking Acero charter teachers receive the support of union members and supporters everywhere. It is also necessary for class-struggle unionists and revolutionary Marxists to underline the lessons of the 2012 CTU strike, when militant pickets shook the city, but Democratic mayor Emanuel hard-lined it and the union's “progressive” leadership rammed a give-back contract down the throats of the striking educators (see “Chicago Teachers: Strike Was Huge, Settlement Sucks,” *The Internationalist* special issue, November-December 2012). Instead of breaking with the Democrats to build a workers party, in the 2015 election the CTU backed dissident Democrat Jesús “Chuy” García.

You won't hear this from the International Socialist Organization (ISO), whose *Socialist Worker* articles simply regurgitate the union press releases. This is not surprising as CTU president Jesse Sharkey is a supporter of the social-democratic ISO. The World Socialist Web Site, meanwhile, criticizes union tops such as Shar-



Striking Acero teachers show that union-busting charter school movement can be fought with class struggle.

key and AFT president Weingarten (who showed up yesterday for a photo op), but its phony pro-strike posture is just a cover for the fact that *the fake leftists of the WSWS oppose unions altogether*. Chicago teachers should be forewarned about this treacherous outfit. What's needed to gear up the CTU for a real fight is a union leadership based on a program of unflinching *class struggle*, opposed to the *class collaboration* of the C.O.R.E. (Caucus of Rank and File Educators), led by Sharkey, which in late 2016 headed off a potentially solid strike when the entire membership was mobilized.

The charter school strike, like any real class battle, is political. In Wisconsin in 2011, teachers led a statewide labor mobilization against union-busting governor Scott Walker, only to see a looming general strike called off at the last minute by the union tops in favor of electing Democrats. That only came to pass seven years later, while teachers' collective bargaining rights were immediately slashed and union membership fell by half. In Chicago, where teachers face Democratic mayor Emanuel (now a lame duck, as his reelection prospects dimmed due to his cover-up of the racist police murder of Laquan McDonald)^[1] and newly elected Illinois Democratic governor Pritzker, owner of the Hyatt hotel chain, key to victory is breaking from all the parties of capital and building a *class-struggle workers party*.

As we stated in "Lessons of the Teachers Revolt," in the CSEW journal *Marxism & Education* No.5 (Summer 2018), those lessons are:

"First of all, we must *oust the bureaucracy* that stands in the way of real class struggle... It is necessary to be precise. The *enemy* is the bosses, the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy is an *obstacle*, but the *unions belong to the workers*.

"Second, it's necessary to *break with the Democrats* and all the capitalist parties.... The teachers unions are the organizational mainstay for the Democratic Party....

"And third, it is necessary to *forge a class-struggle leadership* with a program to actually fight and win against a united ruling class."

Or as we put it in "Life After Janus: Bust the Union-Busters with Hard Class Struggle" (*The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018), "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 [...] may bandy about the spectre of West



Charter bosses and their Wall Street investors are swimming in money, while Acero teachers can barely afford to live on their salaries.

Virginia, but these 'labor fakers' are incapable of waging class war, which is what it will take." ■

With the Caravan...

continued from page 2

17, seeking work, riding atop *La Bestia*, is migrating this time with the Bible in hand. The story he likes best is that of Moses, because "he brought the people out of Egypt, they put up obstacles and everything, and our god opened the sea for him to pass through with the multitude. When I look on this multitude, I think of all those who are supporting us, those who open their doors to us, so that we can have a better life." Optimism born of desperation.

In short, what started out as one more caravan ended up being an exodus of Honduran young people which others have sought to use for their own purposes. The Honduran social democrats in order to demand the resignation of the hated JOH, the two-time president who stays in power thanks to the support of Donald Trump, and due to a crude election fraud which even the Organization of American States denounced. Meanwhile, Trump is using the caravan to juice up his electorate.

The column has already begun to fragment as it goes along: in the vanguard there are the young people, both women and men, who are bolder, who by hitching a ride are the first to arrive at the next town that is the goal for the day; then come those who are making their way on foot, almost always whole families, or with children in their arms, who can't benefit from hitching a ride, because then the families would become separated; bringing up the rear are those who walk slowly, or get short rides. There are also those arriving in small waves who belatedly left Honduras and other countries in the region because they knew that they couldn't pass up this opportunity of the caravan, which far from provoking rejection has received help from

local residents: water, food, clothing.

That's the other thing: in addition to the deep poverty and lack of jobs, working people in Honduras have to pay a "war tax," or protection money. That was the case with 32-year-old Elia Montoya, who because of her age couldn't find work. So she set up a little store, to provide for her family, but she wasn't able to continue because it became unsafe. She and her family were threatened by gangs, and the "war tax" ate up practically all that she earned, on top of which her husband also had to pay part of his wage. So when the caravan passed by, she didn't hesitate for a moment to leave it all to flee together with her husband, their two daughters and her older sister, who practically had no future at all.

This was also the case of Salomé, a trans youth, who was travelling with the caravan under the multicolor flag of the gay movement. Salomé joined the caravan because the day before leaving, five homophobic gang members threatened to kill him, demanding he stop "cross-dressing." When they found out Salomé had fled, they threatened two other trans friends, who also fled and are now on their way. Or the case of a driver, who had to pay a daily fee to his boss, who only left him with enough for half a meal, and sometimes not that, who came because he had to pay an entire day's wage per week for the "war tax." The stories keep repeating themselves all along the highway.

Turning the Fear Into Wrath

Antony Álvarez sends a message from Arriaga: he's afraid. He, along with some friends, was pleased because they got a ride that took them one town further, saving almost an entire day. But as soon as they arrived in Arriaga, they had to run to take refuge in a hotel room, which they paid for with the little money they carried with them, to protect themselves from the immigration police who were hunting down the advance guard of the caravan. They feel safe in the hotel room, but not for long, as they get word that the immigration cops are also combing through the hotels to grab them. In fact, it's all fear: fear of dying of hunger, or at the hands of criminals if they stay in Honduras; fear of the heat beating down, followed by cold downpours which make people sick, above all the children; fear of falling, of falling behind on the road; fear of entering a shelter and ending up deported back to Honduras; fear of being swindled, of people taking advantage of them.

But after Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto announced his plan "This Is Your House," which "would give them employment opportunities, as well as health care, education and regularizing their status in Mexico," so long as they stayed in Chiapas or

Oaxaca, their new fear is of being trapped in the south, in the two poorest states in Mexico, hoping that the xenophobia being whipped up on social media doesn't spill into the streets. Nor is there hope that the new government will mean a change of policy. Peña's plan is in effect an application of AMLO's proposal to "create swaths of employment in the south of the country so that Mexicans and Central Americans can have work and be happy in the places where they were born and do not have to emigrate." In that happy and loving world, full of little hearts, the happiest of all would no doubt be Donald Trump, who was not mistaken when he said that the bourgeois populist López Obrador made a better impression on him than the crude capitalist Peña Nieto.

"It's an investment plan that involves dedicating around \$30 billion to the development of Central America and our country in productive projects and creating jobs. It's a plan like that which President Roosevelt carried out in times of crisis in the United States, which pulled the country out of crisis by providing jobs," says AMLO (which is false, what ended the Great Depression was World War II). "This is the plan we have for Mexico." The New Deal that López Obrador was referring to was a program to save capitalism after the crash of 1929, by offering work to, among others, migrant workers, who traveled from one state to another looking for jobs. It was this exodus which was depicted in John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*.

At bottom, one can pretty much explain the Honduran exodus with words Steinbeck wrote in his book: "The causes lie deep and simply – the causes are a hunger in a stomach, multiplied a million

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times; a hunger in a single soul, hunger for joy and some security, multiplied a million times; muscles and mind aching to grow, to work, to create, multiplied a million times. The last clear definite function of man – muscles aching to work, minds aching to create beyond the single need – this is man.” In other words, “We want to get ahead, we want another life.” Just like the exodus narrated in the novel, as it goes forward this exodus leaves its dead along the way. “On the highways the people moved like ants, and searched for food, for work.” And just like in the novel, the trucks loaded down with migrants are a cry against capitalist exploitation, which in crisis after crisis tears the masses from their lands and throws them onto the highways, turning them into escape routes to flee from hunger and poverty.

Thus this exodus of Honduran youth is the result of a free-trade agreement between Central America and the United States, and of the financial crisis which exploded in September 2008 and then intensified with the coup d'état of 2009, when they overthrew Zelaya and took back the subsidies which he had given to the poor. As Yanela Ordóñez, who got her *licenciatura* (bachelor's degree) in education in 2009, in the same year as the coup, explained: “The coup affected us a lot: they practically privatized education and health care.” The daughter of a day laborer and a housewife, she studied to become a teacher intending to work in public education. But after the coup, those positions were reserved for the hard-core supporters of the regime. Now she is on the caravan together with her husband and her daughter, her sisters, in-laws, nephews and nieces.

Looked at carefully, the situation of health care and education in Honduras presages what could happen in Mexico if the so-called education reform is not stopped and the supposed “universalization” of health care is implemented, a swindle that masks the privatization of this vital social service, which is going forward with wind in its sails. In Honduras the upshot is that Hondurans go to Salvadoran or Guatemalan hospitals for treatment, because their own medical system is practically devastated, lacking infrastructure, without supplies or basic medicines, which is now happening throughout Mexico and has been denounced by constant, massive protests by health workers.

Not only that: AMLO's plan to develop the south involves implementing the so-called “special zones” which would give the green light to pillage by Yankee capital, which is happening now with the “Economic Development and Employment Zones” that Juan Orlando is pushing in Honduras, areas with special laws in the service of capital, with which the Honduran president promised to create 600,000 more jobs. In the same way, López Obrador promises to create 400,000 jobs planting a million fruit trees and timberland in the southeast, along with the jobs produced by building the Tren Maya, the development of the Tehuantepec Isthmus and the modernization of the ports of Veracruz and Coatzacoalcos.

In contrast, the Trotskyists of the Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico, like our comrades of the Internationalist Group in the United States, sections of the

League for the Fourth International, have called to let the migrants in the caravan in, to grant asylum to refugees and for all immigrants to have full rights of citizenship, no matter how they got to the country, whether in Mexico or the U.S. We have also called for workers mobilization to defend the immigrants against racist attacks and state repression. And, as always, we do our best to carry out these demands in the course of the struggle for workers revolution on both sides of the northern border, as well as in Central America and beyond.

Meanwhile, thousands of young people trek from one city to the next, seeking to make it to the north, looking for work. As in the *Grapes of Wrath*, they will find that they have to go from “me” to “we,” to learn the importance of strikes, of the fight against strikebreakers, of the necessary unity of the exploited and oppressed under an internationalist working-class program. Because for these international workers, one day there must be an end to the prayers which quench the fear, but also the wrath. Because what's involved is turning the fear into wrath that spurs on the struggle for socialist revolution that transcends all the borders of capital. ■

Acción obrera...

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toda deportación.

El momento más álgido que los caminantes centroamericanos han enfrentado a Tijuana se dio el pasado domingo 18, cuando una manifestación convocada por los xenófobos en la Glorieta de Cuauhtémoc en el centro de Tijuana decidió marchar hacia el albergue Benito Juárez para sacar con sus propias manos a los migrantes. Estas amenazas deben ser paradas en seco. ¡Hay que barrer con la escoria xenófoba y racista instigada por la patronal mexicana! Entretanto, el alcalde sigue profiriendo amenazas contra los inmigrantes. Apenas ayer, insistió en que no “gastará el dinero de los tijuaneños” en atender a los migrantes y declaró una “crisis humanitaria”. Asimismo, las autoridades municipales anunciaron que 108 migrantes centroamericanos han sido detenidos por “faltas administrativas” (entre otras, por “causar disturbios” cuando se defienden al ser atacados), por lo que enfrentan ya procesos de deportación.

Uno de los detenidos ha sido Víctor Mejía, corresponsal de Izquierda Diario. Mejía fue arrestado en la madrugada del 21 de noviembre cuando cubría la llegada de autobuses con migrantes al albergue Benito Juárez. Tras permanecer incomunicado, fue enviado a las oficinas de la migra en la Ciudad de México. Hoy Víctor Mejía se encuentra en las instalaciones del INM en Chiapas y está a punto de ser expulsado del país. Ayer, en un mitin de protesta convocado por el Movimiento de Trabajadores Socialistas, en el que participó el Grupo Internacionalista, nuestros camaradas portaban pancartas exigiendo la liberación Víctor Mejía y de todos los migrantes detenidos.

Atañe a los trabajadores mexicanos usar su poder social en defensa de nuestros hermanos y hermanas de clase centroamericanos. Ante las amenazas de violencia mortífera azuzadas por la burguesía bajacaliforniana y lideradas por elementos fascitoides, se precisan



Migrantes exhiben una manta en el albergue El Barretal apelando al flamante presidente mexicano, Andrés Manuel López Obrador: “AMLO, Éste es un momento crucial en el cual, o nos solucionas ahora o nos olvidas para siempre...” Muchos integrantes de la caravana albergan ilusiones en el nuevo mandatario burgués mientras éste ofrece a Trump a ser su guardafronteras.

guardias obreras y de defensores de los derechos democráticos para resguardar los albergues de los migrantes y una *movilización obrera multitudinaria para aplastar a los atacantes*. Maestros, telefonistas, jornaleros agrícolas sindicalizados y los cientos de miles de trabajadores de la enorme zona maquiladora, deberían organizarse para repeler el ataque orquestado por quienes los explotan cotidianamente y los reprimen cuando se atreven a resistir.

La clase obrera es una sola clase internacional. Los migrantes, como ellos mismos anuncian, *no son criminales, sino trabajadores internacionales*. Las caravanas de los desposeídos se siguen conformando día a día con la intención de marchar a México y de ahí hasta EE.UU.

Esta enorme tragedia humana exige a gritos que los trabajadores de México y EE.UU. se movilicen en defensa de los que no tienen nada y afluyen en un éxodo hacia las barreras que imponen la burguesía mexicana y sus amos imperialistas. Para organizar la defensa de los inmigrantes contra la violencia racista hace falta una dirección revolucionaria e internacionalista de la clase obrera, que logre aplastar el veneno del nacionalismo burgués y las lacras que lo acompañan. Hace falta, pues, un partido obrero revolucionario que funja como tribuno del pueblo, organizando la defensa de todos los oprimidos, y que allende las fronteras nacionales unifique las luchas de los trabajadores en la perspectiva de la revolución socialista internacional. ■

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Contra los ataques xenófobos instigados por las autoridades:

¡Acción obrera para defender a los migrantes!

AMLO ofrece servir de patrulla fronteriza de Trump

¡Romper con todos los partidos y políticos burgueses!

¡Forjar un partido obrero revolucionario!

24 de NOVIEMBRE – Tras recorrer más de 4 mil kilómetros desde a San Pedro Sula, Honduras, a Tijuana, los primeros integrantes de la caravana centroamericana han llegado a la frontera norte de México. Ahora hay más de 5 mil migrantes en la ciudad, y se espera la llegada próxima de otros 2 mil. Pero con esto no ha terminado el sufrido peregrinaje que emprendieron para huir de la miseria y la violencia omnímodas de sus países de origen. Ahora se enfrentan con un muro fortalecido con alambre de púas y patrullado por 8 mil soldados del ejército estadounidense y de la guardia nacional, con órdenes que les autorizan a “disparar a matar” para impedir su acceso a territorio norteamericano. Del lado mexicano de la frontera enfrentan la amenaza de ataques de turbas xenófobas instigadas por las autoridades tijuanaenses y azuzadas por los medios de comunicación, además de las redadas de policías municipales y efectivos del Instituto Nacional de Migración.

A una semana de la entrada en funciones del gobierno del presidente electo Andrés Manuel López Obrador, no son pocos (incluso en la izquierda mexicana) los que cifran sus esperanzas en este político populista burgués. Se equivocan. AMLO y su Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional no son para nada amigos de los migrantes. Como ya señaló una portavoz del Grupo Internacionalista, “AMLO ha repetido una y otra vez que no se confrontará con Trump sobre la cuestión de los migrantes” (ver nuestro artículo, “La caravana de los desposeídos”, *El Internacionalista*, octubre de 2018). Ahora hay una prueba concreta: el día de hoy, un vocero de la Casa Blanca anunció que el gobierno de Donald Trump y el próximo gobierno mexicano han acordado que todos los solicitantes de asilo en EE.UU. permanecerían en México hasta que un tribunal dicte sentencia para cada solicitud de asilo presentada.

El *Washington Post* (24 de noviembre) cita la afirmación de la próxima secretaria de gobernación mexicana, Olga Sánchez Cordero, de que “hemos convenido en esta política de ‘Permanezca en México’” como “solución a corto plazo”. El posterior “desmentido” de Sánchez Cordero no desmiente en absoluto dicha



El gobierno tijuanaense trasladó a los migrantes de la caravana centroamericana del refugio Benito Juárez, pegado a la frontera, al albergue El Barretal, a 15 km. de la línea. Aunque las condiciones físicas son mejores, ahí están apostados soldados de la Marina de Guerra, entre otras para controlar las idas y venidas de los migrantes encerrados.

información, sino que sólo niega que haya un acuerdo formal y que se haya aceptado que México sea un “tercer país seguro”, lo que significaría que ninguna solicitud de asilo en EE.UU. sería aceptada, una propuesta de Trump que también resistió Enrique Peña Nieto. El plan habría sido elaborado en una reunión entre el futuro canciller mexicano Marcelo Ebrard y su homólogo norteamericano Mike Pompeo. Lo convenido, si no (todavía) acordado, es que México habría de servir como un corral de espera para los refugiados que

piden asilo, y el gobierno de AMLO haría las veces de patrulla fronteriza de Trump.

Según el *New York Times* (24 de noviembre), “Debido a la gran cantidad de casos atrasados en los tribunales de migración – alrededor de un millón – lo más probable es que estos solicitantes tendrían que esperar durante años en México”. De esa manera, México, un país semicolonial, será, aún más de lo que ya es, un muro fronterizo de contención que impida la entrada de migrantes de Centro y Sudamérica, así como de África, al coloso imperia-

lista del norte. He aquí el fruto amargo que están cosechando los izquierdistas oportunistas que saludaron la victoria de AMLO. El Grupo Internacionalista en México y el Internationalist Group en EE.UU., secciones de la Liga por la IV Internacional, llamamos como un acto elemental de solidaridad obrera internacional a que *dejen entrar* (tanto a México como a EE.UU.) *a los integrantes de la caravana*, que huyen un infierno *made in USA*, y que *todos los inmigrantes tengan plenos derechos de ciudadanía*.

Entretanto, en la noche del 14 al 15 de noviembre, una turba de enardecidos vecinos de la acomodada zona de Playas de Tijuana organizó una arremetida contra un grupo de migrantes que acampaba en las inmediaciones del faro. Con gritos, amenazas y golpes los vecinos de este distrito tijuanaense escupieron su odio burgués contra los migrantes. Exigieron a la policía municipal y al Grupo Beta de la infame migra mexicana que desalojara a los inmigrantes centroamericanos de “su” ciudad, que los detuviera y que comenzara con sus procesos de deportación. Luego, el 15 de noviembre por la tarde, en una entrevista televisiva transmitida a nivel nacional, el alcalde panista de Tijuana, Juan Manuel Gastélum, expresó con toda claridad el sentir xenófobo de la clase dirigente local: “Queremos que [a los migrantes] se les aplique el 33 constitucional”, es decir, que se los expulse del país sin juicio previo.

El alcalde inmundo tachó a los migrantes de la caravana de “horda” y sugirió que no tienen derecho alguno, pues “los derechos humanos son para los humanos derechos” (*La Jornada*, 16 de noviembre). La alocución de Gastélum está en la misma línea de las que en el otoño de 2016 profirió Marco Antonio Blásquez, el racista y xenófobo senador del Partido del Trabajo, aliado del nuevo gobierno electo de Andrés Manuel López Obrador, de que a los cientos de migrantes haitianos varados entonces en la frontera había que echarlos de Tijuana y Mexicali, cuando exigió al gobierno federal de Enrique Peña Nieto “despejar las zonas y demarcaciones” ahora “invadidas por migrantes completamente ajenos que, como se ha visto, no buscan ni quieren integrarse a nuestra comunidad”. En esa época el Grupo Internacionalista organizó una protesta trinacional – en Estados Unidos, México y Brasil – exigiendo “déjenlos entrar” y denunciando

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