

# Internationalist



Trump Picks Puppet, Calls for Military Revolt, Threatens Invasion ... and Democrats Applaud

## Venezuela:

# For Revolutionary Workers Action to Smash U.S. Coup



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Front page photo: Venezuelan workers demand:  
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## The Internationalist



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# Venezuela: For Revolutionary Workers Action to Smash U.S. Coup

**For Armed Workers Militias to Crush U.S. Stooze Guaidó and Rightist Plotters**

**For a Military Bloc with the Bolivarian Militias – No Confidence in Maduro**

**Not a Bourgeois Populist Military Regime But a Workers and Peasants Government**

**Forge a Trotskyist Party to Fight for International Socialist Revolution!**

**Down with Sanctions on Venezuela – For Revolutionary Defense of Cuba, China, North Korea and Vietnam Against Imperialism and Counterrevolution!**



Internationalist photo

FEBRUARY 22 – On January 23, the international (imperialist) media suddenly announced the “breaking news” that a certain Juan Guaidó, the head of the National Assembly legislature in Venezuela, had declared himself president of the country, claiming that the actual elected president, Nicolás Maduro, was illegitimate. Within minutes, U.S. president Donald Trump recognized the pretend-president, and in little more than an hour, right-wing governments in Latin America and Canada followed suit. Europe signed on to the operation a week later. In the U.S., top Democrats in Congress joined Republicans in praising Trump’s move. This is a naked imperialist coup d’état – and working people the world over must act to crush it.

However, to the chagrin of the coup plotters in Washington and their toadies in Caracas, the Maduro government did not fall. The military brass declared its loyalty and ridiculed the would-be “president-in-charge” appointed by Trump. Repeated calls on the Venezuelan military – by U.S. vice president Mike Pence, the secretary of state Mike Pompeo, the national security advisor John Bolton and Republican senator Marco Rubio – to topple the president (in the name of “democracy,” of course) went nowhere. In subsequent days there were large mobilizations (unreported in the imperialist media) in the capital and major cities around Venezuela denouncing the coup.

So in a dramatic escalation, on February 18 the com-

**Internationalist contingent at February 23 “No War in Venezuela” protest in New York City.**

mander in chief of U.S. imperialism went to Miami to deliver a sabre-rattling speech to the counterrevolutionary mafias of Cuban and Venezuelan exiles, denouncing the “tyrannical socialist government” of Venezuela which “nationalized private industries”; threatening to go after Nicaragua and Cuba; denouncing “those who would try to impose socialism on the United States”; and warning the Venezuelan military to break with the regime or else “you will find no safe harbor, no easy exit, and no way out. You will lose everything.” In case anyone missed it, he added: “We seek a peaceful transition of power, but all options are open.”

This blatant threat of a U.S. military invasion was tied to a warning not to block the delivery of “humanitarian aid” which the U.S. has been sending on military planes to stockpile across the border in Cúcuta, Colombia and in Brazil. Having received his orders, the next day the imperialist puppet Guaidó announced a deadline, that the military had four days, until Saturday, February 23, to make up its mind, as a caravan was going to the Colombian border to “receive” the “aid.” This sets the stage for a conflict with Venezuelan troops guarding the border. If there are civilian casualties, which is what the putschists intend, this would be denounced as a massacre and serve as the signal for a U.S./Colombian invasion.

**Defend Venezuela Against Yankee Imperialism!**

A *deadly imperialist provocation* is underway in Venezuela. If there are casualties, the *responsibility lies entirely with the U.S. coup-mongers and their stooges*, who are clearly looking for a *casus belli* – a phony “cause of war,” like “Remember the Alamo” in the 1848 U.S. war to seize half of Mexico, or “Remember the Maine” in the 1898 imperialist war to seize Puerto Rico, Cuba and Philippines as U.S. colonies. Since they can’t conjure up “weapons of mass destruction,” the ploy used to sell the U.S.’ 2003 invasion of Iraq, Trump & Co. want the visuals of dead bodies and troops stopping “humanitarian aid.” In the midst of this scenario, British multimillionaire Sir Richard Branson announced a “Venezuela Aid Live” rock concert at the border bridge in Cúcuta. An ad shows Branson holding the world in his hands. Maduro responded with plans for a concert on the Venezuelan side at another bridge.

As the situation careens toward a showdown, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International call to *defend Venezuela against the imperialist onslaught, whether by military attack or a U.S.-ordered coup*. There should be no mistaking what the consequences would be if the imperialists and their puppets overthrow the populist “Bolivarian Revolution” proclaimed by Hugo Chávez. The local oligarchy and the Yankee imperialists have unrelentingly sought to bring it down for 20 years, including a failed coup against Chávez in 2002 and the attempted assassination of his successor Maduro in a drone attack last August. Though Venezuela is very much a capitalist country, and the bonapartist regime is bourgeois-nationalist, belying its socialist pretensions, its maverick foreign policy (above all the aid it provided Cuba) and defiant stance toward Uncle Sam have made it a target for imperialist aggression.

A takeover by the ultra-rightist forces using Guaidó as a figurehead, and the squalid bourgeois opposition (referred to as *los escuálidos*) with their visceral hatred of the “unwashed



masses” of plebeian *chavistas* would surely lead to a bloody settling of accounts. There would be murders of members of the ruling party, the PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela), quite likely a reign of terror in the hillside shantytown neighborhoods that were PSUV strongholds, hunting down militant trade-unionists and peasant leaders, and a brutal repression of leftists in general, including the many who have become critical of the capitalist policies of Maduro.

Success for this coup for “democracy” would include a draconian curtailment of democratic rights by turncoat generals who had switched sides. And the economic policies pursued by the *golpistas* (coup plotters) would make the austerity imposed by Maduro pale in comparison. Their *Plan País* (plan for the country), presented by Guaidó last month, calls to “reestablish market mechanisms and economic freedoms.” What that means is reducing to absolute penury the millions who have withstood privations because of subsidized food and medicine, and cheap fuel (whose price would be lifted to international levels).

Should Trump carry out his “military option,” which saner heads in Washington have counseled against, it could touch off a civil war in Venezuela. If careerist generals decide to go over to the coup plotters, it could lead to a bloodbath. In this grave situation, the Trotskyists of the LFI call for *powerful workers action to smash the U.S. coup*. In particular, this includes the formation of *armed workers militias to crush Guaidó and the putschists* remote-controlled from the White House. That would involve a *military bloc with the Bolivarian militias* against the coup-makers, but in order to unchain the enormous potential power of the working class, the force capable of decisively crushing the counterrevolutionaries, proletarian revolutionaries insist that it is vital to maintain political and organizational independence from the bourgeois government.

Only a *revolutionary* struggle can defeat the imperialist takeover, the ruinous status quo is untenable. This means independently mobilizing to carry out *transitional demands* that attack the foundations of capitalist rule. Against hyperinflation, workers should impose a *sliding scale of wages* indexed to the cost of living. Employees should *seize imperialist firms and domestic capitalist conglomerates*, such as Banco Bradesco, the key to money-laundering by Venezuelan capitalists and the *boliburguesía* (“Bolivarian” bourgeoisie). Class-conscious unionists should *impose workers control* of industry to stop economic sabotage. Food supplies can be secured by *taking over the Polar food and beverage monopoly* and ensuring *distribution through union-backed neighborhood committees* to prevent hoarding.

Above all, while fighting against the coup, the working class must place *no confidence in Maduro and the PSUV*, whose policies of capitalist austerity (in part due to and certainly aggravated by criminal imperialist sanctions) led to the present desperate economic situation for the masses and thus have actually paved the way for the coup. For years, while many leftists politically supported Chávez – not so much with Maduro, though still invoking the threadbare “Bolivarian Revolution” – some consummate opportunists have sided with the

AP



### Tens of thousands at February 2 rally in Caracas against the rightist/imperialist coup attempt.

putschists (while cynically claiming to oppose imperialism). Others declare a treacherous “neutrality” (“neither Maduro nor Guaidó”), which means tacitly going along with the *golpe*.

In contrast, the League for the Fourth International seeks to forge a *revolutionary workers party on the program of Lenin and Trotsky*, to fight for a *workers and peasants government* in Venezuela and *international socialist revolution*. This includes militant action to *defend Cuba* – the secondary target of Trump’s Venezuela gambit – and the other bureaucratically deformed workers states (China, North Korea, Vietnam). It means *solidarity with the Haitian revolt*, and fighting for *independence for Puerto Rico* in a *socialist federation of the Caribbean*, part of a *socialist united states of Latin America*. In the U.S., we call for *workers strikes against an invasion of Venezuela*.

### Bipartisan Imperialist Coup Made in U.S.A.

Since naming Guaidó “president in charge” of Venezuela, serving as a kind of U.S. *chargé d’affaires* on January 23, the Trump administration has seized Venezuelan assets in the U.S. – mainly the Citgo oil company – and banned imports of oil from the Venezuelan state oil company, PDVSA, as well as prohibiting exports of refined fuel needed to dilute Venezuela’s heavy crude for transport. This will cut off much of the beleaguered country’s source of hard currency to pay for vitally needed imports of everything from food to medicine and machinery. The intended effect is to prepare the way for the imperialist takeover by strangling Venezuela economically, causing even more widespread food shortages, and to shut down its oil industry. Recall when U.S. sanctions on Iraq ordered by Democrat Bill Clinton caused the deaths of more than a million Iraqis, leading up to the 2003 invasion by Republican George Bush II (with the support of many Congressional Democrats).

Trump’s asset seizure was followed up by putting Elliott Abrams in charge of the Venezuela operation. In the Reagan administration, Abrams was in charge of covering up the

infamous massacre of peasants at El Mozote, El Salvador, where a U.S.-trained battalion slaughtered an entire village, children included. Later he was convicted for lying to the U.S. Congress about the secret Iran-contra deal to covertly supply weapons to the cutthroat army of counterrevolutionaries (“contras”) attacking the left-nationalist Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Now Abrams is supervising the coup in Venezuela, and is currently in Cúcuta, Colombia together with Cuban *gusano* senator Marco Rubio, overseeing the “emergency supplies” provocation Trump hopes to use as a pretext for war

The Venezuelan government has charged that weapons for the coup plotters would be mixed in with the “hu-

manitarian” cargo, which is one of the ways the U.S. armed the Nicaraguan contras. Meanwhile, U.S. special forces are reportedly arriving in Colombia, and a U.S. Navy strike force around the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* is on pre-deployment exercises off Florida. Trump has been pushing for U.S. military action almost since he took office. The recent memoir by fired deputy FBI director Andrew McCabe, *The Threat*, recounted an August 2017 Oval Office meeting:

“Then the president talked about Venezuela. That’s the country we should be going to war with, he said. They have all that oil and they’re right on our back door.”

Last year, the Associated Press (4 July 2018) reported about the same meeting:

“President Donald Trump turned to his top aides and asked an unsettling question: With a fast unraveling Venezuela threatening regional security, why can’t the U.S. just simply invade the troubled country?... [H]e pointed to what he considered past cases of successful gunboat diplomacy in the region, according to the official, like the invasions of Panama and Grenada in the 1980s.”

But Venezuela is not Grenada or Panama. The Bolivarian National Armed Forces have 350,000 troops between the Army and National Guard, and over 1.6 million members of the uniformed Bolivarian Militia, which quadrupled in size in the last year. They have given every indication that they would fight. While presently unarmed, militia members have undergone military training, and beginning in early February they carried out joint exercises with the army at military bases around the country. If the coup succeeds, the *chavistas* know they will be targeted. And by so openly proclaiming U.S. sponsorship of the attempted overthrow, Trump may have stoked nationalist resistance among the poor and working people who make up the militia ranks.

This is not your usual U.S.-backed coup d’état as has occurred so often in Latin America, most recently in Honduras in 2009, or the bloody Pinochet coup in Chile in 1973. There the local bourgeoisie took the initiative, with crucial backing from



Internationalist photo

**Internationalist contingent at February 23 protest in New York City. Internationalists and Haitian activists chanted, “Haiti, Venezuela – Same struggle, same fight – Workers of the world unite!”**

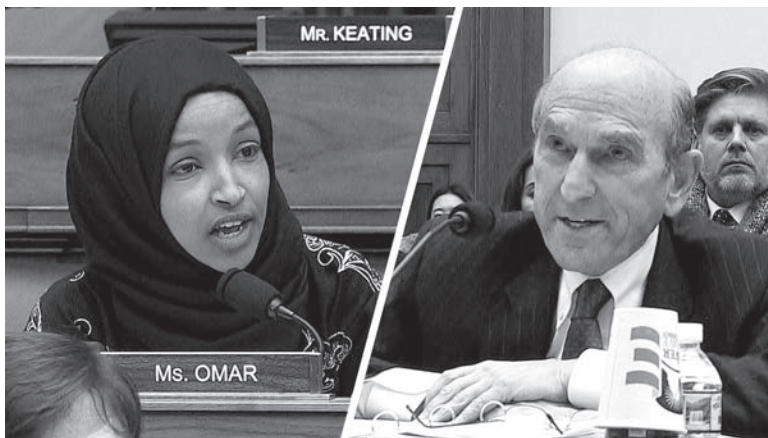
the Yankee imperialists. What is going on now is a straight-out U.S. imperialist operation, totally orchestrated by Washington. The puppet figure placed at the head, Guaidó, was a political nobody. He wasn't even head of the National Assembly until the U.S. secreted him out of the country in December to present him to the new rightist-military government of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, death-squad president Ivan Duque in Colombia and U.S. officials in Washington.

The scenario of having this marionette named president of the “National Assembly” and then proclaim himself president of the country was cooked up by the U.S. The *Wall Street Journal* (26 January) reported that Pence gave Guaidó the go-ahead in a phone call the night before. If the plot succeeds, the

oil industry is to be handed over to U.S. multinationals, while the U.S. dollar will become the national currency. So instead of being a semi-colony of U.S. imperialism, as Venezuela has been throughout the last century along with most of Latin America, it would become a direct colony in all but name, with no more real independence than Haiti has today under the U.S. boot, or the West African countries whose currency is controlled by France.

Today the media are full of stories about food shortages and lack of medicines, but they don't mention that these are in good part the result of the U.S.' economic war on Venezuela. The United Nations special rapporteur Alfred de Zayas, who traveled to Venezuela in 2017, reported that: “The effects of sanctions imposed by Presidents Obama and Trump and unilateral measures by Canada and the European Union have directly and indirectly aggravated the shortages in medicines such as insulin and anti-retroviral drugs.” Now the U.S. has seized \$7 billion of Venezuela's assets, while the U.K. stole \$1.2 billion of Venezuelan gold held there, and cynically offered a few million in “humanitarian aid”!

In the war on Bolivarian Venezuela, the Democrats have been on board from the start, and in the driver's seat much of the time. While Trump has just declared a “national emergency” in order to build his wall along the Mexican border, it should be recalled that Democrat Barack Obama declared a national emergency in 2015 to clamp U.S. economic sanctions on the country. Those sanctions banned the transfer of billions of dollars in profits from



NBC News

**Rep. Ilhan Omar grills Trump's point man to carry out Venezuela coup, Elliott Abrams, over his role organizing death squads in Central America.**



**Venezuelan workers in march for workers control of occupied and nationalized companies in 2011.**

the PDVSA's U.S. subsidiary, Citgo, and made it impossible for Maduro to renegotiate Venezuela's external debt. So as a capitalist government subject to the dictatorship of the market, despite its radical rhetoric, Venezuela kept paying billions to the imperialist banks while imports of food were sharply cut.

Even before Trump "recognized" his stooge Guaidó as puppet Venezuelan president, Democratic Congressional leaders, including senators Richard Durbin and Robert Menendez, were calling on the U.S. to do so. We have already noted how in the State of the Union speech to Congress, Democratic senator Kirsten Gillibrand and House speaker Nancy Pelosi applauded Trump's bragging about his "bold move" to overthrow Maduro, and how even supposed "democratic socialist" Democrats like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib voted for \$20 million to "promote democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela" (see "Imperialist Feminism and the Democrats," page 40 of this issue).

Democrats who have dared to buck the bipartisan consensus on Venezuela have been few and far between. One was Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota who, in a House hearing on February 14, grilled Trump's point man on Venezuela Elliott Abrams, asking if he would "support an armed faction within Venezuela that engages in war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide if you believed they were serving U.S. interests, as you did in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua."

Shortly before that, Omar, one of the first Muslim women elected to Congress, was targeted by a vile hit job of false accusations of anti-Semitism for telling the truth about the American Israel Public Affairs Committee: that AIPAC, the self-proclaimed official Zionist lobby quite literally buys support for Israel. (See, for example, the "Congressional Club" on the AIPAC web site). Top Democrats demanded that Omar apologize, and when she yielded, she was stabbed

in the back by "AOC," who praised her forced apology – thereby giving her stamp of approval to the grotesque equation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. We say, *Ilhan Omar had nothing to apologize for* – and the Democratic Party has shown once again how it gags any opposition to imperialism.

Now there are a few belated protests in the U.S. against intervention in Venezuela, almost entirely focused on denouncing Trump. There may be some routine criticisms of the Democrats, but the small size of these demonstrations is testimony to the fact that, unlike protests over the wars on Iraq or Vietnam, they have very few Democratic Party politicians to put on the platforms of their antiwar "popular front" coalitions. From Fox News to the *New York Times* and the London *Guardian*, the craven "mainstream media" pump out a steady stream of lies. There is almost monolithic imperialist support for Trump's assault on Venezuela, even from the most virulent "Russiagate" conspiracy mongers.

### **Fight Imperialist War with Class War!**

Yankee imperialism is on a rampage, and its pawns and allies are joining the onslaught. Even the few governments that have resisted going all the way with Trump, like Uruguay, or Mexico under populist president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, are promoting a "soft coup," talking of non-intervention while calling on the Maduro government to engage in "dialogue" with the conspirators seeking to topple the Bolivarian regime. The fact is that in order to combat the assault on Venezuela, as well as the U.S. wars and coups from Afghanistan to Honduras, it is necessary to take on the imperialist system itself. This was the lesson of the massive Vietnam antiwar mobilizations, when Democratic "doves" quickly turned into war hawks over Israel and the Middle East.

Over Venezuela as well, revolutionaries call to *fight imperialist war with class war*. This is sharply counterposed to the policy of bourgeois populist nationalists like Maduro and Chávez, who vainly hoped to achieve "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism and domestic capital. Now we are seeing the bitter fruits of their failed quest. In order to *smash the coup*, it is necessary to mobilize the working class, independently of and against all capitalist parties and politicians.

The current assault on Venezuela is a dramatic confirmation of the validity of Leon Trotsky's program of *permanent revolution*, which holds that in this era of decaying capitalism, even to achieve the gains of the bourgeois revolutions, including national independence, democracy and agrarian revolution, it is necessary for the working class, leading the peasantry and all the oppressed, to take power in a socialist revolution that extends to the imperialist heartland. From Venezuela to the U.S., the struggle to build a revolutionary internationalist vanguard on the Bolshevik program of Lenin and Trotsky is the task of the League for the Fourth International today. ■

Massive Work Stoppages Impose Workers' Demands On Corporatist "Unions," Employers Respond with Layoffs

# Matamoros, Mexico: Workers in the Maquiladoras Battle Against Corporatism



Revolución Permanente

First day of the official strike in Matamoros after two weeks of wildcat walkouts. There are 2.5 million workers in the free trade zone maquiladoras, producing for export to the U.S.

**Break the Shackles of State Control,  
Build Genuine Workers Unions!  
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

*The following article is based on eyewitness reports from Matamoros by reporter-activists of the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International. It is translated from the GI's newspaper, Revolución Permanente No. 9, March-April 2019*

In recent weeks, Mexico has experienced an explosive wave of worker insurgency in the *maquiladora* factories of the northeast border as has not been seen in decades. (Maquiladoras or the maquila industry refer to free trade zone plants exempted from tariffs, which take imported components and raw material and turn them into products for export.) The epicenter of the workers' mobilizations has been the city of Matamoros, in the state of Tamaulipas, at the eastern end of the U.S.-Mexico border, just across the Río Bravo (called the Río Grande in the U.S.) from Brownsville, Texas. In January,

**López Obrador's Bourgeois Populist Government – Enemy of the Workers**



Revolución Permanente



**The majority of maquiladora workers are women, but about 40% are men. United class struggle is needed.**

more than 40,000 workers in 45 maquiladora plants in Matamoros staged walkouts (*paros*) and launched a strike (*huelga*) to demand – and win – a 20% wage increase and payment of an annual bonus of 32,000 pesos (US\$1,600). In the great majority of these companies, workers were able to force employers to meet their demands. Their example has spread to local companies, including supermarkets, seafood plants and even the Coca Cola bottling plant, as well as to maquiladora factories in other border cities. Employers have responded with layoffs and in some cases threats to shut down production.

At his inauguration, the new president of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (widely known by his initials, AMLO), ostentatiously announced his intention to increase, starting January 1, the miserable minimum wage to 102 pesos – a paltry five dollars a day. In the 43 cities and towns along the U.S. border, where the cost of living is much higher, he raised it to 176 pesos, or US\$9 a day, doubling the wage. This was ratified on December 17 in an agreement between the government, labor organizations and employers’ associations, with the approval of the Bank of Mexico. Coparmex, the main business association, boasted that with the increase, workers can “satisfy their basic food and non-food needs.” These capitalist gentlemen should try maintaining a family on such a ludicrous wage! But when the Matamoros maquila

Revolución Permanente



**January 26: Police arrived with 8 vans and 15 patrol cars, company lawyer and corporatist “union” delegate to declare the strike illegal. But hundreds of workers refused to be intimidated.**

Revolución Permanente



**Young workers were key to the success of the pickets, convincing older workers to defy the bosses.**

workers saw their pay stubs for the first week of January, there was almost no increase at all.

Nor was there the annual bonus that companies had paid for years as a substitute for genuine wage increases, but which they now refused to pay. As of that Friday, January 12, the black-and-red flags signifying a work stoppage were placed on a dozen plants where the workforce is affiliated to the Union of Laborers and Industrial Workers of the Maquiladora Industry (SJOIIM). Workers protested at the SJOIIM headquarters, complaining that its leader, Juan Villafuerte Morales, had only asked for a 10% increase and a bonus of 5,000 pesos. When Villafuerte then sent a formal letter of demands, he didn’t even mention the bonus. The workers continued insisting on a wage hike of 20% and the payment of the bonus of 32,000 pesos, according to the contract in force, equal to half a year’s wages. Thus was born the “20/32 movement,” which continues to grow, stirring up workers’ rebellion around the country.

Even before January 12, calls circulated on social networks under the name of Obreros Unidos de Matamoros (United Workers of Matamoros), equally directed against the companies and the “union” that the workers did not recognize as a defender of their interests – quite the opposite. “We call all workers to walk out on Friday, January 11 for the wage increase and the annual bonus.... Union Get Out!” read one poster.

Revolución Permanente



Villafuerte, the *charro*<sup>1</sup> leader of the SJOIIM, “exhorted the workers to return to work,” reported *El Mañana* (15 January). Two days later, this paper, which speaks for the maquiladora owners, published a worrisome headline, “Movement Radicalizes.” It reported on a rally in Matamoros’ Plaza Hidalgo with the presence of the lawyer Susana Prieto Terrazas, who “in previous days appeared on social networks supporting the workers of Matamoros and refusing to recognize the union” led by Villafuerte.

In fact, as we were able to confirm after talking with striking Matamoros workers, their rejection of the “union” reflects what they have learned from their own dismal experience with the pseudo-unions of the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). These are corporatist labor organizations, integrated into the capitalist state apparatus, which serve the employers as *labor police* to prevent the emergence of genuine workers unions. Other corporatist confederations are the CROC and the CROM. This legacy of the 70-year government by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) as a state party<sup>2</sup> survived the end of PRI rule due to the need of the bosses and their government, as subjects of imperialism and rulers of the semi-colonial country, to keep tight control of the growing Mexican working class, particularly in the border area.

<sup>1</sup> Literally “cowboys.” Following the bitter defeat of the 1948 railroad workers’ struggle, the government imposed a flunky labor leader who was known for dressing up in Mexican cowboy outfits. Since that time, government-controlled “unions” are popularly known as *charros*.

<sup>2</sup> During the seven decades of unbroken single-party rule by the PRI (1929-2000), all social organizations – from workers “unions” to peasant associations, youth and sports groups, housewives’ and women’s leagues, musicians’ and architects’ guilds – were formally part of the ruling party and integrated into the state apparatus. “Union” presidents were appointed by the government, and often directly by the president himself, while labor bodies were financed by the state. Leaders moved seamlessly from one position in the PRI-government bureaucracy to another. A “union” leader could often become the head of the state-owned company, and then go on to be a local mayor. After that, possibly a PRI deputy or senator in the state or federal legislature, or moving on to a position in the party *nomenklatura*. If he or she fell afoul of the PRI apparatus, however, they could be busted back to union leader, or head of the Tae Kwon Do association, or sometimes thrown in prison for a few years as a lesson to others who might stray. Suitably chastised, they might then return to their old position. This *corporatist system* decayed as the heavily state-owned economy was increasingly privatized from the mid-1980s on, depriving the state party of the resources siphoned off to finance its huge apparatus. When the PRI lost the presidency in 2000, this system largely fell apart (although holding on in PRI-governed states in northeastern Mexico). But it persisted in labor, as the corporatist “union” leaders switched their allegiance to the new governments of the clerical-rightist National Action Party.



**Activist labor lawyer Susana Prieto speaks at workers’ assembly in Matamoros, February 23, calling for formation of independent unions.**

Among those calling themselves socialists, the question of the integration of CTM labor bodies into the state has been obfuscated, in different ways. A few former leftists who have become propagandists in the service of the bourgeoisie (such as the dubious World Socialist Web Site, or more accurately, “Scab Website”) use it to rant against unions as such. More common are those who ignore corporatism and only speak of *charro* unions, or *charrismo*, thereby equating labor organizations embedded in the state apparatus (CTM-CROC-CROM) with unions with sellout leaders, on the presumption that one only has to fight for a militant leadership. But decades of workers’ rebellions underscore, as the Grupo Internacionalista has insisted, the urgency to break the corporatist shackles and forge a revolutionary leadership that is organizationally and politically independent of capital, its parties and its state.

### Corporatism, Old and New

In the course of the workers’ struggle in the Matamoros maquiladoras, the issue of corporatism has been key. During the two weeks following January 12, work stoppages spread to cover all 45 factories in the border city under the SJOIIM contract. Many of the maquila plants manufacture parts for the U.S. auto industry. Workers at companies such as Autoliv (which produces airbags and safety belts), Toyota Gosei Rubber (which produces rubber hoses for radiators) and Joyson Safety Systems (an auto parts plant that is threatening to close) had similar experiences during the first days of mobilization. As enforcers for the employers’ Human Resources managers, “union” leaders sought to convince the workers to drop their demands and go back to work. But in the face of tight-fisted bosses who refused to make any concessions, the rebellion continued to grow.

When the owners realized that the *charros* could not fulfill their task of maintaining “labor peace,” they switched gears. They told the SJOIIM and its general secretary, Villafuerte, to call an official strike in order to better control it. Under the pretext of “legalizing” the stoppages by invoking the relevant



**Thousands of workers jammed into Plaza Hidalgo on February 23 to demand that corrupt “unions” which defend the companies get out and calling to form unions independent of the corporatist CTM. Composite photo from video by CRM 1310 Radio de Matamoros.**

procedures before the Conciliation and Arbitration Boards (JCyA), the SJOIIM stooges urged workers to “act responsibly” for the sake of the “economy of the city and the state.” But advised by attorney Susana Prieto, who played a key role in the work stoppages in Ciudad Juárez at the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016,<sup>3</sup> workers were not intimidated. The strike was called for January 25.

To understand what came next, we must refer to the history of the workers’ struggle in Matamoros.

The SJOIIM today is a traditional “corporatist” union, affiliated to the CTM, under the command of the bourgeois state apparatus. Its main function is that of a labor contractor, providing “disciplined” and cheap labor to U.S. investors and their Mexican junior partners. However, its origins go back to the SJOI of union leader Agapito González Cavazos, who led it from the late 1950s to 1992. An integral part of the PRI-government system (see footnote 2), González Cavazos completely dominated the city, but kept his distance from the CTM. In the heyday of corporatism, this set-up provided some crumbs for members, winning the 40-hour workweek with 56 hours’ pay, which was still pitifully low. But as the system declined under the ravages of U.S. free-trade policies, PRI president Carlos Salinas de Gortari ordered that wages be squeezed, aided by the leader of the CTM, Fidel Velázquez. The leader of the SJOI slipped the leash, waging successful strikes in 1989.

In 1991, González Cavazos unleashed a huge strike, managing to raise wages in nine auto parts plants to US \$1.74 per hour (equal to US\$4.80 today), and won the contract clause that indexed the wages tabulator to the percentage of annual increase of the minimum wage.<sup>4</sup> But the government, management and corporatist “union” leadership counterattacked, trying to undermine the SJOI for defying the regime. At the beginning of 1992, the companies announced thousands of layoffs, a competing “union” was founded in the maquiladora sector, and Salinas de Gortari had Agapito imprisoned for “tax

evasion.” González Cavazos was released a few months later due to pressure from the ranks, but the SJOI became SJOIIM, now under CTM control. In 1994, Juan Villafuerte became general secretary – the same *charro* who heads it today, 25 years later – and the workweek was extended to 48 hours.

Since then, wages have plummeted as the pseudo-union created by the government and the CTM chiefs colluded with the bosses to not pay the wage increase stipulated in the contract. An end-of-the-year bonus was paid as a substitute for the minuscule minimum wage increase of from 4 to 6 percent.<sup>5</sup> When the new AMLO government decreed a doubling of the minimum wage at the border, the announcement that the bonus would not be paid was made by the head of SJOIIM, Villafuerte, acting as an unofficial spokesman of the employers’ association. Then, when due to the workers’ revolt he had to give in on the demand for the bonus, it was again the “union” that limited the wage demand to 20 percent, instead of the 100 percent stipulated by the contract. It is a system of “modern slavery,” as lawyer Susana Prieto put it in an interview with *La Jornada* (February 3).

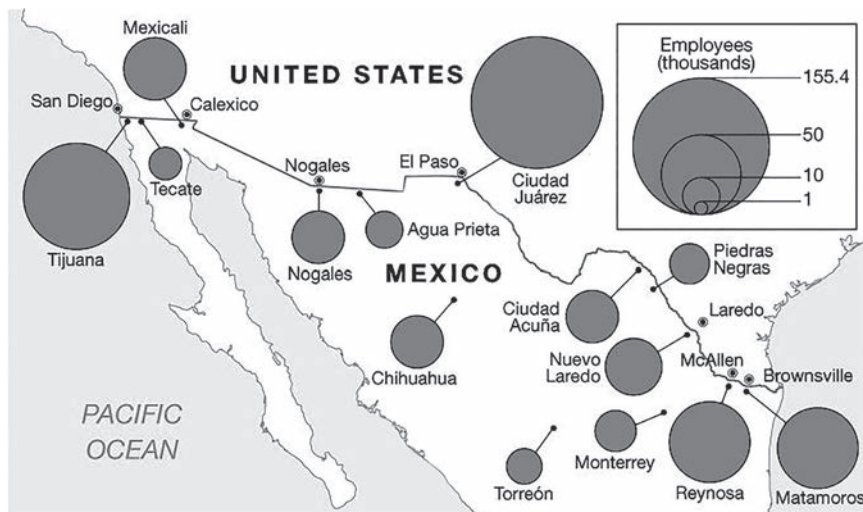
As a “traditional” corporatist labor organization, SJOIIM was forced to seek minor concessions from the bosses to pacify the workers. During contract bargaining, it would usually deploy its lawyers to “negotiate” the clauses, not only converting wage increases into a one-time bonus but often accepting the elimination, for example, of maternity rights of women workers (see the article by Cirila Quintero, “El sindicalismo actual en la industria maquiladora” 4o. Congreso de la Asociación Mexicana de Estudios del Trabajo [2003]). But, as elsewhere on the border, the CTM in Matamoros also offers the services of *another* corporatist “union,” the Industrial Union of Workers in Maquiladoras and Assembly Plants (SITPME), run by an flamboyant gangster named Jesús Mendoza Reyes. This is a straight-out company union offering employers “protection” contracts.

The affiliates of this pseudo-union in Matamoros were often not even aware of its existence. The “union representative” in a series of plants where the SITPME operates was the head of the company’s Human Resources Department. This

<sup>5</sup> Today a woman worker in an auto parts plant in Matamoros with a dozen years’ seniority would make about \$9 a day, whereas a woman worker in a corresponding General Motors plant in the U.S. might be paid \$25 an hour.

<sup>3</sup> See the article published by our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista: “Rebelión obrera en Cd. Juárez: ¡urge acción solidaria internacional!” *Revolución Permanente* No. 6, March 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Thus if the government ordered an increase of, say, 4% in the legal minimum wage at the start of the new year, maquiladora workers’ wages (which were well above the minimum, but typically one-tenth of those in equivalent U.S. plants) would increase by the same percentage.



Map of concentration of maquiladora factories along U.S.-Mexico border.

“union” has fewer lawyers and more goons to beat up workers. Mendoza Reyes does not try to hide that he is an employee of the bosses. He declared that the demand of workers regimented by the SITPME to receive the same settlement as the SJOIIM “is an aberration.” He complained bitterly that “our workers have been contaminated” with the demands of the strikers. And he concluded: “the owners are right to fire them” (*La Jornada*, February 9). However, Mendoza as well finally had to call an official strike (which he tried to sabotage until the last moment) to avoid being driven out of his offices by a crowd of angry workers.

### The Development of the Strike

The wave of strikes in Matamoros was a product of the bosses’ arrogance and the inability of the *charro* labor outfits to prevent the mobilization of the workers. Dissatisfied workers once again came up against the connivance between the maquila businessmen and the corporatist “unions” that regiment the workers of the region. Their status as labor cops to prevent workers’ organization and mobilization was made explicit in the course of the struggle, even when the overwhelmed “union” chiefs tried to regain control of the situation by calling an official strike (with reduced demands) for January 25, while simultaneously *calling off* the work stoppages that were underway. Thus they offered up to the bosses on a silver platter the workers who refused to return to work, depriving them of any protection. As for those who went back to work obeying the “union”: Human Resources kicked those labeled as “ringleaders” out the back door, despite the promise that there would be no reprisals.

When January 25 arrived, police patrols cruised around Industrial City and Industrial Park, where the workers who had walked out days before were waiting for the official strike to start. When the deadline expired at 2 p.m., at the Autoliv plant, the corporatist “union” delegate strutted in with the red-and-black strike flag. In the factory on the other side of the road, Inteva Plant 1, a “union” delegate accompanied the spokesperson of Human Resources and the legal representa-

tive of the firm. The lawyer read a document in which the local Conciliation and Arbitration Board declared itself ineligible to rule on the strike and, therefore, ruled it “non-existent” (i.e., illegal). Then Human Resources ordered the workers to return to the production line. The “union” delegate said that everything would be resolved by legal means, and urged workers to go back to work; that is, to break the strike. Later in the evening, the delegate asked the strikers to remove the red and black strike flag; they refused.

Thus the “union” called an official strike in order to put a stop to the unrest. At Trico, when the strike began, the employers threatened the newly hired workers,

probationary employees, to continue working. As workers who had walked out beginning on January 12 called by cellphone or messaged their co-workers to join the strike, which was now “legal,” the “union” leaders on the production lines ordered them to turn off their phones. Our reporter-activists reported from the scene:

“It was at Trico that the state labor authorities, in collusion with the ‘union’ and the police, tried to break the strike hours after it began, on Friday night (January 25). The representative of the Secretary of Labor, escorted by the police, pulled up to the strikers, almost all of them young, and told them that the strike was illegal and that they had to open the door and clear the way, because it was private property. Neither slow nor lazy, the union delegate untied the strike flag to allow Human Resources to open the door bit by bit, while police took up positions in the entrance. Personnel from the next shift began showing up at the factory door. They said that Human Resources had called them to tell them that they should go to work, that the strike was illegal and that the doors were open; and that if they didn’t go to work, they would automatically be fired and lose all their rights. Young workers, some only 16 years old, explained to fellow workers that they should not be intimidated, and should not break the strike. In the end they convinced them, and the strikers threw aside the ‘union’ delegate and organized themselves.”

The night the strike broke out, in a matter of hours, most of the workers no longer paid attention to the “union” delegates; in case of any doubts, they consulted the lawyer Susana Prieto. Only a couple of minutes after the lawyer called a meeting on the picket lines to encourage the striking workers, on her heels a man would show up, introducing himself as a lawyer of the “union,” saying “don’t let anyone divide us. We need unity, listen to your delegate,” while warning, “Do not be motivated by what comes out on the Internet, on Facebook.” “We are united, unite around the delegate,” he insisted, and then hopped into a van whose driver accelerated to chase after the lawyer, who had gone on to hold a meeting with another strike picket line, broadcasting live on Facebook to alert the other pickets and urge them to resist, and not let themselves get screwed.

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# CLASS STRUGGLE EDUCATION WORKERS

## Teachers Strikes Shake California

Since the mid-1980s, teachers and public education have been under sustained attack in a bipartisan offensive by the partner parties of American capitalism. Both Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Barack Obama pushed privatizing “education reform” aimed at breaking the power of teachers unions. A key weapon was promoting “charter schools” – private schools financed by draining funds from public schools.

In 2018, teachers in Republican-governed states from West Virginia to Arizona revolted against low pay and terrible teaching conditions. Now this revolt spread to California, where Democrats hold office at every level. Class Struggle Education Workers, fraternally allied with the Internationalist

Group, fought for active labor solidarity in the Los Angeles and Oakland strikes.

The militant strikes had the backing of students, parents and working people overall. But in both cases, the pro-Democratic Party bureaucracies atop the unions pushed through sellout contracts leaving the situation of teachers and students virtually unchanged while allowing the billionaire privatizers to continue their drive to destroy public education.. This underscores the importance of the CSEW’s struggle to break with the Democrats, oust the bureaucrats and build a class-struggle leadership.

We reprint in this and following pages several of the CSEW leaflets issued during the strikes.

**Teachers, Students, Parents, Workers –  
All Out to Defeat the Privatizers and Union-Busters!**

January 8

# Victory to Los Angeles Teachers Strike!

By Class Struggle Education Workers

LOS ANGELES, January 8 – Some 34,000 educators in the second-largest school district in the country are poised go on strike here for the first time since 1989. This is more than just a contract fight. It is a battle between capitalist union-busters hell-bent on privatizing schools, and the unions defending public education. The supporters of privately managed “charter schools” who run the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) are hard-lining it, to the point of forcing a walkout. But the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) has the massive support of its membership, which voted 98% to authorize a strike last August, and from students, parents and unionists throughout L.A.

On December 15, a huge crowd of 50,000 people turned out in downtown Los Angeles for the March for Public Education called by UTLA. Teachers and supporters marched through the city to make clear that they are ready to fight the privatizers, who have the overwhelmingly Latino and black parent/student population in their crosshairs. “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

**Picket Lines Mean Don’t Cross!**



Internationalist photo

**Transport workers contingent at 15 December 2018 solidarity rally for UTLA teachers in downtown Los Angeles.**

Transit Union and the California Faculty Association. Supporters of Class Struggle Education Workers and the Internationalist Group joined ATU militants wearing red union-printed shirts reading “ATU

**Break with the Democrats – Build a Workers Party!**

## CSEW Says Fight to Win the UTLA Strike!

- Build strong picket lines that no one crosses. Shut the schools down!
- Form a mass strike committee of representatives to be elected at every school, including teachers, non-instructional employees (nurses, librarians, counselors, etc.), along with representatives of unionized charter school teachers and all LAUSD unions and workers (custodial, cafeteria, school bus drivers, etc.) who respect strike lines;
- Build strike support committees in every area including representatives of students, parents and other unions, community and other groups supporting the strike;
- Support walkouts by students that the LAUSD wants to keep locked up in gymnasiums and auditoriums;
- Demand an immediate end to all LAUSD funding of charter schools and to undo all co-locations of charters in public school facilities;
- Demand mandatory limits on class sizes and that there be nurses and librarians full-time in every school under LAUSD jurisdiction, including charters;
- Demand an end to unpaid hours required of charter school educators. No slave labor in L.A. schools!
- Don't look to Democrats or any capitalist parties or politicians – Mobilize the power of the working class!

1277 Solidarity with UTLA Teachers,” and on the back, “All Out for Teachers Strike Picket Lines.”

The teacher revolt which swept across the United States last spring has reached L.A – but with a key difference. The strikes and walkouts that spread from West Virginia to Ohio, Oklahoma and Arizona, and then back to North Carolina were in Republican-governed states with weak unions and abysmal funding for public schools. UTLA, in contrast, is fighting the assault on public education where all major officials are Democrats. Although California is the richest state in the nation, it is near the bottom (46 out of 50) on per pupil spending on education. And Los Angeles has more students in charter schools than any other major U.S. city.

A strike solidarity motion of the transit workers union noted, “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 [Antonio] Villaraigosa and continues under his successor [Eric] Garcetti.” Yet teacher unions’ leaders are wedded to the Democratic Party. American Federation of Teachers (AFT) president Randi Weingarten is a member of the Democratic Party National Committee, while UTLA endorsed Democrats Garcetti for mayor and Gavin Newsom for governor.

A key issue in the strike is the proliferation of charters, which despite their claims to the contrary are in fact private schools that massively rob funds and facilities from the L.A. public schools. They also get millions from financial operators who enjoy juicy tax breaks and hefty management fees to underwrite their union-busting assault on public education. In announcing a January 10 strike date, UTLA leaders called vaguely to “address the charter industry drain that siphons more than \$600 million from our schools every year.” Yet they did not raise concrete demands even to limit charter schools. Now even their toothless call to “address” the issue has been dropped.

Los Angeles schools superintendent Austin Beutner is playing hardball. The LAUSD chief claimed on December 18 that a deal had been reached with the union on the District’s terms. The next day UTLA denounced this as a blatant lie, and said that L.A. Unified was refusing to deal with its demands for class-size limitations, and other issues directly benefitting students. The union has also pointed out that the LAUSD salary “offer” is

linked to cutting health care of newly hired employees. Beutner, a financier with no experience in education, claims the school system is on the verge of bankruptcy. Yet UTLA points out that the district is sitting on unrestricted reserves of \$1.86 billion, a sum that has more than tripled in the past five years.

The union has demanded the elimination of a contract clause (“1.5”) that allowed the District to unilaterally increase class sizes. Yesterday the LAUSD responded by proposing to *increase* high school class-size limits from 39 to 46 students, which could be breached for numerous reasons! Last fall, Beutner announced that the District would recruit up to 400 “substitute” teachers (scabs). Now local media reveal that the LAUSD has secretly signed contracts with several different scabberding outfits to *supply 4,400 strikebreakers!*

In explaining the decision to drop any negotiations about “unregulated growth of charters” and the financial drain by charter schools of public education funds, union president Alex Caputo-Pearl argued that “we are limited on what we can legally bargain.” The union tops used the same claim in dropping their demands against “toxic overtesting” and calls for teacher and parent involvement in running local schools. UTLA leaders are trying to limit demands to what they think can be won in a short strike. But the education bosses aren’t about to go along.

UTLA rightly wants to capitalize on the massive support for public education shown on December 15. There is also growing opposition to the scandal-ridden charter schools and their bogus claims of raising “standards.” But dropping demands on these key issues undercuts the union’s ability to mobilize the determined support it will need in this battle over public education. Saying that “we will have to deal with them outside of bargaining,” Caputo-Pearl is looking to Democratic Party politicians in Sacramento. Yet

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Class Struggle Education Workers, which originated in New York City education unions and includes union and non-union workers in related fields, fights to revitalize and transform the labor movement into an instrument for the emancipation of the working class and the oppressed.

**E-mail: [cs\\_edworkers@hotmail.com](mailto:cs_edworkers@hotmail.com)**

**Internet: <http://edworkersunite.blogspot.com>**

Longshore, Transit, Teamsters – All L.A. Labor:  
Join in Action with Educators, Students, Parents...

# To Win the Teachers Strike We Must Shut Down L.A.



Internationalist photo

Internationalists join with ILWU members and transport workers at Harry Bridges School in L.A.'s Harbor district on the first day of the strike, January 14.

## By Class Struggle Education Workers

LOS ANGELES, January 21 – After a full week – five school days – the Los Angeles teachers strike is stronger than ever. Picket lines have been large and spirited. “Rain or shine, we walk the line,” chanted teachers in the endless rain, with scores picketing at almost every location and hundreds ringing large schools. Despite vows by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) bosses to keep schools open with scabs and administrators, by week’s end less than one in five students were attending and principals called to close the schools. The mid-day strike rallies have been massive, with over 50,000 in downtown L.A. on Monday, January 14, another 50,000 marching on Tuesday the 15th, and when the sun finally came out, upwards of 60,000 jammed into Grand Park on Friday. Teachers roared their determination to make picket lines even stronger if the strike extends into a second week.

But to win, there’s a hard fight ahead. After lying low for a few days, the forces trying to undercut and destroy public education are raising their heads. The liberal media and Democratic Party politicians are trying to stampede the leadership of

the union, United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), into signing a contract cooked up in secret negotiations that would only offer up some crumbs, leaving the big problems in place. Minimal and temporary reduction of class sizes for a couple of grades, a few full-time nurses, promises of woefully inadequate funds from the state budget: nothing compared to what it will take to even begin to undo the results of years of schools being starved of resources. And those crumbs can be taken away the minute the District cries “budget deficit.” The privatizers who preside over the public school system are deliberately trying to run it into the ground.

Speaking to the crowd on Friday, UTLA president Alex Caputo-Pearl compared the strike to a boxing match: “We have stunned our opponents, the billionaires, the District bureaucrats, the nay-sayers, the nonprofit/industrial complex,” he said. “We have stunned them by taking over this city.” Public opinion polls show 80% in support of the strike, so far. But the opposition is not on the ropes, not by a long shot. Even having teachers, parents, students on the strike lines, with tens of thousands of demonstrators in the streets and massive com-

**Break with the Democrats – For a Class Struggle Workers Party!**

munity support, it's not enough. Now is the time to escalate. To *knock out the privatizers and bust the union-busters* we must **MOBILIZE LABOR and Latino, African American, Asian, immigrant and all working people of this city to SHUT DOWN LOS ANGELES.**

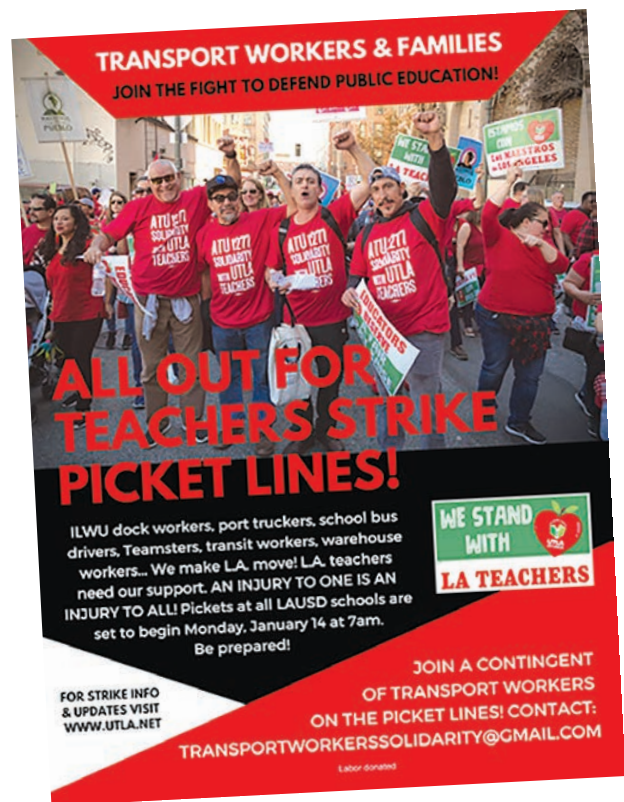
To win real gains over bitter opposition from the enemies of public education will take the power of the entire working class together with parents, students and oppressed communities throughout the city. This means building *strong picket lines that no one crosses*, in order to *shut down the schools*. At the same time, to defeat those powerful capitalist foes it is necessary to *mobilize the entire labor movement*. At the Friday rally we saw members of the ILWU (port workers), ATU (transit workers), SEIU (service employees), IATSE (stage hands), SAG-AFTRA (actors) and other unions. We need to see thousands of those unionists marching in contingents, and undertaking *solidarity action* at the workplace. If it's teachers alone, the LAUSD will just try to wait them out. Want to *win* the strike? Make it cost. *Shut down the ports, stop mass transit, jam the freeways*. That'll get the bosses' attention. And it will inspire working people and youth throughout the country and around the world.

## New From Class Struggle Education Workers



**80 pages with articles on the teachers revolt, Lev Vygotsky, New Orleans schools, Mexican teachers strike, a special dossier on gentrification and school segregation, and much more. Price: US\$3 (includes postage).**

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## What "Deal"? Don't Settle for a Sellout!

So far, the walkout by educators in the second-largest school district in the country has had fairly good press. Even an anti-union rag like the *Los Angeles Times* (16 January) headlined, "Teachers bask in support for strike." At a briefing on Day Two, the UTLA leader said triumphantly that the strike was the number one trending topic on social media, and that Democratic Party politicians including potential presidential candidates (Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris, Corey Booker and Bernie Sanders) had claimed to support the strike. But things will soon change if the teachers hang tough. The media are already floating the potential terms of a sellout "deal" to be brokered by Democratic mayor Eric Garcetti and Democratic governor Gavin Newsom. Garcetti has been "mediating" talks between the LAUSD and UTLA for the last several days.

A week of striking in the rain showed the determination of the teachers. It also had a festive quality: a street fair in Koreatown, a "Red for Ed marching band," student dance videos for public education, car pool videos for the union. But opponents of the strike are beginning to mobilize. Already we're beginning to see articles parroting LAUSD boss Austin Beutner's cynical references to poor and homeless students depending on school breakfasts and lunches. The same profiteers that breed poverty and homelessness have the nerve to use this in their demagogic anti-strike appeals. Expect to see more union-bashing trash in the media.

While headlining on Saturday that "Hopes rise for a deal to end strike," Friday's *Los Angeles Times* suggested what "a deal that meets or exceeds reasonable expectations" would



consist of:

“[A] final deal may look a lot like the district’s most recent offer in the key particulars. Peripheral elements could prove crucial – like a pilot program using union-backed reforms. Tougher accountability for charter schools at the state level also would be something the union could sell as a win.”

Who needs a “pilot program” to show that drastically smaller classes are crucial, or that every school should have a full-time nurse and a librarian – as well as a library?! Every educator knows that you can’t effectively teach, much less give individual attention, to 45 students in a high-school classroom – or even 35, or fewer still in lower grades. To *cut class sizes in half* will require the *hiring of thousands more educators* at full union scale. The money is there – how the capitalist politicians come up with it is their problem.

And what does “accountability for charter schools” mean? The UTLA’s pamphlet *Whose Schools: Community Representation and Transparency in Charter School Governance in Los Angeles* (June 2018) talks of “disproportionate influence of corporations” and calls for adding a couple of parents to governing boards. But that won’t change the nature of this union-busting, corporate operation. Class Struggle Education Workers insists: ***Charters must go! Turn them into public schools!***

From even before the beginning of the strike, the CSEW and the Internationalist Group have fought to build active solidarity from the labor movement. Motions were put forward and passed in the faculty union (CFA) of California State University and the Los Angeles transit union (ATU Local 1277) pledging to join the picket lines in the event of a teachers strike. From Day One, transit workers have been at the picket lines and the demonstrations in their red hoodies and t-shirts calling for transport workers solidarity with the strike and proclaiming the bottom-line union principle that ***picket lines mean don’t cross***. Our supporters have also participated in organizing and preparing strike support together with members of the dock workers union, the ILWU, the powerhouse of L.A. labor.

From the outset, the CSEW has called for measures to win the strike, like building strike support committees, supporting student walkouts and posing demands defending educators in charter schools, in order to organize the unorganized. A key measure is for a mass strike committee of representatives to be elected at every school. If a tentative settlement is agreed to by the bargaining team, UTLA members should demand to see it in writing, and to have the chance to debate any proposed agreement in a democratic mass meeting of the membership.

### **Democrats Are Leading the Drive to Privatize Public Education**

The drive to privatize education is behind the intentional underfunding of public schools, in order to make them fail. This is a *racist* campaign against a school system in which more than 90% of students are Latino (74%), African American (8%), Asian (8%), Pacific Islanders and Native Americans. Yet the underfunding (and the whole issue of

charter schools) isn’t raised in the strike demands, on the grounds that it can only be addressed at the state level. The LAUSD pleads poverty, but 90% of local school funds come from Sacramento, and the richest state in the country is near bottom in per-pupil spending (L.A. spends half as much on every student as NYC). California pays \$10,000 a year for each K-12 student, and \$75,000 a year per prison inmate. *But this fight isn’t about budget priorities, it’s about ruling-class interests.*

Above all, there must be clarity about the bosses’ Democratic Party. Unlike the teachers revolt last year in a series of Republican-governed “red states” (West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Arizona, North Carolina), in California teachers face Democratic administrators and officials at every level. At the Friday rally, Caputo-Pearl said, “Democrats, right here in California, the bluest of blue states, allow privatization to happen by underfunding our schools and being afraid of the charter industry.” His conclusion? “Democrats have to stand up.” Yet *Democrats lead* the drive for publicly funded private “charter” schools. “Right here in Los Angeles,” said the UTLA leader, “Eli Broad and Austin Beutner are pushing the privatization agenda.” What he didn’t say is that billionaires Broad and Beutner are top Democratic Party donors, with close ties to Bill and Hillary Clinton, and Barack Obama – yet another proof of how Democrats’ attacks on labor and the oppressed helped pave the way for raving Republican bigot Donald Trump in the White House.

*The fight to defend public education is eminently political, and in California today the immediate enemy in this fight at every level is the Democratic Party.* Union leaders (along with many reformist leftists) criticize “corporate Democrats,” while looking for aid from supposed “progressive” Democrats in city hall and the state house. The governor, state superintendent of education, Los Angeles mayor and almost all members of the L.A. school board are Democrats, who also hold huge supermajorities (over 70%) in both houses of the state legislature, which they have controlled almost continually since 1970. They are the ones directly responsible for the perilous state of public education in California today. Yet both the UTLA and the LAUSD are looking to the Democrats to resolve the issues in the strike.

The Democratic Party represents the interests of capital against those of labor, immigrants and the Latino, African American and Asian working people. The Democrats’ occasional “friend of labor” campaign appeals are sucker bait. They are on the other side of the class line from workers and the oppressed. Appealing to them is a recipe for defeat. Class Struggle Education Workers says: *you can’t fight Democrats with Democrats, and you can’t fight Trump with Democrats* – they all defend the capitalist system. The CSEW calls to ***break with the Democrats*** and to ***build a class-struggle workers party.***

***TO WIN THE TEACHERS STRIKE, WE MUST MOBILIZE LABOR TO SHUT DOWN L.A.***



at work on Wednesday, many cheered. But by mid-afternoon when the 47-page tentative agreement was posted online, the cheering turned to shock. This was what tens of thousands had marched and picketed in the rain for!

A little over two hours later, a “streamlined voting process” was held at school sites during rush hour (5-7 p.m.). At 7:30 p.m. Caputo-Pearl declared that a “supermajority” had voted “yes.” “Streamlined”? It was steamrollered. The whole business made a mockery of union democracy. The UTLA Facebook page exploded with thousands of angry comments complaining about the terms of the deal and the rushed vote before teachers and parents could even figure out what all the legalese meant. ***The agreement is a shameful sellout of the strike***, forced down the throats of UTLA rank-and-file by a leadership that ultimately seeks to keep the class struggle in check.

The most positive comment we heard about the agreement on Tuesday afternoon after the terms were revealed was that it was “a few baby steps in the right direction.” It’s not even that. What the Internationalist Group said about the Chicago teachers strike of 2012 holds true for L.A. today: “*strike was huge, settlement sucks.*”

So why did this happen? For the misnamed Union Power caucus that talked of a “social justice strike” even as it engineered the sellout, this strike was all about the Democratic Party. As Class Struggle Education Workers said in our leaflet widely distributed at yesterday’s rally:

“The governor, state superintendent of education, Los Angeles mayor and almost all members of the L.A. school board are Democrats, who also hold huge supermajorities (over 70%) in both houses of the state legislature, which they have controlled almost continually since 1970. They are the ones directly responsible for the perilous state of public education in California today. Yet both the UTLA and the LAUSD are looking to the Democrats to resolve the issue in the strike.” —“To Win the Teachers Strike We Must Shut Down L.A.” (21 January)

Sure enough, the Democrats “resolved” the strike issues, in their (capitalist) class interests. As a comment on the union’s Facebook page said: “What happened today is just capitulation to the privatizers and union busters.” But remember, *the membership is the union*. The UTLA ranks should *demand the right to debate and vote on the final agreement*. And the most determined should undertake the difficult task of forging a leadership with the program and determination to wage the class struggle through to victory.

### Sold A Bill of Goods

The makings of the settlement were clear even before the strike. An initial look at the agreement shows the following:

- **Salary “increase”:** The 6% increase retroactive to 2017 is the same figure the LAUSD has put forward since last summer. Yet inflation in the Los Angeles metropolitan area was 3.6% in 2017 and 3.2% in 2018. On top of which, there are no raises scheduled for the next three years. Do the math: this is actually a *pay cut*.

- **Section 1.5:** The leadership is hailing the elimination of the infamous Section 1.5 of Article XVIII of the Collective

Bargaining Agreement (CBA). This allowed the District to increase class size at will. But the LAUSD had *already agreed to drop 1.5* in their January 7 pre-strike offer.

- **Class size “caps”:** The leadership is touting the agreement to lower class sizes by one student a year and two in the third year, which won’t make a dent. That’s not all – read the fine print: this “reduction” is from the current 2017-2018 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) *which allows for up to 46 students per class in high school*. Only after three years, by 15 October 2022, will class size maximums be reduced to the outrageously high levels established in the 2014-2017 CBA (see table on page 218), which allows 39 students per high school classroom. And note that Alex Caputo-Pearl *personally signed off on the huge increase in class sizes* (see his signature on the 2017-18 MOU).

- **ELA, Math and elementary school class sizes:** The “hard cap” of 39 students in secondary ELA and Math classes would actually be an *increase in maximum class size* for those classes currently capped at 37 students. Not to mention that there is *no reduction at all in class sizes up to fourth grade*.

- **Student/counselor ratio of 500-to-1:** Actually, the agreement says an additional counselor will be hired only when a school “has exceeded 50% of the ratio,” i.e., 750 students per counselor! But even 500:1 is a slap in the face, ensuring that overburdened counselors will be consumed by classroom problems, with limited or no time to help students with applying to college, for example.

- **UTLA charter school co-location coordinator:** This would make the union co-responsible for existing charter school expansion instead of mobilizing to *stop* co-locations.

- **L.A. School Board appeal to state legislature for cap on charter schools:** Here the UTLA is collaborating with LAUSD, which has been aggressively pushing charters, instead of fighting these privatizers tooth and nail.

- **Nurses and librarians:** The only step forward in the Tentative Agreement is the hiring of 300 nurses and 81 librarians. But on January 11, the LAUSD offered to hire 1,200 teachers, counselors, nurses and librarians. What happened to that?

As we wrote in the January 21 CSEW leaflet, “Every educator knows that you can’t effectively teach, much less give individual attention, to 45 students in a high-school classroom – or even 35, or fewer still in lower grades. To *cut class sizes in half* will require the *hiring of thousands more educators* at full union scale.”

### The Pro-Capitalist Labor Bureaucracy and Its “Left” Apologists

When teachers saw the temporary agreement there was an explosion of outrage, frustration, bitter disappointment and confusion on social media. Some of the comments:

“This agreement is no win!! It’s a big fat LOSS!!”

“This was a set up. They must have had this contract last week, but needed to pump us all up and wait until day 7 to make a decision in a few hours!”

“Why was a ‘victory’ announced before we voted on this agreement??? Why were we RUSHED into voting on something so important???”



**Picketing at Roosevelt High School on January 14.**

Clearly, many teachers saw that Caputo-Pearl had pulled a fast one on them, and rightly felt betrayed. Yet some were so demoralized that they questioned paying dues and the very need for a union. This would go along with last year's *Janus v. AFSCME* Supreme Court ruling seeking to financially cripple public sector unions and to encourage people to leave or refuse to join unions by outlawing "agency shop" fee collection.

That is also the line of the so-called World Socialist Web Site (WSWS), which has put out leaflets during the strike. Teachers and strike supporters should be forewarned that this *sinister anti-union outfit* seeks to destroy the UTLA. The WSWS fraudsters appeal to demoralized teachers by equating the union tops with the union itself. Yet unions are an essential first line of defense against the bosses. Without the UTLA there would have been no strike. Class Struggle Education Workers criticizes the class collaboration of the "Union Power" sellouts because we *defend the unions* by building a core of militants on a political program of hard *class struggle*.

For their part, the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America (DSA) and International Socialist Organization (ISO) act as apologists for, and in fact are part of the UTLA leadership. During the strike a joint DSA/ISO statement admitted that "local and state Democrats" had overseen the underfunding of L.A. schools, and meekly called for "holding these Democrats to account and breaking with their pro-business agenda." As if the Democratic Party politicians can be made "accountable" to anyone other than the capitalist class they serve! No, it is necessary to *break with the Democratic Party* as a whole in order to throw off the *stranglehold of this ruling-class party* and fight for the political independence of the workers from the bosses throughout the U.S.

ISO spokesperson Gillian Russom, a member of the ruling Union Power caucus and of the UTLA Board of Directors, presented the sellout agreement to teachers at Roosevelt High School on Tuesday. That night she described it as a "victory on many levels" to an ISO meeting where she repeated the bureaucracy's falsehood-filled talking points ("We Won a Historic Victory for

LA Schools," *Socialist Worker*, 23 January). The same line was taken by the DSA's *Jacobin* ("After LA's strike, 'nothing will be the same,'" 23 January). Meanwhile, the "Left Voice" media group runs interference for these reformists, trying in standard centrist fashion to split the difference between victory and betrayal, with a piece (23 January) claiming "important gains" while reporting teachers' "mixed feelings" about the contract.

During the strike, there was an overwhelming outpouring of solidarity from the working-class population, including from some of the most powerful unions that make this city move. Longshore

dock workers who have the power to shut down the ports, bus and rail workers who could paralyze the public transit system – these are key allies of the teachers. Their presence on the picket lines and in mass rallies was a threat to the bosses who fear more than anything the spectre of labor mobilizing its power to defeat the privatizers and shut down the flow of profit.

As the CSEW wrote in our first leaflet, "Victory to Los Angeles Teachers Strike" (8 January), "To build massive picket lines that no one crosses, the active support of the entire L.A.-area labor movement is needed." We did our best to build such support. The solidarity strikes by SEIU Local 99 workers were also very important, pointing the way to shutting down all the schools. But UTLA leaders didn't attempt to shut down the schools, instructing strikers not to stop anyone crossing the lines, and the agreement doesn't even have a "no reprisals" clause for the solidarity strikers. In line with its policy of class collaboration, the leadership didn't have a strategy to win the strike: what they sought was to pressure the Democrats.

### **Forge a Class-Struggle Opposition in the Unions**

After taking it on the chin for too long, L.A. labor is starting to fight back, and not just on narrow economic issues. The teachers strike was an expression of that. Contingents of Transport Workers Against Deportations have fought to defend immigrants. Port truckers blocked the L.A. detention center with Teamster rigs in defense of immigrants threatened by the cancellation of TPS (Temporary Protected Status). It's also significant that class-struggle militants in the transit union (ATU 1277) and the Cal State faculty union (CFA) were able to get motions passed pledging solidarity action with the UTLA and identifying the Democratic Party as responsible for attacks on public education.

In the strike, ILWU union halls were used as strike support centers to plan and prepare concrete solidarity action for the teachers, such as organizing food distribution to the picket lines and making hundreds of picket signs declaring "ILWU stands with Teachers". At schools near the harbor and beyond, longshore

Internationalist photo



**Picket lines mean don't cross, period. Picketers led by ILWU dock workers and transport workers confront truck at Harry Bridges school on the morning of January 14.**

workers and their families turned away scabs and gave confidence to the teachers. The CSEW worked alongside them. But to *win* the strike and real gains in the fight against privatization of public education, a port shutdown by this powerhouse of labor would have hit the privatizers and union-busters where it hurts.

The struggle is far from over. The strike at the Accelerated Schools charter chain in L.A. is still on and needs solidarity. Teachers in Denver, Colorado have voted to strike as early as January 28, while teachers in Oakland (where Democratic Party billionaire Eli Broad tries out his charter schemes before generalizing them in Los Angeles) are about to vote to strike next month. While the second unionized charter chain in Chicago has set a strike date for February 5.

The momentum building behind the L.A. teachers strike posed the prospect of a raging class battle engulfing the whole city, in which the loyal agents of the Democratic Party in the union leaderships could find the reins of control slipping out of their fingers. *That is why there was such a frantic rush to shut the strike down by ramming through this sellout agreement.* The main obstacle standing in the way of *defeating* the money men who seek to take over the schools is the *labor bureaucracy* that holds back class struggle in the service of the bosses' Democratic Party, along with the so-called leftists alibiing their betrayals, and whose fundamental loyalty is to U.S. capitalism.

Class Struggle Education Workers fights to *oust the bureaucrats, break with the Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist political parties* and to *build a class-struggle workers party*. The urgency of this task is the most crucial of all the strike's lessons. ■

## Victory to L.A. teachers...

*continued from page 14*

Governor Newsom and the new state schools chief Tony Thurmond have insisted they are not “anti-charters.”

To *win* this strike the union and its supporters must prepare to wage an all-out fight against a vicious enemy. From the very first day, UTLA should make clear that *picket lines mean don't cross*, period. To build massive picket lines that no one crosses, the active support of the entire L.A.-area labor movement is needed. Motions by the statewide California Faculty Association (representing educators at California State University) and by ATU Local 1277 (representing Los Angeles transit workers) to mobilize in solidarity on the picket lines point the way. The initiative for this originated with supporters of Class Struggle Education Workers and the Internationalist Group.

In a significant development, a call has been issued by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union to join the picket lines. Appeals should be made to other key unions, including the Teamsters, who recently struck L.A. ports in defense of immigrants threatened with deportation.

To hammer out next steps each day, overcome bureaucratic resistance and ensure that the strike is run by the rank and file, a *mass strike committee* of representatives should be elected from every school.

In addition to outreach efforts already underway, *strike support committees* at every school should actively enlist parents and other workers. Such committees are key to countering strikebreaking propaganda and dealing with childcare and meals for the students.

Class-conscious educators should call to *oppose charter schools* altogether, to turn them into public schools and to *abolish the LAUSD administration*. Instead, *schools should be governed by councils of educators, students, parents and workers*. Above all, the defense of public education must be waged politically. From Eli Broad to Bill and Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama on down to Antonio Villagairoso and Austin Beutner, the key privatizers are Democrats. Beutner was picked by Clinton to oversee the plundering of enterprises that were privatized following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Now he is looting the Los Angeles public schools.

We need a fighting leadership to mobilize the power of the working class. The entrenched bureaucracy of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association seeks to hold back rank-and-file militancy by chaining the unions to capitalist politicians who falsely pose as “friends of labor.” What's required is a union leadership with the program and determination to wage hard class struggle to *defeat* the bipartisan capitalist attack on public education. Against Republicans and Democrats, the CSEW calls to build a *class-struggle workers party*.

**ALL OUT TO WIN THE LOS ANGELES  
TEACHERS STRIKE!**

# Labor: Shut Down the Port, BART, Bay Bridge Mobilize Bay Area Workers to Win Oakland Teachers Strike



Oakland Education Association holds rally of thousands on city hall steps, February 5.

**Teachers, Students, Parents, Workers –  
Build Mass Pickets Nobody Crosses!  
Fight for a Huge Pay Hike, Far Smaller  
Classes – Stop School Closures!  
Unionize Charters – Turn Them All  
Into Public Schools**

**by Class Struggle Education Workers**

OAKLAND, California – On February 21, some 3,000 educators are going on strike against the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) demanding higher pay, lower class sizes and an end to the underfunding of public schools. Students have already gone into the streets by the hundreds to support

their teachers. The union, the Oakland Education Association (OEA), has urged parents and residents to join in building strong picket lines. This is key: it's necessary to shut the schools down. But that is only the first step: this battle for public education is facing formidable foes, not just the Oakland School Board but the Democrats who run the city and the state of California on up to the Republican White House and Trump's education czarina Betsy DeVos. These representatives of capital aren't about to provide quality education to poor, minority, immigrant and working-class children. They only understand the language of power – class power. So we must hit them where it hurts. *Shut down the Port of Oakland, Bay Area Rapid Transit and the Bay Bridge with mass labor-led action – then we can talk turkey.*

Teachers in Oakland are hurting, and so are their students and their communities. Educators in the OUSD are among

**Defeat the Democrat-Republican War on Public Education!**

Internationalist photo



**Students speaking from the stage at February 26 rally outside Roots Academy, protesting the pro-charter school board decision to close it.**

the very lowest paid in the Bay Area (third from the bottom out of 101 districts for experienced teachers). Salaries are so low compared to the sky-high housing costs that the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Oakland (over \$2,500) would eat up *over 40%* of the *before-tax* salary of a starting teacher with a master's degree. Meanwhile, Superintendent Kyla Johnson-Trammell is proposing drastic budget cuts (\$20 million for the next school year), including closing 24 of the district's 86 schools. It's not surprising, then, that the teacher turnover rate in Oakland (20%, over 500 quit yearly) is double the statewide average. But Oakland teachers are fighting back. For the last year there have been a series of union marches, wildcat strikes and student walkouts leading to a vote at the end of January in which 95% voted to authorize a strike (with 84% of the teachers voting). The situation is so dire that 75 principals of Oakland schools signed a letter saying they support the teachers in their strike.

The Oakland school administration, however, has hard-lined it with the teachers, cynically trying to pit one group against another, always using a projected budget deficit as the excuse. At the latest board meeting, schools chief Johnson-Trammell proposed cutting up to \$5 million earmarked for low-income, English language learners and homeless students in order to pay for teacher raises! At a late January meeting, the board voted (over vociferous parental and student objections) to close the predominantly black Roots International Academy, in order to expand the predominantly Latino Coliseum College Prep Academy. The Board has flooded the district with 32 charter schools which drain funds and students from the public schools, then used the resulting financial problems to justify shutting down more schools. Meanwhile, the OUSD was accused last year by an independent agency of "highly unusual" and "suspicious" financial practices including "intentional manipulation" of general funds.

Preparing for the strike, the Oakland school bosses are tossing around threats, declaring that any students who do not attend will be marked as unexcused absences, and lining up a pool of substitute teachers to act as strikebreakers. Solid picket lines should ensure that such "scabstitutes," as L.A. strikers called them, don't cross. In turn, Teach for America (TFA) sent out a "guidance" saying that any of its 58 corps members in the District who go on strike stand to lose a \$2,000 to \$10,000 award they were promised from the federally funded Americorps. TFA (whose co-founder is the CEO of the KIPP charter chain and whose alumni include the hated ex-Washington, D.C. schools chief Michelle Rhee) is a union-busting

operation notorious for sending unprepared elite college students into low-income schools for a two-year stint, after which the vast majority leave. Its action in Oakland outraged more than 450 alumni who sent a letter denouncing this naked attempt to pressure teachers into scabbing. TFA's "defense" was that it issued the same antistrike threat during the Los Angeles teachers walkout last month.

The attack on teachers and public schools is being carried out by the Oakland school board, with a pro-charter majority (five out of seven members). As OEA president Keith Brown wrote in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (20 February), "Billionaires like Michael Bloomberg are spending money to influence Oakland school board elections." In fact, the board was bought by the Rogers Foundation, Gates Foundation (Microsoft), Walton Foundation (Walmart), Broad Foundation and the former New York City mayor. Los Angeles magnate Eli Broad has used Oakland to try out his school takeover strategies which he then unleashes on L.A., including a *School Closure Guide* (2009) used to launch a wave of Oakland school closings the following year. Bloomberg has dropped more than \$5 million on California elections to elect charter school supporters, including \$300,000 in 2017 to finance the Great Oakland (GO) coalition that wants to turn half of local schools into charters. The same forces pumped in millions in a failed effort to elect Green Dot charter CEO Marshall Tuck as state schools superintendent.

In the face of this daunting array of capitalist firepower, Oakland educators need powerful allies who can hit the bosses in the pocketbook the way a teachers strike alone cannot. In the L.A. strike, supporters of Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) brought transit workers from ATU Local 1277 to the picket lines and joined with ILWU (International Longshore and Warehouse Union) members and family in the harbor area in picketing and strike solidarity preparations. As

the strike stretched into its second week, the CSEW called to **“MOBILIZE LABOR and Latino, African American, Asian, immigrant and all working people of this city to SHUT DOWN LOS ANGELES.... Shut down the ports, stop mass transit, jam the freeways.** That’ll get the bosses’ attention. And it will inspire working people and youth throughout the country and around the world” (see the CSEW leaflet “To Win the Teachers Strike We Must Shut Down L.A.” [21 January]).

Today, **the port of Oakland is key. A work stoppage in solidarity by the ILWU dock workers in support of teachers would be a powerful blow against the education privatizers,** as union militants calling to respect teachers picket lines recognize. In addition, union action **shutting down the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system** would seriously hamper the West Coast financial center in San Francisco, as would mass **labor-led action to jam the Bay Bridge.** Impossible? Not at all. During the walkouts by BART workers in the summer and fall of 2013 there were concrete possibilities of all of these actions, but the key ingredient was missing: **a labor leadership with the program and determination to take on the capitalists, their politicians and their state.** That’s what Oakland teachers need today. Routine, go-it-alone strike tactics are not enough to win a solid victory against the labor-hating edu-bosses. **It will take hard class struggle to bust the union-busters.**

A key measure would be a **mass strike committee, with representatives elected at every school** to decide on the course of the strike daily, and ensure that the rank-and-file are in charge, including of the bargaining. Another vital step is a concerted **campaign during the strike to unionize the charter schools,** under the same contract as other OUSD educators, demanding an **end to co-locations,** a **cutoff of all public school funds to these private schools,** and a **halt to unpaid (slave) labor** required of charter school personnel. To ensure community support the union must insist that **stop all school closings** is a bottom-line demand. Above all, **the strike must be fought politically, against both capitalist parties and particularly the Democrats,** who are centrally responsible for the crisis besetting public education in Oakland and all of California today. Instead of going hat-in-hand to beg in Sacramento, **teachers from around the state should occupy the capitol** to demand **cancellation of the extortionate “loan” that was imposed on Oakland schools** in the 2010 state takeover (and won’t be paid off until 2024), **roll back charters** and **fully fund schools to meet strikers’ demands.** How the bosses’ politicians come up with the cash is their problem.

### Democrats and Charters

Across the country, the teachers revolt that broke out last spring is continuing, but with important differences. This time it is in states governed by Democrats, with well-established educator unions, and it is going up directly against the key elements of the privatizing “education reform” pushed by both capitalist parties. In January there was the huge Los Angeles strike of 35,000 teachers in the second-largest school district in the country, affecting over half a million students. But while strikers picketed for a week in the rain, bringing out repeated mass solidarity demonstrations of up to 70,000

supporters, the settlement negotiated by the union bureaucracy sold out those efforts, leaving monster class sizes, with a pay “raise” less than the rate of inflation, and on the key question of charter schools which have drained funds from the public schools, nothing but an insincere letter from the pro-charter school board asking state authorities for a temporary cap (see the CSEW’s balance sheet, “Powerful L.A. Teachers Strike Was Betrayed in Settlement” [23 January]).

Earlier this month there was the three-day strike by Denver teachers centrally against “performance-based” pay, based on student test scores and working in high-poverty schools, known as “ProComp.” This system, put in place a decade ago, turned into a monster, according to strikers, with increased testing and unpredictable bonuses. Worse still, it *cut* funding for schools with impoverished students and English language learners, whose scores are lower on standardized tests, and more generally penalized teachers for the social ills of this racist, capitalist society. Yet in the settlement, instead of raising teachers’ base pay, the union tops agreed to the school district’s program of continuing the paltry bonuses, while calling for a research study of the system. This is hardly surprising, since when the system was voted into law in Colorado (and then adopted by the Democratic Obama administration’s Race to the Top program), *it was endorsed by American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten.* When Weingarten tried to push through such “school-based merit pay” in New York, a CSEW union delegate opposed it and won teachers in the largest program in the system to turn down the \$3,000-per-teacher “bonus” (bribe).

Most recently, on February 21, West Virginia teachers walked out, again, this time over a bill in the state legislature to legalize charter schools. Once again, the schools in all 55 of the state’s counties were shut, hundreds of teachers besieged the state capitol in Charleston. The bill, pushed by right-wing groups like “Americans for Prosperity” funded by the Koch brothers, called for authorizing seven charters, plus money for vouchers for private schools and paying parents for home-schooling! In typical fashion, the AFT affiliate favored a house of delegates bill, for “only” two charters. But when the state senate sent

### Beware of the World Scab Web Site

Both in Los Angeles and now in Oakland, in the recent California teachers strikes a dubious outfit has been distributing fliers under the name of the “World Socialist Web Site,” or WSWS. Readers should be aware that while this group may appear to have “left” criticisms of union leaders, in reality the “WSWS” is opposed to unions altogether. In some cases, they have even leafletted against unions as representation elections were being held. The main leader of this group, which sometimes also uses the name “Socialist Equality Party,” one David North, was until recently the CEO of a non-union (scab) printing company in Michigan, Grand River Printing & Imaging. While union leaders are overwhelmingly tied to the bosses’ Democratic Party and often try to pass off sellout deals as victories (as in L.A.), *the membership is the union,* which is the first line of defense against the bosses.



Internationalist photo



**ATU transit workers from L.A. and Oakland along with ILWU in solidarity with striking Oakland teachers, February 21.**

back the original bill, the lower house, feeling the heat from the striking teachers in the corridors, indefinitely tabled it. (Teachers voted to continue the strike just in case there was a move to reconsider.) So under pressure, a Republican-controlled state legislature took a harder line against charters than the union tops. Again, not surprising, as the AFT has operated its own charter school (with a substandard contract) and bragged about its long-time leader Albert Shanker originating the charter movement.

The “mainstream” (capitalist) media have taken note of the groundswell of opposition to privatized charter schools from teachers and parents alike, and the turmoil this has caused in the Democratic Party (see Valerie Strauss, “Why the L.A. teachers strike is so uncomfortable for so many Democrats,” *Washington Post*, 16 January). Some, echoing the union bureaucrats are claiming, “Success of Los Angeles Teachers Strike Rocks Charter Schools, and a Rich Supporter,” *New York Times*, 28 January). The *Times* article stated, “The strike is the latest setback for the charter school movement, which once drew the endorsement of prominent Democrats and Republicans alike.” It noted that “It is still unclear how much practical impact the deal will have on charters,” adding: “But the defeat in the court of public opinion is clear: After years of support from powerful local and national allies — including many Democrats — charter schools are now facing a backlash and severe skepticism.” But the “court of public opinion” won’t stop the powerful forces that are out to corporatize and privatize public education.

In fact, as in Los Angeles, the major foes of striking educators in Oakland are Democrats: Bill Gates, Eli Broad and now Bloomberg once again, who is major bankroller of the Democrats for Educational Reform charterizers. The fact is that the Democrats have been pushing charters even more than the Republicans,

who prefer vouchers. Democrat Barack Obama and his education czar Arne Duncan required states that wanted “RTTP” funds to lift caps on charters. Charter schools are no more “public” than “defense” contractors who milk the budget of the Pentagon war machine. They are designed as union-busting vehicles which demonstrably increase segregation, among other things by “cherry-picking” students and forcing out those with low scores — “separate is not equal.” This “public-private partnership,” so beloved of Democrats like Obama and the Clintons (Hillary was on the board of Walmart, and has worked with Eli Broad since she was first lady of Arkansas), are a weapon to destroy public schools. Weingarten’s mentor as AFT leader, Shanker, was a virulently anti-communist social democrat who once declared that

“public education operates like a planned economy” that “more resembles the communist economy than our own market economy” (*New York Times*, 23 July 1989).

Today as a century and a half ago, the communists are the foremost fighters for and defenders of public education. The AFT and NEA bureaucracies are in the pocket of the capitalist Democrats, for whom they do the donkey work of phone-banking and house-to-house canvassing at election time. While criticizing “excessive” charters, the union tops refuse to call for outright opposition to these parasitic private schools. Even when they are supposedly “non-profit,” charters are a cash cow for financial speculators as they leech off the public education budget and seek to bankrupt public schools. Meanwhile, the labor misleaders bank their whole “strategy” on lobbying Democratic politicians, from Governor Gavin Newsom to Senator Kamala Harris, whom some are looking to as a broker to settle the Oakland school strike. Oakland had the double misfortune of having Democrat Jerry Brown as mayor and then governor pushed charters with a vengeance (and opposed unionizing them).

The Democratic Party presides over racist repression against African Americans, Latinos and Asians in large cities across the country, has waged imperialist war from Afghanistan to Latin America, and deported more than 8 million immigrants under Obama — far more than Trump and Bush combined — while aggressively promoting charter schools and “performance-based pay” for educators. As long as the unions are chained to the Democrats (or Republicans, or Greens), they will suffer one defeat after another, which the bureaucrats will try to prettify as victories. The answer is to forge a fighting leadership of the unions to break with all capitalist parties and build a class-struggle workers party that fights for a workers government, to make it possible for education to serve the interests of the working people and the oppressed. ■

## Escalate the Strike by Taking It to the Port

March 3

# Oakland Teachers: The Deal Stinks – Vote It Down! No Cuts, No Layoffs, No School Closures!

By Class Struggle Education Workers

OAKLAND, California – After a week on the picket lines in a rock-solid strike, on Friday the leadership of the Oakland Education Association (OEA) announced a rotten deal which sells short the demands that teachers have been fighting for. Even before the tentative agreement had gone up on the Internet so members could read it, officials ordered strike pickets taken down, contrary to the decision of the Rep Council on Thursday to keep strike lines up until the membership voted.

As the press conference announcing the agreement was live on the OEA Facebook page there were lots of comments posted opposed to it (try finding them now). At a meeting of the Rep Council today (Saturday, March 2) many activists voiced opposition. Remember: the membership IS the union, and this deal does not at all reflect what the membership voted to strike for. The tentative agreement includes:

- **A salary agreement that is really a pay cut.** The tentative deal is for 11% over four years, or 2.75% per year. The rate of inflation last year in the Bay Area according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics was 3.9%. The average increase in Oakland apartment rents last year was 12.7%. As for the 3% signing bonus (bribe), the cost of living for Bay Area residents has already risen over 6% in the year and a half that Oakland teachers have been working without a contract. Do the math.
- **Minimal cuts in class size.** Class sizes will be cut by one (1) student in the coming year for “highest- needs” schools, and one (1) student for all schools in the following year. The difference between teaching a class of 30 vs. 32 students will be practically unnoticeable.
- **Nothing to stop school closures.** The “5 month pause” on new school closures is no win at all – in fact, it may *aid* the OUSD in closing schools. It means that Roots Academy would still be closed, and the School Board can order the other 23 schools on its chopping block closed during the summer recess when teachers are not there and parents are not mobilized.
- **Nothing to stop charter schools.** Getting the pro-charter School Board to send a hypocritical letter to state authorities calling for a temporary moratorium on new charters will achieve zero.
- **No real increase in student support.** No additional nurses, reduction of counselor caseload from 600:1 to 550:1? This won't be “the schools our students deserve,” as the OEA



Photo courtesy of Daphne Crane

**Oakland School Board member Jumoke Hinton-Hodge, right, choking kindergarten teacher and OEA strike captain Darnisha Wright while trying to cross a picket line at La Escuelita Elementary School, March 1.**

rightly called for.

- **Plus any gains will be paid for by cutting programs and laying off staff.** The OUSD has already announced \$30 million in cuts, including laying off as many as 150 classified staff represented by the SEIU. This deal is stabbing them in the back.

This tentative agreement is an insult to the educators who undertook months of preparations for this strike and a slap in the face for the students and parents who joined the picket lines and marches. Class Struggle Education Workers urges Oakland teachers on Sunday to **VOTE “NO” ON THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT.**

Overturning a rotten contract negotiated by the union leadership is a big deal. The House of Delegates of the Chicago Teachers Union did it in 2012, whereupon the leadership (of the Caucus of Rank-and-file Educators, or CORE) turned around and shoved the deal down the delegates’ throat in a second vote. To be successful it is necessary to have a clear and simple message.

The rotten deal is the product of the union bureaucracy (yes, the OEA has one, we’re seeing it in action right now) that seeks to balance between the employers and the union ranks,

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# CLASS STRUGGLE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

## Taxi Workers to Gov. Cuomo: No to “Suicide” Surcharge

By **Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas**  
(Class Struggle International Workers)

FEBRUARY 6 – Two New York State Supreme Court rulings came down last week in the war on taxi workers. The first, on January 30, was in a suit filed by the “ride-hail” companies Lyft and Juno against New York City’s new minimum “app-based” driver pay formula, which is supposed to work out \$17.22 per hour (the statewide minimum of \$15, plus \$2.22 for other mandatory costs). Rather than letting the new pay rate go into effect, the judge’s ruling let the case proceed, while ordered the companies to put the extra money drivers would have earned from increased fares into escrow.

The next day, a judge lifted the temporary stay on New York governor Andrew Cuomo’s congestion pricing scheme – a predatory toll imposed on all taxis (\$2.50 for yellow cabs, \$2.75 for green, black, livery and app-based vehicles and \$0.75 for “shared” ride services like UberPOOL) entering Manhattan south of 96th Street. This meant that the base fare in most of Manhattan from \$3.30 to \$5.80, a whopping 75% increase, which will sharply reduce the number of riders, and thus drastically cut drivers’ already impossibly low incomes. Over the last year no less than eight taxi drivers have taken their own lives due to catastrophic economic hardship

This one-two punch comes amid a deep crisis for NYC’s taxi workers, who over the last four years have endured plummeting earnings as city rulers flooded the streets with app-based taxis, more than tripling the number of for-hire vehicles. In response, the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA) union, which represents 21,000 mainly yellow cab drivers in NYC, called an emergency protest Sunday outside Governor Cuomo’s New York City office in Midtown. The NYTWA denounced this “suicide surcharge” and estimated a loss of \$15,000 annually for cabbies as a result. “How do I feed my kids?” asked Mohammed Ali, a driver from the Bronx, at the protest. “It means that now every day they’ll deduct \$80 – I make only about \$120 a day!”

Supporters of Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (Class Struggle International Workers) attended the rally with placards denouncing congestion pricing as an attack on drivers and demanding a \$25 minimum pay for all, after expenses. One TIC placard read: “‘Congestion Pricing’ = Attack on Taxi Workers Brought to You by the Democrats, Bloomberg & Wall Street Who Congested NYC With 100,000 App-Based Taxis. \$25/HR For Uber, Lyft And All Taxi Workers.” The capitalist politicians’ fake concern over driver incomes is belied by the fact that they, along with the hated Taxi and Limousine Commission, produced this mess by granting Uber et al. *carte blanche* to operate in NYC. Begging this gang to show “mercy” is a dead end.



Internationalist photo

### Class Struggle International Workers at February 3 protest.

This surcharge is a *direct attack on ALL taxi drivers in New York City* and can only be fought on a *class-struggle program to bring out key sectors of New York labor and shut the city down*. In a statement on the Lyft/Juno suit, NYTWA Executive Director Bhairavi Desai declared, “Drivers are at a breaking point. Maybe it’s time for us to start talking about going on strike.” A **solid strike of the entire taxi industry** is exactly what is needed. But to get there, we must first overcome the divisions between the different sectors. As Class Struggle International Workers wrote in an August 2018 leaflet distributed at NYTWA rallies:

“To overcome the divisions between drivers of yellow and green taxis, black cars and Uber and Lyft vehicles, we call for: **\$25 per hour guaranteed minimum pay FOR ALL**, plus **medical insurance from the municipal system**. Forge a **single union of New York taxi drivers** capable of carrying out a **solid strike of the entire taxi industry**.”

–Class Struggle International Workers, “Taxi Workers Unite Against the Wall Street Attack!” (*The Internationalist*, August 2018).

Uber has announced it will pay the increase, and raised its fares, while Lyft is still finagling. But even \$15/hr. is a poverty wage, forcing drivers to work 60 and more hours a week. Cuomo’s cynical attempt to pass off “congestion pricing”

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# Bust Bezos, the Modern-Day Robber Baron Unionize Amazon and Whole Foods!

The drama over the online retail monopoly Amazon's bid to open a second headquarters (HQ2) in New York City (with another part going to Alexandria, Virginia outside Washington, D.C.) and its sudden withdrawal in mid-February in the face of opposition have thrown into sharp relief differences inside the Democratic Party, which totally controls government in New York, both at city and state levels. "Centrist" Democrats in the pocket of Wall Street, ascendant under the Clintons (Bill and Hillary) and Barack Obama and led here by New York governor Andrew Cuomo, bent over backwards to lure the notoriously anti-labor behemoth to the Big Apple. So-called "progressive" Democrats led by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and including a number of NYC legislators and city council members wanted to boycott all things Amazon. New York City mayor Bill de Blasio blew hot and cold.

When Amazon announced its selection of the sites for its East Coast corporate HQ in November, it chose Long Island City, Queens after Cuomo and de Blasio, usually at each other's throats, ponied up \$2.5 billion in tax breaks and another \$505 million in cash. The gov even offered to change his name to "Amazon Cuomo" if that's what it took to land the deal. That Democrats Cuomo and de Blasio glibly throw \$3 billion to a trillion-dollar company and the richest man in the world (Amazon chief Jeff Bezos)<sup>1</sup> is obscene, especially as state and local governments cry poverty when it comes to spending to fix up the badly decayed NYC subway system. As for prospects of future tax revenue, on the day Bezos walked away from the New York deal it was announced that in 2018 Amazon earned \$11.2 billion in profits on which it paid *zero* federal corporate income tax (and in fact got a rebate of \$129 million).

When Amazon announced on Valentine's Day it was pulling out, the "progressive" Democrats cheered while the "centrists" stewed. Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez crowed that "a group of dedicated, everyday New Yorkers & their neighbors defeated Amazon's corporate greed." City Council president Corey Johnson denounced "vulture capitalism." Senator (and presidential hopeful) Elizabeth Warren decried "taxpayer bribes" to mega-companies. Mayor de Blasio (also eyeing a 2020 White House bid) flipped from backing the deal to complaining about "the 1 percent dictating to everyone else." Governor Cuomo fell silent for several days, but now he's back, lining up an establishment coalition, from CEOs of Goldman Sachs and Citibank to some pliant labor leaders (adding the UFT's Michael Mulgrew to the

<sup>1</sup> Last year Amazon founder Bezos was named richest man in the world by *Forbes* magazine ("the capitalist tool") with an estimated net worth of \$164 billion, before taking a trim with the stock market's recent dive (and before his impending divorce, which may make his future ex-wife the richest woman in the world).



**RWDSU leaders look to Democrats at City Hall in announcing unionization drive at Amazon's Staten Island facility, December 11.**

building trades, 1199 and 32BJ bureaucrats who were already on board), to beg Amazon to reconsider.

There were plenty of reasons for defenders of labor to oppose the Amazon bid, aside from the subsidies and tax giveaway (which NY routinely does for other corporations as well). Many of the promised 25,000 jobs would be strongly anti-union management, high-level staff and tech personnel. It would lead to massive gentrification, driving up rents and tax bills and driving out working-class and middle-class residents. The company rep at a sometimes heated City Council hearing made explicit that Amazon would fight unionization, and there has been plenty talk about worker abuse. But the upshot was a call on consumers to "boycott Amazon," a stupid and hopeless appeal. The issue is not the advent of online shopping – a time-saving technological advance – but the union-busting monopoly capitalists who are reaping megaprofits from low-paid workers' toil.

Like John D. Rockefeller and Sam Walton and other robber barons before him, Bezos has built his empire the old-fashioned way, as a ruthless capitalist exploiter, hell-bent on gouging workers and crushing efforts to unionize them. Amazon warehouse workers have long complained of being treated like robots – or worse than the 45,000 robots that Amazon employs – in buildings lacking adequate air-conditioning in the summer or heat in the winter. Workers have to walk 15 miles a day picking merchandise from the shelves and are required to wear digital wristbands that monitor their every move, to ensure workers meet an ever-increasing "productivity rate." In December, workers at a giant Amazon warehouse in Minnesota, mostly Somali Americans, held a protest against the speedup, from 160 to at least 230 items required to be packed per hour, and not having time for prayer.

Amazon often requires 10½-hour shifts, and mandatory overtime on top of that, with a lack of bathroom breaks. Managers are notorious for bullying and harassment, and for pressuring

injured workers to work, denying workers compensation to or shortchanging workers who are injured on the job, so that an injury can lead to homelessness. Workers often suffer from dehydration. A typical report in Britain revealed that Amazon workers there had suffered over 600 serious injuries in the space of a few years: broken bones, concussions, severe burns, amputations. In the U.S., at least seven Amazon workers have died in workplace “accidents” in the last five years.

Workplace injuries are so common that ambulances and EMT personnel are sometimes stationed outside Amazon plants, as they were outside its Allentown, Pennsylvania warehouse during a heat wave, waiting for workers to drop.

On top of this, ostensibly to “prevent theft” by employees, Amazon workers must go through airport-type security screening when they leave work, or go for lunch! Employees regularly wait up to 30 minutes, without pay, to be screened before they can leave. A lawsuit against this policy went to the U.S. Supreme Court last year – where, of course, the high court sided with Amazon – the job of the capitalist courts, after all, is to *protect the bosses’ thievery!*

### Labor’s Gotta Play Hardball to Win!

With 50% of the retail e-commerce market in the United States, expanding international operations, and dozens of acquisitions and subsidiaries, Amazon’s 613,000 employees make it the second largest private employer in the U.S., after Walmart. Complaints of low pay and dangerous working conditions are pervasive among Amazon’s warehouse workers, drivers, and other employees. On December 11, warehouse workers at a recently opened Amazon warehouse in Staten Island went public with their campaign to join the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), affiliated with the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW). The same day, Warehouse Workers Stand Up held a rally in Newark, New Jersey, for better work condition and the right to organize in Amazon warehouses, a week after 24 workers were hospitalized after a robot tore open a can of bear repellent.

Amazon has a long history of hiring professional union-busters and using dirty tricks – including firing pro-union workers – to nip unions in the bud. They even try to stop workers from talking to each other. Today Amazon is totally non-union in the U.S., but a concerted nationwide drive to organize the unorganized could change that. In 2017 Amazon purchased the Whole Foods chain of 450 grocery stores for \$13.7 billion, and workers very soon felt the effect of Amazon’s harsh management. As one worker told *The Internationalist*: “I see people who come to work sick all the time. There is a fear among longtime employees that they will lose their job in one to two years.” He said that the workers are required to do “more and more in less and less time” in order to



**As a result of strikes, Amazon workers in Castel San Giovanni, Italy, won first ever union contract with Amazon, May 2018.**

meet performance “metrics.” This has spurred unionization efforts at Whole Foods, with the RWDSU/UFCW reportedly involved.

For years, Amazon has been excoriated as the “World’s Worst Boss.” But last November, following reports that one in three Amazon workers in Arizona relies on food stamps to feed their families, due to Amazon’s low pay, and after Amazon’s anti-union training video for managers at Whole Foods was leaked to the press, Amazon announced that it would pay its workers a minimum of \$15 per hour (while at the same eliminating monthly bonuses and stock grants). While Ocasio-Cortez’ comrades in Democratic (Party) Socialists of America and allied social-democratic groups have focused on calls for \$15/hour, this is hardly a “living wage” and it is a very small fraction of the value produced by the workers. (Bezos makes \$4,500,000 per hour.)

As with Walmart, what’s urgently needed is a hard fight waged by the labor movement to organize the drivers, warehouse and other workers at Amazon, as well as Whole Foods. The RWDSU/UFCW and SEIU unions have teamed in the Warehouse Workers Stand Up coalition in New Jersey, which is fast becoming a “warehouse state”: Amazon has a dozen “fulfillment centers,” with 20,000 workers there. But the main strategy of the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats is to make impotent appeals to capitalist politicians to deny tax benefits and state subsidies to Amazon and other warehouse operators that do not comply with a “code of conduct” on wages and allow the right to organize. Thus in announcing the Staten Island unionization drive, Stuart Appelbaum, president of the RWDSU, stated:

“It’s incumbent upon the governor and the mayor to make sure that nothing happens to these workers who are standing up for their rights. If Amazon continues its union-busting activities in New York, they should call off the deal.”

–Bloomberg.com, 12 December 2018

Appelbaum is on the Executive Committee of the capitalist Democratic National Committee.

Begging capitalist governments and politicians will not succeed in organizing union-hating Amazon. Instead of dead-end class collaboration, that will take hard class struggle – a determined strike backed up by other unions that actually shuts down Amazon’s facilities, putting a wrench in its vast humming machine of maximum “efficiency.” A taste of this was the coordinated “Black Friday” strikes last November by thousands of

Amazon workers backed by unions in Germany, France, Britain and Spain, disrupting Amazon on the busiest shopping day of the year. Organized under the slogan “We are Not Robots,” strikers protested low wages and inhuman working conditions. After Spanish police beat Amazon strikers during a work stoppage in July, Amazon now wanted them to go even further:

“Spanish newspaper *El Confidencial* reported that Amazon approached police officials after thousands of Spanish workers announced they would be striking. The paper said Amazon wanted local officers ‘to force employees to go to their respective jobs and ensure their performance was identical to that of a normal working day’.”

—*Daily Mail* [London], 25 November 2018

Even the Spanish cops refused Amazon’s demand that they patrol workers’ productivity in the plants.

Unionizing this virulently anti-labor company will not be accomplished by routine “business unionism” methods. In 2013, Amazon in Germany was scandalized when it was revealed that it used a Nazi-connected security firm to “keep order” at hostels and budget hotels where 5,000 immigrant workers were housed, resulting in harassment and intimidation of these vulnerable seasonal workers. German Amazon workers, organized by the *ver.di* union, have struck many times since then, sometimes forcing concessions from Amazon, but the company still refuses to negotiate a contract. Amazon workers in Italy and Poland have also struck, and strikes in Italy finally resulted in a landmark first-ever union contract signed by Amazon last May, stipulating changes to the oppressive work schedules and increasing wages for night work by 25%. Now Amazon workers in Lombardy are on strike.

This points to the beginning of class-struggle wisdom – labor can’t win against vicious union-busters by playing softball, playing by the bosses’ rules and appealing to the bosses’ government. As *The Internationalist* has said over and over: *Labor’s gotta play hardball to win*. A real strike based on class-struggle unionism, backed by the solidarity of the union movement, would build solid mass pickets that no one dares cross. Amazon workers can’t do that on their own, but a serious mobilization of unions can. If hundreds of unionists are on the lines, Teamsters and even many non-union truckers would honor the pickets. These are the kind of tactics necessary to challenge the corporate monster. ***But that requires a willingness to defy cops, courts and capitalist politicians, Democrats and Republicans alike, to whom the sellout labor bureaucracy is beholden.***

Amazon is not an isolated case. Real estate developers have received massive government subsidies. The Hudson Yards development on Midtown Manhattan’s West Side has received more than \$6 billion to build office buildings and luxury residential towers. Building trades unions mounted a months-long #CountMeIn campaign of protests outside the project, in which supporters of the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth participated. But these business unionists opposed picketing to *shut down* scab labor (while Carpenters and Iron Workers even facilitated it), instead looking to Democrat Cuomo for aid. Now, the construction unions have thrown in the towel, signing an “agreement” that does not require use of union labor.

What’s needed is to break the chains that bind wage slaves to the modern slave masters, to ***build a workers party to fight***

***for a workers government.*** Solidarity – one section of workers defending another and recognizing that our interests are the same – isn’t just a nice idea: it’s the only possible way in which workers at Amazon, or anywhere else, can fight back effectively and win. ***Organize Amazon and Whole Foods workers!*** ■

## NY Taxi Workers...

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ing” as the only alternative to sharply raising subway and bus fares is a smokescreen to hide the fact that the state and city governments are responsible for decades of deterioration of the subways. The TIC leaflet also called for ***free mass transit – “rip out the turnstiles!”*** and for “an ***effective public transportation system by abolishing the TLC and MTA*** (Metropolitan Transit Authority) and ***imposing workers control.***”

A single, powerful taxi union representing the 140,000 taxi workers of yellow and green cabs, black cars, liveries and app-based taxis united in ***strike action behind the demand for \$25 per hour guaranteed minimum pay*** and allied with the powerhouse Transport Workers Union Local 100 would have the taxi bosses, Democratic politicians from city hall to the state house, as well as the Wall Street and Silicon Valley vultures shaking in their loafers. ■

## Oakland Teachers...

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acting as an obstacle to militant class struggle.

In going back to the bargaining table, in order to ensure rank-and-file control, negotiations and strike activity should be under an ***ELECTED STRIKE COMMITTEE.***

Bottom-line strike demands should be: ***NO CUTS – NO LAYOFFS – NO SCHOOL CLOSURES!***

And to escalate the pressure on the District, ***TAKE OEA PICKET LINES TO THE PORT OF OAKLAND*** where ILWU Local 34 has voted to support the teachers strike and the ILWU Local 10 membership meeting enthusiastically applauded OEA leaders on the first day of the strike.

Class Struggle Education Workers has called for union action to shut down the port in solidarity with the teachers strike (see our leaflet, “Mobilize Bay Area Workers to Win Oakland Teachers Strike” on the CSEW site). CSEW supporters in Oakland advocated this in meetings with strike activists this past week. So have others. This deal, if approved, would short-circuit the decision of the Rep Council to mass picket at the port next week.

A mass outpouring of striking teachers and supporters together with dock workers at the port where the profits of Bay Area rulers are generated could be key to winning a real victory.

The battle to defend public education against the capitalist privatizers and their charter schools must be fought politically. Ultimately it must be taken to Sacramento, not to lobby hat-in-hand but to occupy and shut it down, as teachers from West Virginia to Arizona did against Republican governments last year. That means mobilizing teachers throughout the state, but above all, in deep-blue California, to be successful it requires a ***SHARP BREAK WITH THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY,*** the bosses’ party that is centrally responsible for the education crisis facing us today. ■

# Aiding and Abetting the Capitalist Democratic Party “Socialists” Chase After Anti-Gun Movement

The following article was issued as an *Internationalist Group* leaflet in April 2018.

The cynical exploitation of traumatized youth by the Democratic Party to further its agenda of gun control has provided an X-ray into the politics of a panoply of left groups. When key sectors of the most powerful ruling class in the world want to disarm the populace, slashing a key democratic right in order to leave the oppressed defenseless, how do socialists respond? In the last few weeks, as high-minded liberals, big-city police chiefs and Democratic mayors (“the bosses of the racist killer cops”) push for gun control, almost the entire U.S. left has marched in lockstep with them. Why? Because they are chasing after the young marchers who have been enrolled in this campaign to bolster the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state.

As revolutionary Marxists, we oppose any and all efforts by the bourgeois government to infringe on the right of workers and oppressed people, and the population in general, to “keep and bear arms,” which is vital to self-defense. The bourgeoisie’s rule is made possible in large part by its ability to perpetrate violence against those it rules over, which is why it wants a disarmed populace. Gun control has historically been used to disarm black people and intensify racist repression going back to the time of chattel slavery. Today, gun control is enforced by racist police dragnets in impoverished black and brown inner-city neighborhoods, along with the system of mass incarceration.

In the flood of gushing coverage by the left press of the protests following the February 14 Parkland, Florida, school massacre, this elemental truth about the U.S. is whitewashed or ignored. For revolutionary Marxists, *class criteria* are key in judging any social phenomenon, along with Roman jurist Cicero’s watchword, *cui bono?* (who benefits?). But the pseudo-socialist left in the U.S. has degenerated to such a degree, after decades of tagging along and lining up with



Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

**Democratic Socialists of America says “if you want a military gun, go join the National Guard.” Above: National Guard patrols Baltimore, April 2015, to help police repress unrest after cop murder of Freddie Gray.**

liberal Democrats, that when they see hundreds of thousands of young people marching in the street they reflexively start salivating, no matter what “the movement” is actually for.

## DSA/Jacobin: Champions of Gun Control ... and Counterrevolution

The most outspoken support for the anti-gun movement comes from the **Democratic Socialists of America** and the hipster social democrats of *Jacobin Magazine*, the unofficial publication of the DSA’s “left wing.” The DSA was founded in 1982 as a pressure group and conduit for the Democratic Party, and continues to play that role today. It has fronted for U.S. imperialist-backed counterrevolution from Central America to Poland and beyond.<sup>1</sup> The DSA’s first response to the Parkland massacre was an article titled “The Second Amendment is a Threat to Us All” ([dsausa.org](http://dsausa.org), 19 February). Following the contorted argument of the DSA, the Second Amendment “doesn’t

<sup>1</sup> For the sordid history of these “democratic socialists,” see the *Internationalist* pamphlet *DSA: Fronting for the Democrats* (February 2018). To order, send \$5 (postage included) to Mundial Publications, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, or e-mail [internationalistgroup@msn.com](mailto:internationalistgroup@msn.com).

actually grant” the “rights of citizens” to “keep and bear arms,” but only “addresses whether and by whom it can be infringed.”

Hello? These social democrats are saying that the federal government *does have* the constitutional right to infringe upon gun ownership, even though the Second Amendment explicitly says “the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.” What part of “not” does the DSA not understand?

The article even offers the ruling class helpful advice on how best to overcome this unfortunate misunderstanding, with a proposal for a Twenty-Eighth Amendment repealing the Second Amendment and banning “the manufacturing, transportation or importation in or into any State, Territory, or possession of the United States for delivery or use therein of pump-action, semi-automatic or automatic firearms.” Here they join with former U.S. Supreme Court justice John Paul Stevens<sup>2</sup> who wants to abolish the Second Amendment altogether. This has long been a dream of the liberal establishment, which wants to limit the possession of dangerous (read: effective) firearms to “responsible agents” such as...the police and military.

Even more explicit is an article by DSA vice-chair Steve Max that reads like a passage out of a manual on *Counter-revolution for Dummies*, asserting that “There is No Second Amendment Right to a Gun,” (dsausa.org, 14 December 2013):

“We need to start saying loudly and strongly that if you want a military gun, go join the National Guard – they have one for you to use. Otherwise, government at all levels has the right to limit guns just as it does drugs, tobacco, gambling, alcohol, tainted meat and a host of other evils. There is simply no constitutional right to individual gun ownership.”

How grotesque! Never mind that the National Guard is called in to repress outraged masses, as in Baltimore in 2015, when protestors took to the streets over the cop murder of Freddie Gray. Or that in 1970 the Ohio National Guard opened fire on unarmed students protesting the Vietnam War at Kent State University, killing four – shortly followed by the police murder of two black students and wounding of twelve others at Jackson State in Mississippi. Or that National Guard units are being sent to the Mexican border to hunt down immigrants. None of this matters to the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America. They place full confidence in Uncle Sam’s armed and uniformed defenders.

As for the right-Girondists of the “Jacobin” clique,<sup>3</sup> they argue in response to leftists who (correctly) say that gun



**Robert F. Williams heroically fought off KKK mobs in Monroe, North Carolina.**

control is racist, that it is necessary to “catch up with popular outrage” to “support robust gun control.” An article written by Nivedita Majumdar, a professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and secretary of the Professional Staff Congress (the faculty and staff union at the City University of New York), declares:

“Progressives are right in highlighting the racism of the criminal justice system most glaringly manifested in police shootings of black and brown men, and they’re understandably concerned with the *possibility* [emphasis in original] of racialized gun control. But they tend to ignore the *actuality* of the state’s racialized neglect of the gun violence that disproportionately impacts communities of color. The failure of the state to safeguard black lives rarely factors into Left opposition to gun control.”

–“The Socialist Case for Gun Control,” *Jacobin*, 26 February 2018

This whitewashes the racist nature of the U.S. “justice” system and denies the basics of the Marxist analysis of the state, which is essential for all those seeking to end racial oppression.

The “possibility” of “racialized” gun control? The main purpose of gun control has *always* been to keep guns out of the hands of African American, Latino and other oppressed groups. (See “Democrats Exploit School Shooting to Push Racist Gun Control” in this issue.) What Majumdar is calling for means stepped-up police repression to supposedly “safeguard black lives” precisely in those neighborhoods where the cops are notoriously violent and murderous. The state’s purpose is not to defend black people – its purpose is to repress the exploited and oppressed, as was the case in the government’s war on the Black Panther Party and as can be seen today as police kill more than three civilians a day, and a black person every 28 hours on average, year-in and year-out.

While reformist social-democratic supporters of capitalism call for police to seize guns in “communities of color,” revolutionary Marxists defend the right to *form workers*

<sup>2</sup> Stevens authored the Court decision okaying states requiring governmental photo IDs for voting, and voted to overturn the moratorium on executions resulting from *Furman v. Georgia* (1972), thus reinstating racially discriminatory death penalty laws.

<sup>3</sup> The Jacobins under Maximilien Robespierre were the left wing of the French revolutionary governments, holding power in 1793-94 after sidelining the right-wing Girondins and before being overthrown by the Thermidorian reaction.



*militias* and the *right to armed black self-defense*. Like many “left” academics, Majumdar has bought into the myth of eternal bourgeois rule. Majumdar treats “the state” (never the capitalist state) as neutral and a possible ally, and any argument in favor of organized self-defense as “romanticized,” ludicrous and dangerous:

“The notion that today a civilian armory can hold its own against the military might of the state is absurd. And such romanticized notions, unchecked, can cause a lot of harm. Imagine the state response if Occupy or Black Lives Matter included the idea of armed defense or resistance. And also imagine what it would have done for the future of organizing.”

Or imagine instead what if civil rights workers in the Jim Crow South had not been protected by armed black residents exercising their Constitutional right to self-defense, as documented in many important and easily accessible accounts, from Robert F. Williams’ classic *Negroes With Guns* (1962) to *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* by Akinyele Umoja (2013) and *This Non-Violent Stuff’ll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (2014) by Charles Cobb.

Nobody would claim that in a frontal clash, small groups of people with light arms could effectively take on the enormous stock of heavy weaponry in the hands of the repressive forces of the capitalist rulers. The working class must rely on its own power, organization and proletarian methods of struggle. But in a country of 319 million people, the fact that there are an estimated 359 million firearms in the hands of civilians (2015 estimate)<sup>4</sup> would give pause to a despotic government with, say, 5 million police and military at its disposal. The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed not to benefit hunters, but to ensure that an armed population “would be able to repel the danger” of a standing army, as James Madison wrote in *Federalist* No. 46.

Plus today we have the danger of fascists, so far relatively small in number in the U.S., but still heavily armed, as we saw in Charlottesville last year, along with right-wing militias. Imagine, if you will, relying on the police to deal with the violent racists, either in the 1960s or today. Yet that suicidal policy is exactly what is called for by the “left” advocates of gun control. You might ask, how could any Marxist even imagine the police as a force that could safeguard black lives? The answer is, first, that the DSA and other social democrats are not Marxists, and second, that they push such an absurd and dangerous illusion because they seek to maintain and administer this capitalist state.

### **Social Democrats Embrace Gun Control, Lock, Stock and Barrel**

If the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America long ago came to terms with being lap dogs, if not bloodhounds for U.S. imperialism, other social-democratic outfits tailing after the DSA like to keep up at least a pretence of a left façade. Hence we find them squirming as they embrace the Democrat-led gun

<sup>4</sup> See “There are now more guns than people in the United States,” *Washington Post*, 5 October 2015.

control movement. They love “the movement” even though some may be a bit queasy about its program. But that is not an insurmountable problem for your accomplished opportunist. We will see below how they squared the circle between their current appetites and the longstanding revolutionary socialist opposition to gun control. In their different ways, they all give obeisance to the grandfather of modern reformism, Eduard Bernstein, who coined the motto: “The final goal is nothing, the movement is everything.”

The **International Socialist Organization** (ISO), political heirs of British ex-Trotskyist Tony Cliff, are past masters in this game. These professional ambulance chasers of the left are always on the lookout for whatever is moving and shaking in the streets or, more specifically, on campus; as to the political content, they’re not so picky. The ISO waxes lyrical about the “deeply inspiring” post-Parkland demos, which draw “a line in the sand – marked out by young people.” Back in 2008 when they wanted to climb on the Obama bandwagon, the ISO referred to the Democratic candidate’s campaign as “a breath of fresh air.”<sup>5</sup> All these circumlocutions are just excuses for embracing “movements” led by one or another section of the bourgeoisie, pretending to push them ever so slightly to the left:

“By bringing the gun debate into the arena of social struggle, this new movement has the potential to develop a left wing that can take this issue out of the cul-de-sac of an unresolvable ‘safety vs. freedom’ clash – and instead start raising pointed questions about militarism, social alienation and the right-wing politics of paranoia....”

–“Refusing to accept a society steeped in violence,” *Socialist Worker*, 22 February

By the time the March 24 “March for Our Lives” rolled around, the ISO had to recognize that the “new movement” was being politically led by the Democratic Party. Its article (“Youth lead the way in the March for Our Lives,” *Socialist Worker*, 30 March) admits that “Organizing and planning for the March 24 demonstrations came from mainstream organizations with direct connections to the Democratic Party.” But it adds: “In most cases, though, everything from the speeches at the front to the signs in the crowd and comments of demonstrators showed that the March for Our Lives mobilized people whose concerns go further than elections.” Actually, if you read the rest of the article, just about every snippet from one city after another shows that youth were fronting for a march about electing Democrats and gun control.

In an earlier article, Danny Katch, a leading ISO spokesman, conceded that gun control laws are used against black people: “Socialists have traditionally been wary about many of the policies that are labeled gun control measures. For one thing, many anti-gun measures implemented in cities like New York City and Chicago have further criminalized entire Black and Brown communities.” Katch even recognizes that, historically, the “American left has always had to organize its own self-defense against the Ku Klux Klan and other far-right groups.” (But these days, the ISO makes blocs with the mayor and police to *oppose* workers mobilization to stop the

<sup>5</sup> See “ISO: ‘Fresh Air Fiends’ of Class Collaboration,” *The Internationalist*, December 2015.

fascists.<sup>6</sup>) So what's the solution, Danny? Here's his answer: "If a government agency were to take over gun training and licensing, that would also greatly undermine the primary recruiting tool of the NRA...."

"Socialists can – and I think should – also support prohibiting the manufacture of weapons like the AR-15 semi-automatic rifle...." – "How do socialists take on gun fundamentalism?" *Socialist Worker*, 27 February 2018

So the ISO wants the *bosses' government*, which it admits would use gun control laws against black and Latino people, to be in charge of training and licensing gun owners! Aside from expressing abject confidence in the capitalist state, this is a sure-fire formula to see that people who oppose or are the victims of racist repression are denied the right to own firearms as a means of self-defense. For good measure, Katch throws in the standard reformist demand calling for money for "books not guns." But the capitalist war on public education and the U.S.' predatory wars around the world are not a matter of budgetary priorities. Imperialism is capitalism in terminal decay, waging endless war as it rips up social programs and democratic rights. The ruling class wants gun control in order to reinforce the power of the capitalist state.

Next up is **Socialist Alternative** (SAlt), the U.S. section of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI). Like the rest of the social democrats, SAlt hails the "massive and historic movement" and the "bold initiative of the students in Parkland." Recognizing the "attempts from the Democratic Party to channel this movement," its response is to say "we sympathize with" the "understandable" desire of "many people ... to vote the Republicans out in November." To give a slight left veneer, SAlt claims that "for many" who participated in the March for Our Lives the "demand for gun control is just a start" in addressing a "broader social crisis": "With a world in desperate need of change, the so-called 'mass shooting' generation is likely to become the mass movement generation" ("Student Revolt Shakes America," *Socialist Alternative*, 27 March).

SAlt's only caveat is to say that "the movement" would be "wise to remain independent of the Democratic Party establishment's influence." Meaning: Hillary Clinton no, Bernie Sanders OK. It embraces the demonstrators' call to "ban the sale of all assault weapons," adding the usual laundry list of reformist demands, including "tax the rich and big business to fully fund our schools." An earlier article ("Parkland School Massacre: Youth Rise Up Against Violence & the NRA," *Socialist Alternative*, 21 February) calls for "demilitarization of the police and the schools," talking of "democratically elected committees to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all employees, students and parents" which "should have a controlling oversight over all measures pertaining to health and safety" while studiously avoiding the call for *cops out of the schools*.

This is no oversight, as SAlt and the CWI come out of the Militant tendency that for decades was embedded in the British Labour Party, and which pretends that police are "workers in uniform" rather than their real role as the armed fist of the capi-

talist state and the core of its repressive apparatus. They look back with nostalgia to the time in the early 1980s when Militant Labour ran the Liverpool City Council – that is, when they were the bosses of the police. And what exactly does SAlt's call to "demilitarize the police" mean? Return to the pre-9/11 days when cops shot down black people with impunity, just as they do today, only without military gear? Just months ago, SAlt published an article titled "Is Gun Control the Solution to Gun Violence? A Socialist Analysis," (*Socialist Alternative*, 5 December 2017) which recognized:

"Attempts at gun control have been an ongoing feature of U.S. and other capitalist societies.... Marxists have historically opposed such attempts to try to enforce the bourgeoisie's desire for a monopoly of force."

And today? The "socialist analysis" concludes: "While we strongly believe in the right of working people, racial minorities, and the oppressed to defend themselves against the violence of the bosses, the state or reactionary groups," and "While defending our general theoretical position on the state – and not making any concession to liberal ideas that the state is neutral, we need to examine the question concretely under the current conditions, balance of forces, and consciousness." So while *historically, theoretically* and *generally* defending the rights of working and oppressed people to self-defense, *concretely* our Labourite social democrats "support some gun control measures including mandating background checks on all gun sales." Oh yes, they "have reservations about how background checks proposals are often written," which "in practice means excluding a significant section of the black working class." But those pious concerns are brushed aside.

Incredibly, *Socialist Alternative* argues that "limited gun control measures" are OK because, it says, "The only areas where there are forcible attempts by the police to disarm people are public housing projects in the inner cities." Oh, well, if it's "only" there then it can't be so bad, is that it? Have these pseudo-Trotskyists never heard of "stop and frisk," where hundreds of thousands of African American and Latino youth are stopped every year by the cops, just in New York, on the pretext of looking for "illegal guns" or drugs?! In fact, these "socialist" imposters are so pro-police that Seattle city councilwoman and leading SAlt figure Kshama Sawant praised the selection of a woman police chief as a "positive" move.<sup>7</sup> Of course, the Seattle police kept on carrying out racist repression. In June 2017 they killed a pregnant black woman (in her apartment, in front of several children) who had called police to report a possible burglary.

As for the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, the housebroken social democrats of Socialist Alternative label it "ultra-left" and opine that "the brandishing of weapons, while being attractive to a minority of revolutionary black youth, was a serious mistake." For shame! In its final sentence, SAlt's article admits "Our position embodies a certain contradiction," but blames that on having to "to operate within a capitalist framework." The contradiction is only on paper. In practice, *Socialist Alternative* supports racist gun control.

<sup>6</sup> See "Portland Labor Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation," and "How Do You Spell Class Collaboration? ISO," in *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.

<sup>7</sup> See "Killer Cops, White Supremacists: Racist Terror Stalks Black America," *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015.

Time video



**ISO and other social democrats claim that youth led the way in post-Parkland protests. But as videos of March 24 “March for Our Lives” show, it was all about electing Democrats and gun control.**

### “Color-Blind” Economism and Centrism in the Service of the Democratic Party

The other branch of the former Militant tendency, the misnamed International Marxist Tendency (IMT), like the CWI, pretends that bourgeois police are workers and supports cop “strikes” (see “Her Majesty’s Social Democrats in Bed with the Police,” *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009). While the DSA, ISO and SAIt swoon over the movement for gun control, the IMT pretends that this is, at best, a peripheral demand of “the growing movement”:

“The most important aspect of these walkouts is that they have given voice to a range of social demands that have nothing to do with the typical gun-control debate that has prevailed in Washington and the media until now. For students living in cities with high rates of gun violence, safety in schools and working-class neighborhoods is a social question tied to jobs, housing, education funding, and more – and not something that can be entrusted to the armed bodies of the capitalist state.”

–“USA: student walkouts reveal demands for broader change,” marxist.com, 22 March

But the walkouts were all about gun control, they arose in wealthy white suburbs not inner cities, they were run by the Democrats, and their demands would in fact strengthen the “armed bodies of the capitalist state” to carry out *racist* repression in hard-hit African American and Latino neighborhoods (something that is hardly mentioned in the IMT’s article).

Even more aggressively “color-blind” are the anti-union pseudo-socialists of the **World Socialist Web Site**, a/k/a the Socialist Equality Party, acolytes of David North (who for years was the CEO of a non-union printing company). In 15 articles enthusiastically praising the post-Parkland marches against gun violence, the “alternative facts” accounting of the marches by the WSWS paints the picture of a Democratic Party unsuccessfully attempting to steer the message of the demonstrations in support of gun control:

“While the Democrats intervened as much as they could to block demonstrators from drawing broader conclusions, protesters who spoke to the World Socialist Web Site ... readily connected violence within the US to imperialist war and the social crisis.”

–“The International Significance of the March for Our Lives demonstrations,” World Socialist Web Site, 26 March 2018

No doubt some demonstrators criticized aspects of U.S. imperialism, but the political demands of the “March for Our Lives” and the other “youth-led” protests are quite clear: gun control, and elect Democrats in November.

While criticizing the Democrats for trying to “limit discussion” to gun control, in 18,945 words on the protests the WSWS barely mentioned (twice, to be exact), in the abstract, that gun control would be “connected to efforts to increase state control,” and not once did these fraudsters actually *oppose* calls for the capital-

ist government to control firearms. As for demands to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, they remark positively that “such measures would possibly limit casualties when school shootings and other murderous rampages occur” (while noting that the measures can’t deal with the underlying social crisis that produces these incidents). They did, however, make sure to include one of their signature anti-Marxist positions – equating any opposition to special oppression with “identity politics.”

Saying that “millions” participated in the March 24 protests “out of a profound sense that something is terribly wrong with an American society so marred by extreme violence and a degraded political and cultural life,” the WSWS writes: “This explodes the official narrative of the Democratic Party, according to which the American population should be chiefly concerned with questions of racial and gender identity.” And: “When student speakers in cities like Chicago and Los Angeles shed light on the extreme violence and police repression in impoverished African-American and Latino neighborhoods, they did so without presenting the violence in chiefly racial terms.” Not only does WSWS pretend the Democrats were outside interlopers in a wave of demonstrations against U.S. imperialism, they also pretend that cop repression against blacks and Latinos is not “chiefly racial.”

*Nowhere* in the WSWS coverage of the post-Parkland mobilizations does the word “racist” appear! Nor, for that matter, does the word “cop.” To be “color-blind” in racist capitalist America is to whitewash the masters of industry and commerce and to mask one of the central mechanisms they use keep their wage slaves in thrall. In the United States, exposing, denouncing and combating racism in the *fight for black emancipation from racial oppression* is key to the revolutionary struggle, as it has been ever since the days of chattel slavery, the very foundation on which the American capitalist republic was built, North and South.

While the various social-democratic reformists shamelessly fall all over themselves to get with the “movement” of

the day, **Left Voice** is more shamefaced. The U.S. outlet of the Internet media apparatus of the Fracción Trotskista (FT), a right-centrist current, **Left Voice** laments not being able to join its DSA, ISO and SAlt cohorts in wholeheartedly praising the gun control marches. So it does so half-heartedly. In typical tailist fashion, it praises how “massive mobilizations of young people around the country shake up the political scene and demonstrate an opening for transgressive actions and left politics.” It’s just that there’s this little problem, namely “what ‘gun control’ has meant for Black people in America” and because it would mean “to rally for the largest mass murderer in the world – the US government – to hold all the weapons” (“I Really Want to, But I Can’t Entirely Support the Walkouts,” *Left Voice*, 15 March).

These centrists (pseudo-revolutionary in word, reformist in deed) are in a quandary. They really, really want to “praise this new youth movement” which is “based on legitimate and progressive indignation,” and “spontaneously arose in high schools around the country.” But its program is for gun control. How to wiggle out of that? Concocting a story about the “movement” being at a “crossroads,” they present a fantasy scenario to justify tailism. It’s classic for this current derived from the followers of the “political chameleon” of pseudo-Trotskyism in Argentina, Nahuel Moreno (1924-1987). **Left Voice**’s workaround is to propose an alternate program, to “take all of the strength and resolve we saw in the streets yesterday to go beyond the capitalist politicians” and to fight for “the immediate end to police in schools, ... an end to police brutality against the Black community ... to dismantle the border patrol and the paramilitary groups along the border who harass and brutalize immigrants, and ... to end US imperialism and US wars and other attacks abroad” (“The Movement Against Gun Violence at a Crossroads,” *Left Voice*, 25 March).

So **Left Voice** would love to uncritically hail the Democratic Party-led marches for gun control – were they not about gun control. But, whatever, like the rest of the opportunist left, they chase after “the movement” anyway, because that’s what opportunists do. The fact is that the recent protests have raised no such demands, and they’re not about to, because the “new youth movement” is all about building support for the Democrats and *increasing* the power of the state – and thus it will *increase* police in the schools and *increase* police brutality against African Americans in particular. The effects will be mainly felt on the mean streets of the inner cities and not so much in the leafy white suburbs where the movement “spontaneously” started (and where, incidentally, almost all mass school shootings take place).

It takes some verbal gymnastics for the various opportunist groups, each in its own way, to rebrand the liberal marches for gun control as some kind of movement for radical change. But for groups that hailed “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders



**Black Panther Party at the California State Assembly, 2 May 1967. Socialist Alternative says BPP defending its right to armed self-defense was a big mistake.**

as he ran for the Democratic Party nomination, and who then embraced Democratic-led “women’s marches,” it shouldn’t be too hard to throw their arms around a Democratic Party-led “youth movement.” It’s called class collaboration, the opposite of class struggle. Rather than leading to radicalization, this serves to head it off, or co-opt it, channeling discontent back into the safe bounds of bourgeois politics.

A real fight against the presence of cops in the schools, against police brutality and murder of black people, against anti-immigrant repression and deportations, and against fascistic paramilitaries and fascists, would require, first of all, a sharp break with the Democratic Party, and all capitalist parties. And it requires exposing the real meaning of racist, anti-worker, pro-cop gun control. But don’t expect that from outfits whose whole *raison d’être* (reason for being) is to be the tail on the Democratic donkey. Lenin had their number over a century ago: in *What Is To Be Done?* (1903) he called it *khvostism* (tailism).

### The Camp Followers

All the flim-flam, all the reservations, the alternate programs and alternative facts about the protests, trying turn them into something they weren’t, are just a fig leaf to hide what’s going on here. The various groups have their different formulas, but they all come down to would-be radicals opportunistically tailing after (and helping build) liberal movements in hopes of winning over some activists. But Trotskyists seek to build leadership for a revolution, and the first step is to “tell the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter.” The truth is that a struggle for revolution is *counterposed* to this “movement” for gun control and for the Democratic Party of imperialist war, mass deportations and racist police terror.

Since the whole opportunist operation depends on talking out of both sides of your mouth, naturally some take it to ludicrous extremes. The **Workers World Party** (WWP), for

example, saw in the March for Our Lives a “shadow” of the May 1963 march in Birmingham, Alabama, where “thousands of Black school children, some as young as six years old, marched and defied police dogs, fire hoses and police beatings to protest the violence of racist segregation.” Did you see any of that on March 24? What we saw was police marching *with* the protesters. WWP admitted that “Gun control laws are historically known to disproportionately affect Black and Brown people.” WWP’s solution? “The cops should be disarmed” (“Ending Gun Violence – A Radical Call,” *Workers World*, 26 March). By you and whose army, one might ask. The idea of police being disarmed in violent, racist American capitalism is pure liberal/reformist utopianism. Nothing short of socialist revolution will take guns out of the hands of bourgeois police.

The **Progressive Labor Party** (PLP) promotes an idiosyncratic brand of Stalinism that puts a far-left veneer on day-to-day reformist politics, with results that often sound like political schizophrenia. Thus the PLP accurately described the gun control marches as “orchestrated by liberals in the ruling class” who “channel workers’ natural horror at mass shootings into an embrace of the Democratic Party” (“Expose Bosses’ Dead-End Reform – Masses of Students Walk Out Against Capitalist Violence,” *Challenge*, 23 March). So what to do? Why, join the movement, of course: “As a revolutionary communist party, PLP is tasked with joining the top-down reform ‘movements’ the ruling class seeks to launch and control, and then to lead workers and youth to break out of the box of dead-end electoral ‘solutions’ presented by capitalist misleaders.” The PLP used the same political double-talk in 2008 when they simultaneously called Obama a “fascist” in the pages of *Challenge* and printed glowing reports about their members campaigning for him. So PLP rounded up votes for a capitalist Democrat. Some “revolutionary communists”!

Finally, for comic relief, we have the **League for the Revolutionary Party** (LRP), heirs of the anti-Trotskyist renegade Max Shachtman, which has had a rather sporadic existence of late. The LRP calls for “Solidarity with the Student Protests Against the NRA and Republican Merchants of Death!” Yet in the next breath it declares: “But Beware – Some Gun Controls Would Leave Working-Class and Oppressed People Vulnerable to Violence” (LRP statement, 8 April) Some? That is the very purpose of gun control, as history shows. The LRP’s call to “Defend the Right to Bear Arms and Organize Self-Defense” is contradicted by its calls on the capitalist state to regulate firearms. It “demand[s] that the capitalist state enforce” in particular “limitations on access to weapons” for “anyone with a history of anti-social violence.”

This is the age-old social-democratic concept that the state can be pressured to serve the working people, rather than the reality, that it is the organ of repression to enforce the interests of the ruling class. *This state* is the biggest purveyor of anti-social violence. The LRP then takes this suicidal illusion to even more absurd heights, echoing the ISO in demanding that “All gun owners be licensed, including that the state provide training and test applicants’ competency in weapons’ use and storage, just like applicants for drivers’ licenses are tested.”

First off, the issue of arms ownership is not about technical competence, like the ability to drive a car safely, it is a basic democratic right. And to call on the capitalist government to license and train gun owners is a *guarantee* that African American, Latino and working people in general will be disproportionately denied this basic right.

This is particularly ridiculous coming from the mouths of the LRP, which strongly defended (and distorted) Leon Trotsky’s “proletarian military policy” (PMP) that on the eve of WWII called for “military training under trade-union control.” We hold that this was a mistaken policy under a stable capitalist regime, where it amounts to training for a bourgeois army. The LRP cynically cited the PMP to justify denouncing opposition to the draft with the argument that leftists “prefer” a conscripted imperialist army to a volunteer one, whereas Trotsky wrote: “Conscription? Yes. By the bourgeois state? No.” But now the LRP calls for *weapons training under the control of the capitalist state* – confirming our conclusion that “The LRP’s policy ... would make them *facilitators of imperialist militarism*.”<sup>8</sup> If, in Daniel De Leon’s memorable phrase, sellout union bureaucrats are the labor lieutenants of capital, the LRP social democrats would be non-com recruiting sergeants for capitalist repression – in this case concretely for Trump’s call to arm teachers.

The mobilizations “against gun violence” following the February 14 school massacre in Parkland, Florida, have had a polarizing effect on the left. We have gone into the arguments of several tendencies at some length because one can see the real politics of opportunist left groups in their scrambling to latch onto a “movement” firmly controlled by the Democratic Party and explicitly committed to a program – gun control – that would increase the power of the capitalist state. The fact is that almost the entire left fell into line to get a piece of the post-Parkland action. Social democrats and Stalinists, reformists and centrists of all stripes stuck to the “movement” like the north and south poles of a magnet. In contrast, genuine Trotskyists stand for the right to bear arms and call gun control by its proper name – racist.

The Internationalist Group intransigently defends the right of self-defense – calling in particular for the right of armed black self-defense against racist attack – and opposes gun control by the capitalist state. We seek to build workers defense groups to counter the rise of violent racist and outright fascist forces in the shadow of the Trump regime. With outbreaks of class struggle on the one hand and never-ending racist repression on the other, the working class and the oppressed more than ever need a leadership that points the way to victory. The “left” that plays into the hands of the Democratic Party can only lead to defeat. The fight against the real sources of violence against poor, oppressed and working people – the poverty, racism and war spawned by capitalism in its putrefying imperialist stage – can only be waged by forging a revolutionary workers party against all the parties of capital. ■

<sup>8</sup> See on the LRP and PLP, “Which Side Are they On? Opportunists Straddle the Class Line,” *The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005.

# Nancy Pelosi, Icon of Female Capitalist Power

JANUARY 3 – The *New York Times* today ran a puff piece on “Nancy Pelosi, Icon of Female Power.” “A generation of young feminists is taking notice” of her ascent to Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, the *Times* wrote. Well, she is, actually – a symbol of female capitalist power. If you push for feminism in bourgeois politics, Pelosi is what you will get, or Hillary Clinton. Pelosi is the San Francisco millionaire congresswoman (estimated net worth \$100 million) who brags about raising \$728 million in campaign cash for Democrats, who together with Chuck Schumer, the “Senator from Wall Street,” claimed she had brokered a deal for the Dreamers with racist Donald Trump by throwing their un-

documented immigrant parents under the bus and who now claims to oppose Trump’s border wall while offering billions for increased “border security.” In her previous stint as House Speaker, Pelosi “delivered the votes” for the 2007-08 multi-trillion-dollar bailout of the banks for Republican George W. Bush, Democrat Barack Obama and the investment bankers and hedge fund operators. As the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee during the Bush presidency she knew about the torture and “extraordinary rendition” of prisoners and said nothing, as did her Senate counterpart, sister California Democrat and senator Diane Feinstein (net worth \$79 million).

Down in the second tier you get the likes of Kirsten Gillibrand, the champion of #MeToo and of the Tenth Mountain Division, who travels to Afghanistan to praise these professional killers as they slaughter Afghans. And among the incoming rookies in the 116th Congress you get wheeler-dealers like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the “Justice Democrat” who signs up with Democratic (Party) Socialists of America to build her brand and enlist leftist millennials to vote for Pelosi in exchange for a piece of the pie of Congressional goodies. AOC is the “progressive” with 1.38



Mark Wilson / Getty Images

**Democrat Nancy Pelosi wields the gavel after being sworn in as Speaker of the House of Representatives on January 3.**

million Twitter followers who hails Franklin D. Roosevelt, the president that led the U.S. into the imperialist Second World War; who calls to “abolish I.C.E.” out of one side of her mouth, while on the other side she tells CNN that she is for “secure borders.” Like Hillary Clinton, who stole relief funds in Haiti to set up a sweatshop garment factory paying black women workers under \$5 a day, who greenlighted the 2009 coup in Honduras and who has incessantly beat the war drums to bomb Syria, these feminists are enemies of the liberation of poor, immigrant and working women, and of their class brothers. That’s Democratic Party feminism for you. You want it? You can have it. We internationalists, communists, fight for socialist revolution, which is the *only* road to women’s liberation.

As an Internationalist sign proclaimed at the April 2017 Women in the World “summit” of female imperialist power brokers (held in the David Koch Theater in Manhattan) that honored the failed Democratic presidential candidate and the Republican U.N. ambassador, “Warmonger Hillary and Trump Rep Nikki Haley: Not My ‘Sisters’.” Making it perfectly clear, another sign declared, “You Can’t Liberate Women with Capitalism’s Democratic Party!”

Since we're talking identity politics let's not forget "deporter-in-chief" black Democrat Barack Obama who garnered immigrants' votes with talk of immigration reform, while building up the I.C.E. juggernaut into the biggest federal police force and throwing 8+ million immigrants out of the country, more than any other president in U.S. history; who ran as a peace candidate and got a Nobel Peace Prize just as he launched the U.S. imperialist assault on Syria, brought U.S. troops back to Iraq to kill Arabs and continued the U.S. bloody occupation of Afghanistan

for another eight years; who posed as an opponent of torture while keeping the Guatánamo torture center open and personally signing off on kill orders to murder thousands of Pakistani, Afghan and Yemeni civilians, including hundreds of women and children; who shoveled over \$16 trillion to the bankers and real estate fraudsters who gouged millions of black families with high-interest subprime loans, then evicted them from their homes when the market crashed; who called the racist police murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri "heartbreaking" even as he loaded up kill-crazy cops with billions of dollars' worth of BearCat armored cars, assault rifles and other Pentagon weaponry so police can kill over 1,100 civilians every year (and murder a black person every day). That's identity politics for you: enemies of women's liberation, black liberation, immigrants' rights, of gay, lesbian and transgender rights, of the rights of all the oppressed.

Race, gender and national oppression are all rooted in class domination. This land is not our land, this land is their land and will be so long as the male and female, black and white and Latino capitalist rulers continue to rule. The all-sided social oppression of this racist, xenophobic, misogynist, homophobic society was built on the



**Internationalist contingent protesting war criminal Hillary Clinton and Trump U.N. rep Nikki Haley at April 2017 Women of the World "summit."**

bedrock of chattel slavery and genocide of Native American peoples, of this country which posed a "beacon on a hill" for "freedom-loving people everywhere" (Ronald Reagan) and whose march across the continent violated one treaty after another with the original inhabitants, and seized half of Mexico through in a predatory war. This self-proclaimed "indispensable" (Madeleine Albright) hegemon of the imperialist New World Order with its free-trade "agreements" destroys agriculture in Mexico and Haiti on behalf of the agribusinesses that export cheap Iowa corn and Arkansas rice, and which props up dictators in Africa in order to get the coltan for iPhones, is all based on *capitalist exploitation*, that still keeps the wage slaves in thrall today. It will continue to do so until a revolutionary workers party leads an international socialist revolution that will free humanity and unceremoniously throw all the Trumps, Obamas, Clintons, Pelosis, Feinsteins, Gillebrands, Haleys and, yes, the socialist-talking Bernie bros and their Ocasio-Cortez "sisters" – virulent anti-communists, one and all – into the dumpster of history.

Then the road will finally open to free all of humanity from poverty, war, racism, misogyny, xenophobia and the other plagues that prop up the rapacious rule of capital. ■



**Screenshot from MSNBC story "The Military-Industrial Complex Is Now Run By Women."**

# Chanting “U.S.A., U.S.A.” to Woman-Hater Trump’s Praise Imperialist Feminism and the Democrats

Screen shot from New York Times video



**Millionaire Democratic speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi joins Republican vice president Mike Pence in applauding billionaire imperialist chief Donald Trump’s jaw-jutting vow, in his February 5 State of the Union speech, that “America will never be a socialist country.”**

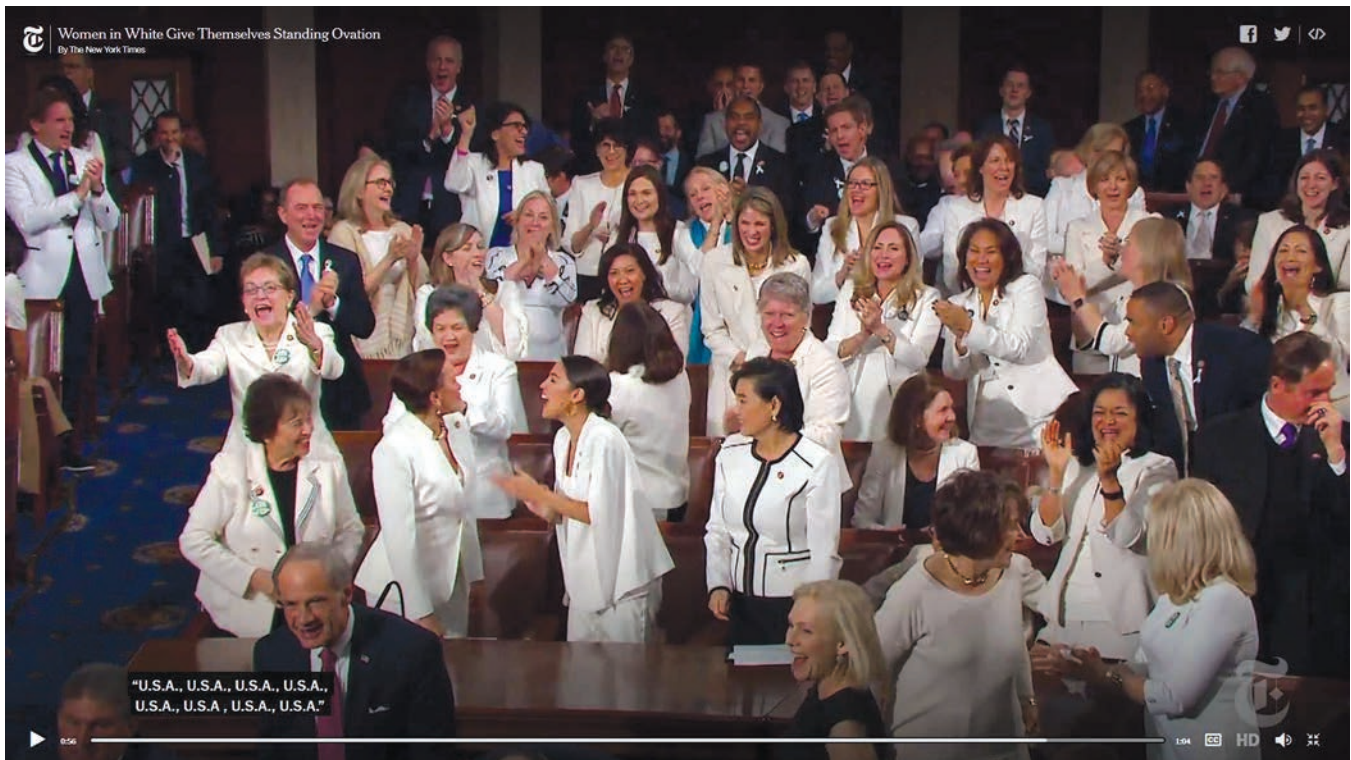
FEBRUARY 10 – So Donald Trump finally got his State of the Union speech on February 5, which even the right-wing Supreme Court chief justice John Roberts dismissed as a “political pep rally.” What we were treated to was a bipartisan spectacle of imperialist politicians chanting “U.S.A., U.S.A.” While it was Trump’s show, Democrats were in a self-congratulatory mood over House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi denying the Republican president his showcase until he backed down (for now) on his partial shutdown of the federal government over the failure of the U.S. Congress to fund his wall along the Mexican border.

True to form, Trump used his “bully pulpit” to demonize immigrants, claiming that “countless Americans are murdered by criminal illegal aliens,” when in fact undocumented immigrants commit far fewer crimes proportionately, and particularly far fewer violent crimes, than do American citizens. Trump as usual claimed that there is a “crisis on the southern border,” cit-

ing El Paso, Texas and San Diego, California as places where crime supposedly went down after walls were built. Yet every Congressional representative from a border district, including a Republican from Texas, has opposed his call for a wall (CBS News, 8 January), while El Paso and San Diego have had lower crime rates than most U.S. cities for decades.

Republican congressmen and senators cheered Trump’s xenophobic fear-mongering while the Democrats just sat there. The fact is that Democratic president Barack Obama deported millions, far more than Trump or any prior president, the Dems are just as committed to militarizing the border, and their supposed opposition to a wall is just grandstanding. (Bill Clinton built the first wall, in San Diego.) The real crisis at the border is that thousands of refugees forced to seek asylum from the devastation wreaked by U.S. imperialism in Central America have been kept out, and that tens of thousands of immigrant families which have been ripped apart, with children held in





Screen shot from New York Times video

**Democratic congresswomen wearing suffragette white chant “U.S.A., U.S.A., U.S.A.” as sexual-molester-in-chief Trump delivers applause line hailing record number of female capitalist legislators. DSA members Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (front, center) and Rashida Tlaib (rear, left) joined in the orgy of imperialist chauvinist celebration.**

cages by the U.S. Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) under both Obama and Trump.

Trump went on to brag about creating millions of new jobs, and that 58 percent of these jobs have been filled by women. That prompted the bloc of Democratic congresswomen (all wearing white in honor of the suffragettes) to *give a standing ovation to the misogynist president!* (Some “resistance.”) Meanwhile, the truth is that most of these new jobs are low-wage – nearly seven out of every ten workers earning less than \$10 an hour are women, according to the National Women’s Law Center – and many are only part-time. The marked preponderance of women in new jobs also reflects the pattern in the decade-old economic crisis in which almost 80% of those who lost their jobs were men (*Der Spiegel*, 1 May 2009). Continued long-term unemployment of men is no gain for women workers.

But cheering Trump’s claim over jobs was only the start. For his next applause line (“Don’t sit yet, you’re going to like this”), he bragged: “we also have more women serving in Congress than at any time before.” At this point, on cue from Nancy Pelosi on the podium, the Democratic women in white leapt out of their seats to cheer again. This soon morphed into chants of “U.S.A., U.S.A., U.S.A.” including by the supposed “democratic socialists” Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib (see photo). Applauding the sexual-molester-in-chief boasting of a supposed gain for women under his baton is bad enough; to join in the imperialist-chauvinist chanting like the spectacle at Olympic games is positively obscene, especially for anyone claiming to be a leftist.

Then came Trump’s claims of foreign policy triumphs. The Democrats sat stony-faced as he said that the U.S. would

likely have been in a major war with North Korea if he hadn’t been elected president (probably true, as Hillary Clinton was incessantly banging the war drums). But when the nuke-rattling commander in chief announced that he had recognized the U.S. puppet Juan Guaidó as president of Venezuela – in other words, that he was launching a coup d’état to overthrow the government of Nicolás Maduro – many if not most of the Democrats applauded, including New York senator Kirsten Gillibrand (see photo) and House speaker Pelosi. No doubt so did Democratic senators Richard Durbin of Illinois and Robert Menendez of New Jersey, who hail the U.S. blockade of Cuba and Venezuela.

Trump claimed that the Venezuelan government’s “socialist policies” were behind the country’s economic collapse – which is the opposite of the case, as the economic emergency is centrally due to the bourgeois nationalist Maduro’s vain attempt to conciliate the imperialists and domestic capitalists, religiously paying the foreign debt as food supplies dwindle. The uber-capitalist U.S. president then launched into a tirade against calls for “socialism” in the U.S., by which he meant the social-democratic flavored liberalism of the Bernie Sanders wing of the capitalist Democratic Party. When Trump proclaimed that “America will never be a socialist country,” and more shouts of “U.S.A., U.S.A.” rang out, there was Democrat Nancy Pelosi behind him clapping.

No surprise there, or over the House speaker applauding Trump’s coup-mongering in Venezuela. As top House Democrat in the 2000s, Pelosi knew about the U.S. torture of prisoners in Iraq and Afghanistan (and later helped engineer the multi-trillion dollar bailout of Wall Street banks). For a rap sheet of some of the crimes against working people by this millionaire leader of

the imperialist Democrats. “We’re capitalist, that’s just the way it is,” she responded to a student at New York University when asked about youth interest in socialism (see “Nancy Pelosi, Icon of Female Capitalist Power,” on page 38 of this issue).

We have noted as well that Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib, the two Democratic (Party) Socialists of America (DSA) members of Congress, voted on their very first day in office (January 3) to maintain funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which includes the I.C.E. immigration cops, after they earlier called to “abolish I.C.E.” That bill (H.R. 21) – which “progressive” Democrats Jamila Jayapal, Ilham Omar and Ayanna Pressley likewise voted for – also included some \$20 million “for programs to promote democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela,” that is, preparing the way for the coup by financing the pro-imperialist opposition.

As for wearing white (along with the other female politicians of this capitalist party) in honor of the women’s suffragists, this glosses over and covers up the fact that the main leaders of the movement, including Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, now celebrated as heroes, were racists who following the Civil War counterposed the struggle for the vote for women to the 15th Amendment for the right to vote of black men. This racism was so pervasive that organizers of the huge 1913 women’s suffrage march in Washington, D.C. demanded that black women march



Screen shot from New York Times video

**New York senator and Democratic presidential hopeful Kirsten Gillibrand applauds Trump’s Venezuelan coup.**

in a separate contingent at the back. Anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells courageously refused this vicious segregationist demand.

To be sure, after taking a lot of flak for her vote to fund I.C.E., while tacking between Democratic unity appeals and burnishing her “woke” image, “AOC” subsequently voted against a continuing resolution which funded the DHS, saying “our community felt strongly about not funding” the hated *migra* cops. But meanwhile she praises House speaker Pelosi as the “strong woman we need right now” to face down Trump over the government shutdown, and follows that up by cheering and chanting “U.S.A., U.S.A.” when Trump praises the election of more congresswomen. And don’t forget Ocasio-Cortez’ support for “border security” or her praise for racist imperialist war criminal and warmonger John McCain as “an unparalleled example of human decency and American service.”

The liberal bourgeois media is celebrating the number of women representatives and senators (127, a little under a quarter of the total) in the 116th Congress. They are echoed by many on the reformist left, such as *Socialist Alternative* (February 2019), which effusively headlined “Ocasio-Cortez Exposes the Rot of Corporate Politics” (“corporate,” mind you, not capitalist). But the fact is that these “progressive” and even “socialist”-posturing Democrats have acted exactly like the capitalist politicians that they are, loyal to the U.S.-dominated imperialist world order. That includes flipping and flopping on issues in order to maintain “credibility” with their base, and “playing ball” with the party bosses when it counts.

In supporting the U.S. coup in Venezuela supposedly in defense of “human rights,” the Democratic Party congresswomen continue the tradition of Madeleine Albright, who as U.S. ambassador to the U.N. and then secretary of state under Bill Clinton, whipped up feminist fervor for two imperialist wars on Yugoslavia (1994-95 and 1998-99).

Then there is Democratic senator Kamala Harris, who recently announced her presidential bid, posing as a “progressive” with talk of “Medicare for All,” a “Green New Deal” and the rest. In 2017, Harris spoke to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the hardline Zionist lobby, saying that “America’s support for Israel’s security must be rock solid”

*continued on page 51*



Chicago History Museum

**Organizers of 1913 women’s suffrage parade in Washington, D.C. ordered anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells (above) and other black women to march in a segregated contingent at the back. Wells refused.**

# DSA Members of Congress Vote to Fund “Homeland Security” Cops

JANUARY 10—Together with the rest of the Democratic Party caucus, the two Democratic Socialists of America members in the House of Representatives, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, voted last Thursday, January 3, to maintain the funding for the Department of Homeland Security, which, of course, includes Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) police and the Border Patrol. How much teargas, how many ice-cold detention cells, how much anti-immigrant brutality and imperialist deprecation will it pay for? Their votes, with those of the rest of the “progressive” Democrats, can be seen in the official government listing here.

The DSA as an organization, as a whole and in all of its constituent parts, is responsible for the actions of its representatives in Congress, whose election its National Political Committee called the “rebirth of the American socialist movement” (sic). Only a few months ago, they were calling to “abolish I.C.E.” (see our article “Smash the I.C.E. Gestapo with Workers Revolution!” *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018). Now, as the capitalist Democratic Party politicians that they are, DSAers in Congress vote to fund the hated immigration cops (*la migra*) as well as the DHS police (the Federal Protection Service) who with their heavy firepower are the front-line defenders of fascists, from Portland, Oregon to Washington, D.C.

The reformist left has met this vote for the DHS and I.C.E. with thunderous silence (while endlessly “debating” idiot rightists over a dance video by Ocasio-Cortez from 2010). In fact, almost all groups calling themselves socialist joined in to help associate the DSA Democrats with “socialism,” which can only discredit the word and vitiate its meaning. As we detailed in our article, “Midterm Elections:



Bryan M. Vance / Oregon Public Broadcasting

**This is what DSA members of Congress voted to fund: DHS cops together with Ill Percenter militia member arrest anti-fascist protester after fascist thug (in background) attacked him, Portland, Oregon, 4 June 2017.**

No Win for Working People” (*The Internationalist* No. 54, November-December 2018), these social democrats celebrated the ascension of DSAers to political stardom and high office, hoping to get a share of their present popularity.

Will the opportunists now admit to sharing political responsibility for what these new members of Congress did on their very first day in office? No. Unlike historical figures they sometimes claim to admire (whether they be Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, Debs, Trotsky...), such “leftists” disdain the mere idea of a class line or political principle. So yet again they will slough off any notion that they share responsibility for the actions of those they have helped promote and lionize. It is an old story (what they said and did regarding Syriza is just one example from the relatively recent past). New members are quickly taught to deride such things as the stuff of “sectarian polemics.”

Yet the issues involved are as real as teargas shot over the the border and the freezing-cold cells in countless DHS detention centers.

Another vivid object lesson in what “social-imperialism” (socialism in words, imperialism in deeds) looks like. ■



Ross D. Franklin / Reuters

**Thousands of immigrant children are held in freezing cold I.C.E. dungeons with nothing but aluminum foil “blankets” to sleep under, as in this photo of a DHS detention center in 2014 under the Democratic Obama administration.**

# Revolution



## Womens Liberation Through Socialist Revolution! Democratic Party Feminism and the “#MeToo Movement”

The following is the transcript, edited for publication, of a presentation by Comrade Yari of the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth at RIY's January 19 educational and organizing conference.

We're having our educational and organizing conference today, so this is a very special day for us. But this is also a special day for another group of people – because today is the Women's March. And here in New York we are very blessed because we don't have just one Women's March, we have two women's marches. So we have the *Women's March Inc.*, which is the national organization run by Tamika Mallory, Linda Sarsour and Carmen Perez; and then there is *Women's March Alliance*, who have been the New York organizers since the first Women's March of 2017.



John Minichillo / AP

**Gloria Steinem at 21 January 2017 Women's March in Washington D.C. From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, Steinem was a CIA “asset” working with the imperialist spy agency in the anti-Soviet Cold War fingering leftists while infiltrating womens organizations in the U.S.**

If you've been reading the *New York Times*, you've seen that a lot of accusations of anti-Semitism have been launched against Women's March Inc. Basically, Women's March Alliance is claiming that Tamika Mallory is an anti-Semite because she attended a Nation of Islam protest, which she later tweeted positive things about despite the fact that Louis Farrakhan was railing against Jews in a really disgusting way. However, Tamika Mallory is not an anti-Semite. She has said she disagrees with a lot of Farrakhan's views, but because she's a pioneer of identity politics, she's not going to “turn her back on black faces.”

Women's March Inc. are the people who are all about “intersectionality.” Mallory, Sarsour and others in that grouping supported Bernie Sanders, whereas Women's March Alliance organizers are so-called “New Democrats,” also called Clinton Democrats. They're based here in New York, where Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign was based. Hillary's campaign headquarters were in Brooklyn, even though she doesn't know how to swipe a Metrocard – but that's a different story. Basically, the accusations against the Women's March Inc. were a Zionist-orchestrated campaign by the Women's March Alliance, reflecting the infighting within the Democratic Party.

So while these bourgeois politicians are using the woman question to meet their ends, the rest of the left is hailing Bernie and pretending that the Women's March organizers are cham-

Internationalist photo



**IG/RIY demonstrators at NYC “women's summit” proclaim Clinton and Haley “not my sisters,” May 2017.**

pions of women's liberation, whereas we are Marxists, and we understand that both sides represent the Democratic Party, and both sides are wedded to the capitalist system, which is at the root of women's oppression. The "New Democrats" hail Hillary Clinton, this warmonger who set up sweatshops in Haiti, where women are paid under \$5 a day. And the Bernie-ites, who do they have as their keynote speaker? Gloria Steinem, who was a CIA asset fighting against the Soviet Union and spying on leftists like ourselves in Europe and reporting it back to the CIA.<sup>1</sup>

### "Marching to the Polls"

Who else did they have to speak at the Women's March? Well, there's "AOC" – Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez – who apparently gave a "riveting" speech about "justice" (after all, she's a Justice Democrat). But the Democratic Party does not care about women (except bourgeois women). In reality, the Women's March was not about women. So what was it actually about? It was about the Democrats taking back the House of Representatives. It was about "marching to the polls."

<sup>1</sup> On Steinem's widely-documented work for the CIA, see "'Democratic Socialism' in the Service of U.S. Imperialism," in the Internationalist Group pamphlet *DSA: Fronting for the Democrats* (February 2018), and Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 141-48.

At last year's Women's March (20 January 2018), Toni Van Pelt, the president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), urged women to go to the polls in her speech. She said: "This year's elections are crucial.... Women can determine the outcome in close elections. We need to build the excitement and enthusiasm right now to get out the massive vote we need in November, and we will do that.... Strong feminist candidates are running like never before.... As of today, there are 311 women running in Democratic primaries for the House of Representatives – *yeah!* And 47 Democratic women are running for the Senate.... And we're going to get 'em elected.... Feel the energy that's gathering here to make history in November! ...We're marching to the polls in November.... March on!"

And so on. In her speech, Van Pelt specifically endorsed Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, who ran for the Senate and won. Sinema is a Democrat who voted 50% of the time with Trump. When she was a member of the House of Representatives, she voted to fund his border wall. It's worth pointing out too that back in 2000, Sinema worked for anti-immigrant Ralph Nader's presidential campaign.

In terms of the House in the November 2018 elections, the Democratic Party succeeded in its campaign. There are now 102 women in the House, over 23% of the seats, and 89 of them are Democrats. The women's marches that they and

## Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution

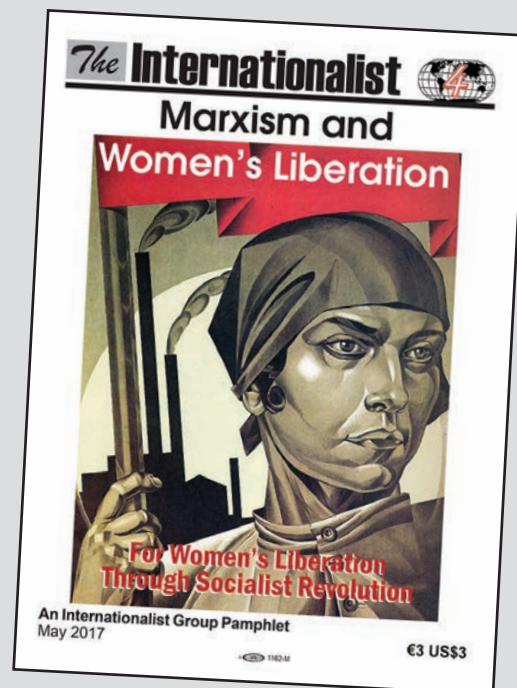
*From the introduction to the Internationalist pamphlet, Marxism and Women's Liberation (May 2017):*

The great French utopian socialist Charles Fourier observed "that in any given society the degree of woman's emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation." By that measure, and many others, the social condition of humanity in these early years of the 21st century is decidedly regressing. Women's rights are everywhere under attack.

The struggle for the emancipation of women has been a core issue ever since the French Revolution of 1789-1802. Although many key demands are basic democratic rights (the right to vote, the right to abortion), the implacable opposition to equality for women is rooted in the nuclear family, key to the maintenance and reproduction of capitalist society.

On the "woman question," there are two sharply counterposed programs in conflict: bourgeois feminism and revolutionary Marxism. While the term "feminist" is often loosely applied to all those who support women's rights, feminism is a bourgeois ideology and program. By posing "sisterhood" between bourgeois and working-class women, feminism is an obstacle to the liberation of women.

Marxism emphasizes the class divide, locating the origin of woman's oppression in the advent of private property and emergence of a ruling class, backed up by its enforcing power, the state. From slavery to serfdom and now capitalism, women have been held in thrall, and even as we fight for every real reform, this condition will not change short of a socialist revolution making possible the superseding of the family through collective institutions.



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their affiliated groups organized were a means that helped them pave the way toward that goal. As we have said since the first Women's March, held just after Trump's inauguration in January 2017, what they're about is advancing the goals of the Democratic Party, not women's liberation. They're certainly not going to challenge the institution of the bourgeois family or the capitalist system.

As we were coming up here this morning, I was looking around and asking myself, where are all the "pussy hats" – all those stupid pink hats with the cat ears that you're supposed to knit for yourself in a particular shade of pink? Last year and two years ago they were all over the place, but I didn't see them anywhere this time around. It looks like this year's Women's March is going to be much smaller, partly due to the infighting within the Democratic Party, but also because the prior Women's Marches succeeded in what its organizers set out to do, which was to take back the House. That was the point. And an electoral victory for one of the two big parties of U.S. imperialism is no victory for working-class, black, Latina and other doubly and triply oppressed women. Capitalism and its parties and politicians, both the men and women ones, are the enemies of women's rights and women's liberation.

### Origins of #MeToo

Since Trump's inauguration in 2017, the Democratic Party has maneuvered in many ways to endorse, support, co-opt and control a range of social movements and causes in the interest of winning the House, and more broadly to advance its electoral objectives. Among these are the question of the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival) program, the supposed "resistance" to Trump's border wall and family separation policy, etc. After the Parkland, Florida shooting in February 2018, there was the "March For Our Lives,"<sup>2</sup> which Women's March Inc. facilitated, by the way. And particularly there is the question of the Democratic Party and women's rights overall. In this context I wanted to talk about "#MeToo," together with some other topics.

I wanted to start off with a quotation, which highlights the ideology that gained force in the "#MeToo movement." It's from Zerlina Maxwell, who was the "Director of Progressive Media" for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. Writing in the *Washington Post* (6 December 2014), Maxwell stated: "We should believe as a matter of default what an accuser says. Ultimately the costs of wrongly disbelieving a survivor far outweigh the costs of calling someone a rapist."

So let's get into this. How did the #MeToo movement start? Basically, after the accusations against Harvey Weinstein had come out, Alyssa Milano, the actor who was friends with Harvey Weinstein's wife, took to Twitter, and created a hashtag: #MeToo. Initially, she didn't think much of it; she went to bed, but when she woke up in the morning, there were over 50,000 tweets with this hashtag, #MeToo. It was trending on Twitter, and there were thousands upon thousands of stories that women

<sup>2</sup> See "Democrats Exploit School Shooting to Push Racist Gun Control," *The Internationalist* No. 51 (March-April 2018).

## Not Our Sisters



Larry Downing/Getty Images

**Hillary Clinton with her top aide Cheryll Mills (left) in October 2012 at the opening of Sae-A Trading Co. sweatshop in Caracol industrial park built with funds Clinton pilfered from Haiti earthquake relief. After leaving the State Department, Mills went into business with Sae-A chairman Woong-ki Kim in textile trade with Ghana where workers are paid US\$2 per day.**

had come forward with, saying that they had been sexually assaulted or raped. It highlighted this very real situation, because rape is a particular tool of violence that's used against women.

As revolutionary partisans of women's liberation, democratic rights and sexual freedom, our guiding principle regarding sexual relations is that of effective consent. This means agreement and comprehension among those involved, without force or coercion. Rape is forcible sexual intercourse, whether the force is actual or threatened. In an article titled "Rape and Bourgeois Justice" published in 1975 in what was then the Trotskyist youth press (*Young Spartacus*, February 1975), the following point is made:

"Rape ... involves an act, the circumstances of which determine whether it is a crime or voluntary sexual intercourse. Therefore, ambiguities about consensuality do and must occur. Rape transforms what is normally a pleasurable intimacy and consensual activity for sexual gratification into an experience of fear, degrading submission, brutality and often injury for the victim and into an expression of overt hostility and aggression for the rapist."

So sexual assault and rape are things that large numbers of women are subjected to, and many of the accusations that have come out as a result of #MeToo are believable and horrific. Many of the accounts that have come out have encouraged women to stand up and speak about things that they hadn't

## Our Sisters

Swoan Parker/Reuters



**Factory workers sewing garments at Caracol industrial park where workers are paid less than US\$5 per day. Sae-A supplies Walmart, GAP, Target and other retailers from this plant.**

been able to speak about before. So socially this is important, and it is something that needs to be addressed. However, at the same time #MeToo put forward this principle that you have to “believe women” *a priori*.

There is something problematic with that. The idea is that you not only have to believe women’s accusations, but you have to believe that if a woman calls something rape, or if she calls something sexual assault, whatever she says it is, that is what it is, as a principle, period. This sets the conditions for a witch hunt, and one that can use puritanical ideas, and be launched against men in general (including gay men, as we have already seen). And it can and has been used against women, from college professors to high-school teachers, which actually happens all the time. This can and sometimes does muddy up what sexual assault means, and what rape actually means.

So then we were presented with the scenario of someone like the actor Aziz Ansari. Apparently, he thinks it’s really sexy to stick his fingers down a woman’s throat and is a really rude person for not asking if his date prefers red or white wine. He was a really bad, awkward date, it’s alleged, and he’s probably not going to have dates for a really long time. But someone like this should not be equated with someone like the film mogul Harvey Weinstein, against whom there is a crimi-

nal indictment including for first-degree rape and aggravated sexual assault, or with someone like U.S. gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar, who has been convicted of serially sexually molesting young female gymnasts. Equally weighting Ansari with these two trivializes rape; equating a bad date with sexual assault trivializes sexual assault.

### Inequality and Consent

I’m sure everybody here knows this, but I’m going to state the obvious: sex is really confusing, and sex is also full of contradictions. That is true about a lot of things in life, but we’re talking about sex, especially about young people who are just coming into their sexuality. It can be a very confusing thing, especially if you apply a feminist conception of what sex is – because for feminists, it’s all about the power dynamic and inequality. According to that conception, your position in society predetermines what you can and cannot consent to. This is why as a rule, feminists support age of consent laws, for example, arguing that teenagers cannot really consent to sex with older people because the situation is necessarily coercive. There’s a power imbalance, right, so let’s criminalize it *a priori*, period.

So if we take that idea to its logical conclusion – the idea that social inequality and a power dynamic necessarily equal coercion in sexual relations – then someone who is a retail worker, for example, couldn’t or shouldn’t go out with someone who’s a lawyer. There’s a power imbalance there. The lawyer makes way more money than the retail worker does – so retail workers should go out and have sex with retail workers, lawyers should go out and have sex with lawyers. That would be the logical conclusion. Let’s take it even further. Women and men are

obviously not equal in this society. So let’s apply the logic here. Then the conclusion would be that women and men should not have sex with one another because women are unequal to men and thus there is no way that women can consent to having sex with men. So women should really just be having sex with women and men should have sex with men. That’s that. It’s the opposite of a fight to free everyone from bigoted restrictions so people can have whatever kinds and varieties of consensual sexual relations – gay, straight, whatever in whatever combinations – that they choose.

And if we want to take that logic – that social inequality invalidates consent – even further, then interracial relationships, that’s done with. Because in this society black people do not have equality with white people. There’s inequality. But what if it’s a black man and a white woman? Well, then it becomes the oppression Olympics. What is the more important fact: that he’s man or that he’s black or that she’s a woman and she’s white? We’re



**Emmett Till was lynched in Mississippi in 1955 at the age of 14 for supposedly making physical and verbal advances toward a white woman. Decades later, the accuser admitted that her story had been made up.**

going to get back to that.

The next thing to know about the feminist conception is that, according to this view, sexual encounters range along a scale, on which consensual sex is at one end and rape is at the other, and all sex exists somewhere on this spectrum. So in this view there are degrees of rape; that in a particular case, it might not be all the way non-consensual, but it's definitely not all the way consensual, so there is a degree of rape. What this fails to see is that rape and sexual assault represent a *qualitative discontinuity*, because there is force and compulsion, rather than there being an accumulation of bad things that if you reach a certain *quantity* would be sexual assault. And at the same time, they fail to see that people may have *contradictory* feelings about sexual relations, at the time or later. Feminism cannot account for contradictions, and doesn't really care to, actually. Marxism is a science of contradictions, and as Marxists we have an investment in understanding how the real world works – because we actually want to do something about women's oppression. We want to put an end to it.

So the conceptions we are discussing here can encourage and invite willful misinterpretations of very real contradictory feelings, together with fear and the puritanical ideas this society teaches people. Plenty of people are familiar with a situation along the lines of “I kind of like him, but I kind of don't; I kind of want to go out with him, but I kind of don't; I made out with him, but...” – contradictory feelings. It's very real, but the feminist conception we're talking about doesn't account for that. Instead it relies on the puritanical values that are used to regiment the population.

### Title IX and the Kipnis Inquisition

I want to move on to Title IX,<sup>3</sup> because a lot of the ideas that we just discussed are reflected on campus. I'm going to be drawing on a book on these issues by Laura Kipnis, *Unwanted Advances* (HarperCollins, 2017). If people haven't read it, they should; it's very important and also very well written overall. Laura Kipnis is a professor at Northwestern University who wrote an essay titled “Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe” for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (27 February 2015), about sexual misconduct policies, relationships between faculty members and students, and issues of free speech on campus. The essay criticized (and in places poked fun at) what Kipnis viewed as

<sup>3</sup> This refers to Title IX of the federal Education Amendments Act of 1972, which states: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” This originally created opportunities for women's sports programs in the schools. Subsequently, a number of Supreme Court decisions in the 1990s required schools to respond to reports of sexual harassment or sexual violence; and in 2011, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights issued a statement, known as the “Dear Colleague Letter,” stating that institutions of higher education have the responsibility to “take immediate and effective steps to end sexual harassment and sexual violence.”



Internationalists call to mobilize workers power to defend women's rights. Above: Class Struggle Workers – Portland in labor contingent against fascist #HimToo provocation, 17 November 2018.

the excesses of new campus conduct codes. It also questioned some of the vocabulary that was being encouraged and that has become increasingly standard, including the *a priori* use of the term “survivor” for anyone alleging sexual harassment or abuse.

While strongly supporting measures against “bona fide harassers,” Kipnis argued that “the myths and fantasies about power perpetuated in these new codes are leaving our students disabled when it comes to the ordinary interpersonal tangles and erotic confusions that pretty much everyone has to deal with at some point in life, because that's simply part of the human condition.” Her straightforward expression of such views was then used to add fuel to the fire of what she called (in a subsequent piece in the *Chronicle* [29 May 2015]) “My Title IX Inquisition.”

Because of her “Sexual Paranoia” essay, and then her book, Title IX investigations were rained down on Laura Kipnis. The first investigation brought against her claimed that her essay had supposedly created a “chilling effect” at the university. She was cleared in that investigation. Kipnis then faced *another* Title IX investigation, accusing her of “involvement in and/or approval of” a statement by another faculty member to the faculty senate expressing concern that the first Kipnis investigation posed a threat to academic freedom. (That faculty member then had a Title IX complaint filed against him!) Kipnis was cleared in that investigation as well. And then she faced a lawsuit over her book.

Thus, even speaking about these investigations was grounds for more investigations. As a result of the 2011 expansion of Title IX, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs receiving federal funding, it now incorporated sexual conduct standards including everything from sexual harassment to coercion, to assault and rape.

### “Preponderance of Evidence”

So the “Dear Colleague” letters issued in 2011 to college administrations by the Obama administration were meant to serve as guidelines for higher education institutions when inves-



tigating sexual assault. Basically, they changed the standard of evidence used within a university for investigating sexual assault cases, so that rather than requiring “clear and convincing” proof of wrongdoing it would be “preponderance of the evidence,” defined as being based on “the more convincing evidence and its probable truth or accuracy, and not on the amount of evidence.”

For example, “more convincing” can mean more detailed. So Kipnis talks about an account where a woman remembered a specific drink that she had with a male professor whom she was accusing of sexual assault, and that detail apparently led the investigator from the OCR [the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights] to believe that her story was true. Details like this, which in some cases could simply be made up. Basically, the idea is that if there is a 50.01% likelihood that the event that an accuser alleges happened did occur, then the accused could actually be found guilty on that basis.

“So long to niceties such as presumption of innocence,” as Kipnis put it. “Hello to campus as penal colony.” With the “preponderance of the evidence standard,” it is easier to produce convictions or guilty verdicts based on hearsay, and on the common male/female tropes that the male is always the aggressor – and that’s that. What was the incentive for turning out these verdicts? Universities and colleges that received federal funding or financial assistance that did not implement this lower standard of evidence ran the risk of having an OCR investigation against them, of being fined, and of losing their federal funding.

Part of the investigative procedures under the “Dear Colleague” guidelines could mean that the accused would not even know what they were being charged with, and when and how to reveal those charges would depend – it was a tactical maneuver of the investigator. That way, the argument went, the accused would not have time to come up with some sort of lie to contradict what was being said by the accuser. Typically this meant that you were not allowed to know who was making the charges, for the same reason; you would not know what the evidence is; in many cases, you were not able to have a lawyer present during questioning, and you could not present evidence in your defense. You were denied the right to cross-examine the complainant, and you were prohibited from talking about any of this. You were also not allowed to have a copy of the Title IX report against you.

Off-campus incidents could also be reported to the university administration for Title IX investigations, and third-party complainants were permissible. Laura Kipnis describes an incident in which one young woman saw that her friend had a hickey from her boyfriend, and was concerned about it because it might have been sexual assault. So that third party had a Title IX investigation brought against her friend’s boyfriend. The investigator can also double as the complainant.

Trump’s Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is certainly an odious figure. We’re against her, she is a charter-school hawk and a “voucher vulture.”<sup>4</sup> However, she has declared that schools now can opt for a higher standard of proof, the “clear and convincing” standard, or they can continue to use the lower standard of “preponderance.”

<sup>4</sup> See “Betsy DeVos: Trump’s Voucher Vulture,” by Class Struggle Education Workers, *The Internationalist* No. 45, January-February 2017.

## “Affirmative Consent”

There is also the question of “affirmative consent” policies. Obviously, all sexual relations need to be consensual – as noted, our principle is that of effective consent. In 2014, California Governor Jerry Brown signed SB967 into law, making California the first state to pass a so-called “Yes Means Yes” law defining sexual consent, applicable to universities and colleges that receive state funding. SB967 included the “affirmative consent” standard. What does that mean? It goes further than the common “no means no” standard and states that “affirmative consent must be ongoing throughout a sexual activity.” Some feminists also add that it must be “enthusiastic consent.”

It’s all very jarring, because this is what “affirmative consent” means – you need to be able to account for every single little touch and every single move you make, and this is not how sex really works. This is not the reality of sex, where there is often plenty of uncertainty and hesitation and ambiguity. “No means no” is clear. Saying that only “yes is yes” means wanting to banish “maybe,” by law. Instead of foreplay, they want to require a checklist. “Affirmative consent,” though, is not new. In 1990 at Antioch College, a feminist group called Womyn of Antioch advocated what they called “the policy,” which later came to be known as affirmative consent.<sup>5</sup> It was passed at Antioch, but was widely ridiculed at the time, because it didn’t make sense. Saturday Night Live even came out with a skit making fun of Antioch College for this business.

But now it’s 2019 and this has become the norm; over 1,000 universities in the United States now have such “affirmative consent” policies. There was an article last year describing how an Antioch student who had gone home for the first time after starting college was very surprised that her mother did not ask for her permission before hugging her (“The Reinvention of Consent,” *New York Times*, 24 February 2018). It’s a true story. Here in New York State, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed a law called “Enough is Enough” in 2015, enshrining the affirmative consent policy, which CUNY now follows, by the way.

So the shift to so-called “affirmative consent” is a direct consequence of the “Dear Colleague” letters, and it means the effective criminalization of a lot of sexual activity which in real life really is consensual. This is not about liberating or freeing young people, especially young women, gay, lesbian and trans people and others doubly targeted by hypocritical bourgeois morality, guilt, shame and repression, let alone young men, whose rights we also care about, since Marxists are the most determined defenders of democratic rights. No, it’s about the opposite, and a lot of it is about money. It is a tool that is utilized to make it easier to produce favorable adjudications, and to avoid financial strains on the universities, because it is time-consuming and expensive to have an OCR investigation brought against your school, mind you, plus the university’s reputation can be ruined... This is how a lot of administrations look at it.

So what about “identity politics”? The term is sometimes misused to describe concern with, and a desire to overcome, what Marxists call the special oppression of women, black

<sup>5</sup> See Bethany Saltman, “We Started the Crusade for Affirmative Consent Way Back in the ‘90s,” *The Cut*, 22 October 2014.



**Internationalist Club speak-out against racist terror at Hunter College, September 2015, protested murders of transgender black and Latina women.**

people and others doubly or triply oppressed in class society. In fact, identity politics is the opposite of a real fight against such oppression.<sup>6</sup> A common gender does not make all women “sisters.” The term “feminism” is often used (erroneously) as a synonym for defending women’s rights. But feminism is an ideology which pretends that real equality can be achieved within class society, by drawing a gender line instead of a class line, rather than understanding that discrimination against women and their oppression and subjugation is a product of class rule, which can only be overcome freeing women from the bourgeois nuclear family, socializing its functions, and establishing a classless society, through a common struggle by working men and women and all oppressed sectors of society against exploitation and oppression. Feminism does not liberate women. As we fight here and now against every form of oppression and discrimination, Marxists also emphasize that it is illusory to claim that women’s equality can be won under the capitalist system. We call instead for women’s liberation through socialist revolution.

For feminists today, their champions are Nancy Pelosi, who was the senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Com-

<sup>6</sup> As we wrote in the “Founding Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth”: “This form of bourgeois ideology feigns a fight against oppression through ‘check-your-privilege’ liberal idealism and is systematically imbued among university students, including many of those who see themselves as radical. It is used to deepen the wedge between different sectors of the workers and oppressed, claiming to unite those who share a sectorally defined identity, including members of the exploiting class. The long-standing feminist slogan ‘Sisterhood is Powerful’ is a classic example, as if Hillary Clinton or former First Lady Michelle Obama could be the ‘sisters’ of women workers in the Clintons’ Haitian sweatshops, immigrants deported by Barack Obama, mothers whose children were killed by his drones, or strikers targeted by the anti-labor laws the bourgeois politicians enforce. Ostensibly radical versions (including the phantasmagorical ‘proletarian feminism’ some Maoists go on about) give left cover to this bourgeois ideology rather than forthrightly explaining how it can never be a program for actually winning liberation” (*Revolution* No. 14, January 2018).

mittee and knew all about CIA torture; and Senator Dianne Feinstein, who chaired the Select Committee on Intelligence. And let’s not forget about Gina Haspel, the CIA agent who ran a torture site and is now CIA Director;<sup>7</sup> Gloria Steinem who worked for the CIA and dated Henry Kissinger, the mass-murdering carpet bomber of Vietnam; and then Trump’s former UN envoy Nikki Haley, also a champion of feminism. And let’s not forget that the CEOs of four of the five top U.S. weapons manufacturing conglomerates are now women.<sup>8</sup> Woo-hoo – so you know it’s all about “representation” for feminists, as if bourgeois women becoming capitalist politicians, mass-murderers, torture and spy chiefs and weapons manufacturers is somehow going to liberate the mass of women from their shackles.

But Marxism is about *genuinely* liberating all of the oppressed. It is a program for the liberation of women, based on our understanding that the oppression of women is rooted in class-based society.

This is very different from how liberals conceive of women’s oppression. For them, it is not specifically rooted in concrete social structures; it’s all at the level of ideas – having a “conversation,” getting men to “get it,” promoting “herstory” – separating sexism from the material reality of women’s oppression. And if you’re just punching at ideas in the air, then you don’t have to – and can’t – challenge capitalism.

Lastly, I want to return to the topic of rape. Rape is real, and still today regularly ignored. In fact, there are hundreds of thousands of rape kits that are untested all across the United States, collecting dust. Not only that, but in New York alone, seven hospitals were charging victims for rape kits (*New York Times*, 29 November 2018). Rape kits are a really invasive procedure in horrifically traumatic circumstances, and then victims got a hefty bill for it. But we’re not going to combat the terrifying scourge of rape with “affirmative consent” rules in colleges, which is a totalitarian recipe for disaster.

We’re also not going to be able to challenge the basis of women’s oppression with the program of the #MeToo movement, by only always believing the accuser. The feminists who are backing that ideology would have lined up with the lynch mob against Emmett Till. They would be against the Scottsboro Boys, who were falsely accused of raping two white women and condemned to death for it. Only the massive international defense campaign, led by reds, saved their lives. And they would be against the Central Park Five, the black and Latino teenagers convicted on false charges of raping a white woman in 1989, with Donald Trump taking out full-page ads demanding the death penalty against them. They spent from 6 to 13 years each in prison, only to be exonerated.

And we can’t pretend that women never misremember,

<sup>7</sup> A recent article on Haspel (*Independent* [London], 6 January) is headlined “Women now run top three CIA departments for first time in history: Agency chief Gina Haspel aids rise of the ‘sisterhood’ in organisation dominated by men for much of its 70-year history.”

<sup>8</sup> “How Women Took Over the Military-Industrial Complex,” *Politic*, 2 January.



**Nine black teenagers in Scottsboro, Alabama, shown here with their lawyer Sam Leibowitz, were convicted in 1931 of raping two white women. Only worldwide mobilization of support, led by the International Red Aid, stayed the executioner's hand. The women later admitted that their testimony was fabricated.**

get confused, make things up, or just lie. There was the case of Tawana Brawley, for example, the black 15-year-old who invented a false story of being raped by four white men, including two cops, and the entire left was taken in by this claim, which was later revealed to be a hoax. So it is important to be careful in looking at the details of each case instead of jumping onto this bandwagon.

Then there is the class question as it concerns the “#MeToo movement.” Working-class women do not, as a rule, have the option to call out their bosses. In some cases, this is actually a matter of life or death. In Ken Loach’s movie about the immigrant janitorial workers’ organizing drive in Los Angeles, *Bread and Roses*, which we often show at CUNY, the main character’s sister sleeps with the boss to get her a job she desperately needs. Unfortunately, this woman doesn’t have the real possibility of calling out her boss. Her oppression is written into the very structure of capitalism.

Any real program for the liberation of women needs to include the socialization of housework, as part of the overall Marxist program for replacing the monogamous nuclear family – which today’s feminists don’t touch – with social institutions to lift these burdens off the back of women and open the way to real freedom, in the context of building a socialist society. ■

## Imperialist Feminism...

*continued from page 42*

over Iran, Gaza, Syria, billions for arms, etc. Earlier, as San Francisco district attorney and then California attorney general, she ran on a “tough on crime” platform, appealing judges’ decisions that declared the death penalty unconstitutional and challenging convictions involving police withholding of evidence (over 600 cases were dismissed).

It recalls Hillary Clinton’s mid-1990s talk of black “kids that are called superpredators,” when she was touting husband Bill’s Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. The package of repressive laws the Clintons passed then (the 1994 crime bill, and in 1996 the “Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act,” the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act” welfare “reform” and the “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act”) was the single biggest body blow to black rights, defendants’ rights, immigrant rights and the welfare of millions of poor African American, white and Latina women in recent history – laws which Donald Trump is enforcing with a vengeance today.

And it recalls the feminist appeal by war criminal Albright in 2016 that there was “a special place in hell” for any woman who didn’t vote for Hillary, who stole millions from earthquake relief funds in Haiti to set up a sweatshop where women workers earn less than \$5 a day; whose State Department oversaw the plotting leading up to the 2009 coup in Honduras; who as senator from New York pushed for trillions to bail out Wall Street banksters in 2008; who in 2007 voted for a bill giving the green light to “bomb, bomb Iran,” and who as a leading war hawk peddled the lie of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to justify the 2003 U.S. invasion, and more recently beat the war drums to bomb Syria.

Putting more female capitalist politicians in Congress may signal a shifting social climate yet, by reinforcing the Democratic Party’s stranglehold on the poor, oppressed and working people, it reinforces the structures and mechanisms holding back their struggles. It is essentially a repeat of how the 2008 election of Barack Obama as the first black president “reflected a considerable social change in this country founded on chattel slavery,” but “has not changed the system of imperialist capitalism one iota” (see “Obama Presidency: U.S. Imperialism Tries a Makeover,” *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009). The wars, the torture, the skyrocketing inequality all continued.

Next up: a “bipartisan” border security bill being orchestrated by Nancy Pelosi and negotiated by Republican Kay Granger of Texas and Democrat Nita Lowey of New York. Instead of Trump’s “big, fat, beautiful wall,” there will be billions for bollard fences, more repressive technology and more Border Patrol agents. While phony “democratic socialists” and their reformist left cheerleaders round up votes for the Democratic Party of war, poverty and racism, the communists of the Internationalist Group insist that it’s necessary to break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties and to build a class-struggle workers party that genuinely fights for women’s liberation, and for full citizenship rights for all immigrants the only way that basic democratic right will be won: by *international socialist revolution*. ■

Amazon, #MeToo Blacklist Director in Vicious Smear Job

# In Defense of Woody Allen

The #MeToo “movement” has reignited the reactionary smear campaign against famed film director Woody Allen as a “child molester,” for which there is no evidence. The hysteria being whipped up against him has had a sinister goal, now successful, of blacklisting Allen, with more than a dozen actors pressured to issue apologies for having worked with him. College courses studying his work have been cancelled. The *New York Times* (18 January 2018) ran an article, “Can Woody Allen Work in Hollywood Again?”

Following the methodology of the McCarthyite anti-Communist witch hunt, those actors who defend or who refuse to condemn Woody are themselves condemned. Thus, Diane Keaton’s defense of Woody Allen is denounced by the likes of Judd Apatow (who condemns Allen as a “narcissist” for marrying a younger woman). Apatow rose to fame with his anti-abortion “comedy,” *Knocked Up*. Greta Gerwig, whose acclaimed movie *Lady Bird* salutes the virtues of education by the anti-woman Catholic Church, states her regret for working with Allen.

Such attacks on democratic rights, frame-ups and smears appealing to puritanical moralism (like the idea that if a young woman gets involved with an older man like Allen, he must be a moral degenerate and criminal) weaken the rights of all. Especially threatened are the most marginalized and oppressed sectors of society – like racial and ethnic minorities and those whose sexuality does not conform to “traditional family values” – together with the workers movement. In the drive to regiment the U.S. population during the anti-Soviet Cold War, the anti-communist “red scare” was accompanied by a large-scale witch hunt against gays and lesbians, subsequently known as the “lavender scare.”

Now Amazon Studios has refused to distribute Allen’s latest movie, *A Rainy Day in New York*, completed six months ago, and has terminated a contract to produce and distribute three more of his movies. Allen is suing the studio, a subsidiary of the e-commerce monopoly Amazon (see “Unionize Amazon and Whole Foods!” on page 28 of this issue) for \$68 million they would have paid under the contract, plus damages. The lawsuit notes that Amazon breached the contract because of “a 25-year-old, baseless allegation,” and that “there simply was no legitimate ground for Amazon to renege on its promises.” Allen deserves every penny he can get!

Woody Allen is known, among other things, for being one of the few American directors to write strong roles for women in films such as *Annie Hall*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, *Blue Jasmine*, to name but a few in his enormous oeuvre, long denounced by right-wing yahoos for its urban, secular, humanist themes. In the 1976 movie *The Front*, written, directed by and starring formerly blacklisted Hollywood figures, Allen played a “front,” putting his name on the script of a blacklisted screenwriter in 1953, at the height of the McCarthyite anti-Communist witch hunt. Allen now apparently needs his own



Jamie McCarthy / Getty Images

Woody Allen and Soon-Yi Previn in 2016.

front if he is to get his own movies produced and distributed in the “#MeToo” era.

The basic facts of the allegation against Allen, that he supposedly touched the genitalia of his seven-year-old daughter Dylan on 4 August 1992, show that the story was concocted by her mother Mia Farrow, who was in the midst of a bitter custody dispute with Allen. Farrow had been Allen’s partner for 12 years and became enraged when she learned in January 1992 that Allen had begun a relationship with Soon-Yi Previn, her adopted daughter, at a time when Woody and Mia’s relationship was on the rocks.

Soon-Yi, who was 21 years old when she began her relationship with Allen, was not Woody Allen’s daughter in any manner. According to testimony by the family’s psychologist at the time, Dr. Susan Coates, Farrow became increasingly distraught and enraged in the course of 1992 as Woody and Soon-Yi’s relationship continued, issuing death

threats against Allen – while still hoping to marry him. A few days before making the child abuse allegation, Farrow told the doctor that she wanted to “find a way to stop him” (“Doctor Recounts Threats By Farrow Against Allen,” *New York Times*, 30 March 1993).

Against the advice of Dr. Coates, who considered Farrow to be unstable and “dangerous,” Allen ventured to Farrow’s country estate in Connecticut on August 4 to visit his children. According to Moses Farrow (mosesfarrow.blogspot.com, 23 May 2018), who was 14 at the time, he and the three adults at the house were all ordered by Farrow not to let Allen out of their sight. Farrow had been drilling into all her children’s heads for months that Allen was a “monster” and “evil” for “betraying” the family.

Today, Mia’s son Ronan Farrow – who has described Allen’s marriage to Soon-Yi as a “moral transgression” – is paraded as a prime witness against Woody Allen, coming off his *New Yorker* exposé of Harvey Weinstein. Yet he witnessed nothing. His brother Moses gives a detailed description of the impossibility of the allegations, as well as the orchestration of the smear job by their mother. As Allen noted in an op-ed in the *New York Times* (7 February 2014), responding to a hit piece by Mia Farrow’s good friend Nicholas Kristof:

“After all, I was a 56-year-old man who had never before (or after) been accused of child molestation. I had been going out with Mia for 12 years and never in that time did she ever suggest to me anything resembling misconduct. Now, suddenly, when I had driven up to her house in Connecticut one afternoon to visit the kids for a few hours, when I would be on my raging adversary’s home turf, with half a dozen people present, when I was in the blissful early stages of a happy new relationship with the woman I’d go on to marry – that I would pick this moment in time to embark on a career as a child molester should seem to the most skeptical mind highly unlikely. The sheer illogic of such a crazy scenario seemed to me dispositive.”

Kristof is a smug imperialist ideologue who retails “human rights” claims as a justification for every possible U.S. military bombing campaign, invasion and occupation: Serbia, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, etc. A few months after his 2014 op-ed reviving the smear of Woody Allen, he was exposed for having been for years the press and marketing agent of a lucrative hoax by Somaly Mam, who falsely claimed to have been the victim of child sex trafficking in Cambodia. Kristof also supports sweatshop super-exploitation in poor countries, arguing that higher pay for workers would mean fewer jobs.

According to affidavits submitted by one of Mia Farrow’s nannies, Monica Thompson, beginning on the day after Allen’s visit Farrow spent two or three days making a choppy video in which she rehearsed and drilled Dylan to make a report of abuse, which supposedly took place in the attic (“Nanny Casts Doubt on Farrow Charges,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 February 1993). A physical examination of Dylan by a doctor found no sign of abuse. Two separate investigations, one by the Yale-New Haven Hospital Child Sex Abuse Clinic on behalf of the Connecticut State Police, and another

by the New York State Department of Social Services, found no credible evidence against Allen.

The Yale report stated: “It is our expert opinion that Dylan was not sexually abused by Mr. Allen. Further, we believe that Dylan’s statements on videotape and her statements to us during our evaluation do not refer to actual events that occurred to her on August 4th, 1992.” It stated that Dylan was “likely” “coached or influenced” by Mia Farrow into making the allegation. The Connecticut police, although champing at the bit to go after Allen, had no credible evidence to arrest him.

Thompson’s deposition also described how Mia’s nannies were pressured by Mia to support her smear by falsely reporting that Allen was “missing” for 15 minutes during the day and that Dylan was found not wearing underpants. Moses Farrow in his May 2018 article relates that out of “loyalty” to an often violent “Mommy Dearest” Mia, her children were “brainwashed” into hatred of Woody Allen. He also accused his mother of child abuse and neglect, and stated that she beat Soon-yi with a telephone receiver.

1992 was also at the tail-end of the “moral panic” that began in the 1980s in which hundreds of day care workers were falsely accused of sexual abuse of children, including hysterical claims of mass “Satanic ritual abuse.” The most famous case was the literal witch hunt against the McMartin Preschool near Los Angeles. This continued for years, though no one was ever convicted of a single act of wrongdoing,” as noted in “The Trial That Unleashed Hysteria Over Child Abuse” by veteran reporter Clyde Haberman in the *New York Times* (9 March 2014).

After horrendous victimization in this wave of persecution, almost all those accused were exonerated, sometimes years later, as it became clear that the children had been coerced and influenced into making statements. The witch hunt of daycare workers was part of a reactionary “family values” crusade to put working women back in the home.

In framing up Woody Allen, the tabloid press went after his affair with Soon-Yi Previn to portray him as a “pervert.” Soon-Yi sought to set the record straight at the time, saying “I’m not a retarded little underage flower who was raped, molested and spoiled by some evil stepfather – not by a long shot” (*Newsweek*, 30 August 1992). She added, “Mia was always very hot-tempered and given to rages which terrified all the kids.”

Not only Allen but Previn also has been vilified through their 20 years of marriage. Last fall she staunchly defended her husband, saying “what’s happened to Woody is so upsetting, so unjust. [Mia] has taken advantage of the #MeToo movement and paraded Dylan as a victim,” and now “a whole new generation” is being indoctrinated (*New York magazine*, 16 September 2018).

The persecution of Woody Allen, now revived supposedly in the name of women’s rights, is no aberration. Puritanical anti-sex witch hunts are as American as apple pie, and these reactionary crusades are instrumental to the oppression of women.

***Down with the witch hunt against Woody Allen! Let his films be seen! Amazon: Pay up!*** ■

# From “Occupy Wall Street” to Trotskyism

*We print below the letter of application for membership in the Internationalist Group of comrade August.*

Throughout the course of my political development, two phrases have echoed in my mind. The first is Marx’s introduction to the Communist Manifesto: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” The second is Trotsky’s introduction to the Transitional Program: “The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.”

Like many young revolutionaries my political development began in adolescence. I was unaware that left politics even existed, let alone the possibility of being a professional revolutionary. Nevertheless, it was during these years that ideas vital to a Marxist analysis of class struggle began to take shape. Perhaps the most important of these ideas were a complete disillusionment with religion, a vehement opposition to U.S. imperialism, and a renunciation of bourgeois politics.

For the vast majority of my childhood, I attended Catholic school. I often found myself questioning the doctrines of the Christian faith, and the answers that I received left much to be desired. On October 7, 2001, George W. Bush announced, “Operation Enduring Freedom”. Under the guise of fighting terrorism, the U.S. imperialists slaughtered thousands of innocent Afghani people. All this done with the quiet but very real approval of Pope John Paul II. When I asked teachers how the church could justify murder the only reply I received was to “pray for them.”

By the time I reached high school, I was chastised regularly for my refusal to say the Pledge of Allegiance or to participate in religion class. At that time, I had not yet considered myself an atheist, but I understood that all religions were used as a tool to control the masses. These dogmas taught individuals to accept the status quo because those most oppressed would receive their rewards in the next life. Meanwhile, the Democratic and Republican parties of the United States, along with their imperialist allies, were free to wage endless wars overseas and ruthlessly dismantle any opposition to capitalism. I wanted no part of it.

As I became more aware of the world around me, a burning desire to take action against capitalist oppression steadily increased. My first opportunity came in the fall of 2011. Twenty-one years old, I integrated myself into the Occupy movement. With chants referring to the 99%, I thought that I finally found something worth fighting for. I spent countless hours milling about Zuccotti Park, volunteering in the kitchen, participating in assemblies and doing what I thought at the time was revolutionary work. Then on November 15, 2011, the police raided and cleared Zuccotti Park. Two days later I joined protesters in an attempt to “shut down Wall Street.” Forty minutes later, with my face to the pavement and my hands zip-tied behind my back, I truly believed I was being revolutionary. I was arrested, spent the next 20 hours in jail, and was released.

By the end of the year the occupation movement had disintegrated, and I begrudgingly had to acknowledge that, at best, the movement was only a symbolic protest without any real chance of success. I had passion and energy but no theoretical understanding or direction. Without having any organization to turn towards, I spent the next few years adrift in the murky waters of identity politics.

Over the past three years there have been key moments during my development that have furthered my dedication towards Trotskyism. These experiences have highlighted important and necessary lessons that all professional revolutionaries must learn.

The first of these experiences was my participation in the IG contingent on May Day 2015. I can honestly say that I did not know what to expect. Upon arrival at Union Square I was handed a sign that read “Free Mumia Abu Jamal” and was introduced to various comrades. Having never participated in any events prior, I must admit that I was overwhelmed. I had so many questions. Why were all these different groups gathering? Are all the groups the same? What makes them different? The specific details of that day are rather vague; however, there is one thing about that day that I remember quite clearly that set the Internationalist Group apart from all the rest. As we marched through the street and chanted “Only Revolution Can Bring Justice,” I quickly realized that the comrades of the IG took militancy seriously. After May Day I slowly become more involved with the Internationalist Club at Hunter College. With each subsequent event that I participated in, I came to appreciate fully the value of revolutionary discipline.

Perhaps the most important experience in my development has been becoming a member of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth group. In the months leading up to the formation of RIY, I began meeting for weekly study. During these study sessions I was given the opportunity to broaden my understanding of important theoretical lessons including women’s liberation, dialectical materialism, the party question, black liberation, and the theory of permanent revolution. The more I learned, the more I understood that I was participating in the process of cadre development. With the formation of RIY, I took on more responsibility and dedicated much more time to my development as a cadre, both through study and by participating in labor struggles. I also understood that joining RIY served a purpose. I was preparing to join the party.

I believe that I am ready to take that step. I am a Trotskyist, and want to dedicate my life to being a professional revolutionary. I am submitting my application letter to the Internationalist Group because I believe the LFI is the only true continuation of the Trotsky’s Fourth International. I agree with the principles of the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International, I accept the program, I agree to abide by the Group’s discipline, and to support it financially according to the current norms.

–August

May 20, 2018

# Italy: Block the Racist Salvini “Security and Immigration” Decree

After the March 2018 general elections in Italy that swept out the previous “center-left” government and produced a strong rightist parliamentary majority, weeks of parliamentary maneuvering led to the formation of a government of the right-wing populist Cinque Stelle (Five Star) party led by Luigi Di Maio and the fascist Lega (formerly Northern League) of Matteo Salvini. This rightist-racist government, in which the whip hand was held by Lega leader Salvini, found its common ground in whipping up anti-immigrant hysteria (see “Italy: Mobilize Workers Power to Smash the Anti-Immigrant Offensive,” *The Internationalist* No. 52, May–June 2018). As interior minister, in charge of police, Salvini quickly closed Italian ports to refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea in rickety boats to seek asylum.

By the end of September, the government approved an omnibus “security” law combining abolition of key legal protections for immigrants with stepped-up repression of labor struggles and social activists. The following article against this “Salvini Decree” is translated from *L’internazionalista* No. 3, November 2018, published by the *Nucleo Internazionalista d’Italy*, section of the League for the Fourth International.

The recent xenophobic “security” decree of Matteo Salvini eliminates the possibility of applying for asylum for humanitarian reasons for over 90% of the present cases (according to many experts); extends the period of possible incarceration for asylum seekers in deportation centers from 90 to 180 days; increases the use of tasers and electronic devices; and prohibits re-entry into Italy of “foreigners” who have been expelled from other countries of the Schengen agreement.<sup>1</sup> It also takes a law (the so-called DASPO), originally promoted as clamping down on marauding ultra-rightist soccer “hooligans,” and extends it to ban anyone involved in “crimes” of protest and social struggle from attending social, political and trade-union events.

In an article in *L’Espresso* (28 September) Aboubakar Soumahoro compared the Salvini decree to the fascist racial laws of 1938, as it explicitly discriminates against part of the population. This decree establishes that the Italian citizenship

<sup>1</sup> Among the founding documents of the European Union was the 1985 Schengen Agreement under which border controls within Europe were largely eliminated for citizens of EU countries, and regulations adopted for the processing of immigrants and asylum seekers. In 2016, as a result of the European immigration crisis, border controls were reintroduced in seven EU member states.



**Demonstration in against Salvini’s racist “security and immigration” decree, organized by the SI Cobas rank-and-file union, Bologna, 10 October 2018.**

of “foreigners” can be taken away for various “crimes” associated with social struggle. It also states that asylum seekers and immigrants cannot appeal in the courts, as they are limited to a single level of “justice” rather than being able to appeal (as Italian citizens may) to two levels of higher courts.

This racist decree is a frontal attack against the entire workers movement and all the oppressed. Those who organize and promote occupations of public and private property can now be punished with up to four years in prison. Those who participate in blockading roads can be condemned to one to six years in prison. These measures are intended to criminalize immigrants first of all, along with trade-union actions, militant unionists, and organizations and individuals that organize picket lines, protest demonstrations, and the occupation of housing (squatting) by the homeless. This would target the heavily immigrant SI Cobas “rank-and-file unions,” and others who organize or defend immigrants and asylum seekers.

The fight for the interests and rights of immigrants and those of the working class as a whole will either go forward together or slide back together. They are intimately and indissolubly bound together. The multi-racial proletariat must fight against all forms of special oppression.

If Salvini and Co. use this draconian law to criminalize trade-union and leftist militants, it is the duty of all class-conscious workers and militants to seek to mobilize the entire labor movement to defy it and shut the country down with massive strikes and other actions. *Block the racist anti-working class Salvini “security and immigration” decree!* ■

# Argentina's Left Front: A Reformist Electoral Cartel



**March of the Left and Workers Front in Argentina.**

*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 discussions of the left's electoral politics in Brazil, the Movimento Revolucionário de Trabalhadores (MRT) raises as an example of the way forward the Left and Workers Front (FIT) in Argentina. The MRT is the Brazilian section of the international Trotskyist Faction (FT) tendency, led by the Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas (PTS – Party of Socialist Workers) in Argentina, which is one of the three components of the Front. From the Southern Cone of South America to Europe and the United States, affiliates of the FT point to FIT as the model and very embodiment of class independence in the electoral arena. They announce with great fanfare their electoral advances, from 500,000 votes (2.3% of the total) in the 2011 presidential election to more than 1,000,000 (4.3% of the total) in the elections for the National Congress in 2017. “Nothing succeeds like success” would seem to be their motto, even if the results are still very modest in terms of electoral arithmetic.

So, what is the Argentine Left Front? Not to keep the reader in suspense, it is a reformist and opportunist electoral alliance. It represents a coalition based on a program of the lowest common denominator, in which centrist parties claiming to be revolutionary abandon the Marxist principles they claim to defend. It is precisely the type of propaganda bloc which Trotsky warned against in the 1930s. And we shall spell this out not only with Marxist analysis but also by quot-

ing the words of the very participants in this electoral consortium.

The FIT is made up of the PTS, the Partido Obrero (PO – Workers Party) and Izquierda Socialista (I.S. – Socialist Left). It was founded to run candidates in the presidential election of 2011, when these organizations presented a slate headed by Jorge Altamira for president, with Christian Castillo as vice

president, those being the main leaders of PO and the PTS, respectively. Its program, the “Programmatic Declaration of the Workers and Left Front” (August 2011), consists of a laundry list of typical demands of militant economist trade-unionism: “minimum wage equal to the cost of the indexed family basket” (a measure of basic expenses of a typical family), pensions at 82% of a worker’s minimum wage, a ban on firings, “an end to outsourcing”; nationalizations, state takeovers and “expropriations” of particular sectors (occupied factories, railroads, the “large landowning oligarchy”); defense of social programs (health, education, public housing); union independence from the state, oust the bureaucracy. To this it adds other demands such as free abortion, police out of working-class neighborhoods, withdrawal of troops from Haiti, etc.

As for the economic crisis, the program demands that it “be paid for by imperialism, the multinationals, bankers and capitalists,” as if it were all a matter of distribution. This is a liberal/reformist utopia. The crisis is due to the fact that bankers and capitalists are in deep trouble. Even with raising taxes on profits, inheritances and fortunes (which won’t happen), until we overthrow the rule of capital, it will be the workers who pay the cost of the crisis. Among the 22 numbered items of the FIT program, there are some that might seem more radical, such as the “nationalization of land, beginning with the expropriation of the 4,000 main estates.” The latter, however, would only be a classic capitalist agrarian reform, and “nationalization of the land” has been a bourgeois-democratic demand since the days of bourgeois economist Adam



Smith in the 18th century.<sup>1</sup> And when the program speaks of supporting the victory of “revolutions” in the Middle East, it actually means *supporting pro-imperialist reactionary Islamist “rebels”* in Libya and Syria, for example.

In short, *the program of the Left and Workers Front in Argentina is a collection of reformist recipes, which in no way goes beyond the bounds of capitalism, nor does it challenge imperialist domination and the bourgeois state.* You don’t have to take our word for it. Let’s read what the Partido Obrero itself writes about the FIT Programmatic Declaration: “The program ‘approved’ in 2011 (there was no discussion) is a recipe for state takeovers and by no means lays out the method that should lead the proletariat to establish a government of working people” (“Resolution on the Left Front,” *En defensa del marxismo* No. 47, 1 April 2016).

But what about this maximum slogan of the FIT, of a “government of the working people and of the people [*gobierno de los trabajadores y del pueblo*] imposed by the mobilization of the exploited and oppressed”? Is that not a revolutionary demand? By no means. Based on this platform of reforms, it would instead be another government of *the capitalist state*. This could be the slogan of any reformist social democrats (like the Labor Party in England) or even some bourgeois populist. In fact, the formula is copied from the greatest Argentine populist of all time, General Juan Domingo Perón. Among many other mentions, in the speech of then-president Peron on May Day 1949, he hailed the “government of the working people that I have the honor of presiding over.” That phrase is in the memory of many Peronist workers. Let’s also remember that the PTS came out of the Morenoite tendency, and that Nahuel Moreno began his trajectory as a political quick-change artist posing as a spokesman for “revolutionary worker Peronism.”<sup>2</sup>

We explain in another text that the concept of working people is not limited to the working class, but encompasses broad petty-bourgeois sectors; and that a “government of the working people” is not the equivalent of “workers government” or “workers and peasants government,” which for Trotskyists (and the Bolsheviks of 1917) means the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat (see “The Electoralist Campaigns of the Brazilian Left” in *The Internationalist* No. 54, November-December 2018). When the FIT program adds “and the people,” it underscores the “multiclass,” and therefore bourgeois, character of such a government. A government “imposed by the mobilization of the exploited and oppressed”? It could be said of any government elected in connection with a strike wave.

<sup>1</sup> Calling for nationalization of land is relevant in a country of huge landed estates like Argentina or Brazil, but it is not a socialist measure. As Lenin explained in *The Agrarian Program of Social Democracy in the First Russian Revolution* [1907]: “Nationalization of the land under capitalist relations is neither more nor less than the transfer of rent to the state.” (Rent being “that part of surplus value which remains after average profit on capital is deducted.”) Nationalization of the land would seize the added surplus value that the large landowners enjoy due to their monopoly of the land.

<sup>2</sup> See our brochure *La Verdad sobre Moreno (Moreno Truth Kit* in English), published in 1982 and reprinted by the League for the Fourth International in 2011.



**The FIT slate in the 2011 elections. Four years later, Altamira’s Partido Obrero called the Front “oportunist” and Castillo’s PTS says that its demand for a “government of the working people” could mean a government of the capitalist state.**

But let’s take a concrete example: the Social-Democratic government of Germany presided over by Friedrich Ebert which took office on 9 November 1919. A government of the working people? Of course, it consisted of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) of Germany. “Imposed by the mobilization of the exploited and oppressed”? Undoubtedly, it was the result of the workers uprising that overthrew the emperor Wilhelm II. This government approved many of the reforms contained in FIT’s catalog of demands. But it was *a government of the capitalist state whose task was to bury the revolution*. Or, more explicitly: *Communist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered on the orders of a counterrevolutionary “government of the working people imposed by the mobilization of the exploited and oppressed”!*

FIT leaders are not newcomers and are well aware of the meaning of their words. So let’s read what the PTS says about the government of the working people slogan. In an article on “Programmatic Debates in the Left Front of Argentina” (*Izquierda Diario*, 7 October 2015) it writes that: “This is a general formulation, but it responds to the agreement that we could reach in the Front.” However, the slogan “government of the working people” is “ambiguous” and “subject to different interpretations” because of the absence of a sentence on the need “to replace the repressive apparatus of this state, which is at the service of the exploiters, by workers’ organizations on the road of struggle for their own government.” However, PO objected to spelling this out. So the program remains as written, without “making it clear that the working class cannot simply rely on the bourgeois state as it is.” It’s not just ambiguity. In the context of the FIT reform program, the meaning of “government of the working people” is unequivocal: it would be a government of the capitalist state.

The response of the Workers’ Party? In its “Resolution on the Left Front,” PO writes that the “contradictory political composition” of the FIT – with the presence of “militant but democratizing parties” (i.e., Izquierda Socialista and the PTS), due to their origins in the Morenoite tendency – “has led us to characterize

the FIT as ‘opportunist’ since its foundation.” The partners themselves say it’s an opportunist conglomerate!

It is not just a matter of disputes over formulations in the program, but rather of acute internal contradictions of the Left Front that have come to the fore amid the biggest class struggles in the country. A notable case was the provincial police “strike” (mutiny) in Córdoba in December 2013. During a salary dispute, police officers declared an *acuartelamiento* (confinement to barracks) of their forces, which then led to looting. The next day, the governor yielded to the demands of the police. Thereupon several unions of public employees demanded

equal wage hikes, and police from other states won much higher increases. What was the FIT’s response? The I.S., which in line with its Morenioite tradition calls the police workers, spoke of a “police strike” and welcomed the “important raises” won. Altamira’s PO published an article saying that the “riots” by the police won increases “to continue to fulfill their present repressive functions”, but that workers should demand equal raises under the motto “Let’s Get Ours.” The PTS wrote that “the elementary position was not to give any support to the police riots,” and that a “clear political denunciation of the mutiny” was required along with demanding “raises for the workers, not for the repressors” (*La Verdad Obrera*, 12 December 2013).

In spite of these very different positions, which were already known before the Front was formed, on December 13 the FIT approved a communiqué that said: “We warn against the illusion that the police crisis has transformed the security forces into allies of the workers, or that it has diminished their repressive function.” However, even after the joint statement of position, the infighting in the FIT continued. PO called for participating with a FIT contingent in a demonstration of the Argentine Workers Confederation (CTA) that December 19. The PTS did not agree, saying that they should not march with police officers (the CTA includes a police “union”). PO replied that “such situations cannot be resolved with the phrase “a policeman is not a worker,” and that [with its line] the PTS should have signed the statement against the police riot voted by the government and opposition, both of them capitalist (*Prensa Obrera*, 3 January 2014).

So with such strident mutual condemnations, how did they manage to write a joint statement? Did you already catch the word game? The members of this rotten bloc hid their differences by denouncing *the police* as an institution while covering over their diametrically opposed positions on the *police officers*. And then they continue to present candidates



La Voz [Córdoba]

**“Strike” (mutiny) by the police in the city of Córdoba, Argentina, December 2013. In this test in the class struggle, the partner parties in the FIT found themselves on both sides of the barricades, with one sector openly supporting the action of the police (refusing to leave barracks) while another called on workers to follow their example. Afterwards, the components of this rotten bloc have continued to run common candidates. The League for the Fourth International insists: cops are not workers, but instead the armed fist of capital, and we act to expel police organizations from the labor movement.**

on the same list in the elections, until the next crisis arrives.

This is a highly disputed issue on the left. Revolutionary Marxists (Trotskyists) insist that police are not workers exploited by bosses, but “the armed fist of capital”, and hence they are the declared enemies of the movements of the workers and oppressed. As Trotsky wrote in the early 1930s about Germany, where the Social Democrats had many illusions about the police: “The workers who become police in the service of the capitalist state are bourgeois policemen, not workers” (*What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* [1932]). The police themselves attest to this by engaging in their repressive “work” in every strike or protest against the violence unleashed by these guard dogs of capital. Organizations of the police are not workers’ unions but bands of uniformed gun thugs in the service of the bosses: we call for their expulsion from the labor movement. Not only do we call for this, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, now a section of the League for the Fourth International, mobilized to separate the local police from the municipal workers’ union of the city of Volta Redonda in 1996, which resulted in a repressive offensive with more than nine lawsuits against us.<sup>3</sup> The following year, the PSTU and a large part of the Brazilian left celebrated the riots of the military police.<sup>4</sup>

And just to be clear, the Trotskyist Fraction is no model of Marxist orthodoxy or consistency on the police. In Bolivia in 2003, a few months before the start of the “gas war,” there was

<sup>3</sup> See “Class Struggle in Volta Redonda: ‘Cops, Courts Out of the Unions,” in *The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997, translated from *Vanguarda Operária* No. 1, July-September 1997. See also the Internationalist Group pamphlet, *Dossier: Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil* (February 1997).

<sup>4</sup> See “Brazil: Crisis of the Capitalist State,” *The Internationalist* No. 3, September-October 1997, translated from *Vanguarda Operária* No. 2, August-October 1997. See also “Latin America: Opportunist Left Embraces the Cops,” *The Internationalist* No. 4, January-February 1998.

a riot by police, dissatisfied that they had not received a salary increase in the budget of the imperialists' puppet president, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. Virtually the entire left supported the cops, even shouting "Long live the uprising of uniformed workers" (as a leaflet of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario of Guillermo Lora proclaimed). We commented on the response of the Bolivian section of the FT: "Others, like the small Liga Obrera Revolucionaria por la Cuarta Internacional (LOR-CI, Revolutionary Workers League for the Fourth International), more timidly raised the call for 'a policy that would make support for the mutiny conditional,' at the same time as it declared February 12 and 13 to be 'revolutionary days' (*Lucha Obrera*, March 2003)."<sup>5</sup> The LOR-CI then accused us of falsifying its policy (in *Revista de los Andes*, Autumn 2004). But when we showed them the quotations from their newspaper, some LOR-CI cadre admitted that there was no falsification, and that our criticism was politically correct.<sup>6</sup> However, it never published a correction of the accusation.

The multiple political differences within FIT and the frequency of attacks between the PTS and PO (with accusations of "cretin," "sabotage," "slanderers," "idiocy," "lies," "playing to the media," "and even physical violence," among others) are so pronounced that one has to ask why such hostile groups would ever join a common electoral front. The answer has to do with the Argentine parliamentary system, and particularly with state funding. The Front was formed shortly after a political reform of 2009, supposedly aimed at "democratizing" the electoral system, established a "floor" of 1.5% of the votes cast in "primary, open, simultaneous and mandatory elections" (PASO). These primaries function as a first round of the voting, to decide who can run in the general election (and receive state funds). The formation of the FIT enabled the participating parties to surpass the cutoff point and, at the same time, to free up funds from the "public" coffers. The amounts are not negligible. According to the accounts of the Permanent Party Fund, in 2017 the FIT received a total of 42,361,918 Argentine pesos for the primary and general elections, which at the time was worth nearly US\$ 2.5 million. A nice piece of change.

As we explain elsewhere, revolutionary Trotskyists reject financing by the capitalist state, which we struggle to overthrow, because it gives the bourgeoisie a powerful tool to control, paralyze or even eliminate the workers party. The only honest

<sup>5</sup> "Bolivia Aflame: 'Gas War' on the Altiplano," *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003.

<sup>6</sup> See "Bolivia Explodes in Sharp Class Battle," *The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005.



**Municipal workers of Volta Redonda, Brazil demand (July 1996): "Bosses' courts, military police and municipal guards, stay out of the SFPMVR," the union of city employees. The union leaders, Trotskyists of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, launched the campaign to separate the police, triggering heavy repression against our comrades.**

justification that the FIT and its constituent parties (PST, PO, IS) could put forward for being funded by the state would be a statement that they are not trying to do away with capitalism, but to reform it (an impossible goal). Moreover, the FIT is not the only reformist option in the Argentine elections. Whoever wants to vote for a left-wing party that seeks to reform the irreformable capitalist system could also choose the MST (Movimento Socialista de los Trabajadores, Socialist Movement of the Workers) or the Left Alliance for Socialism that includes the MST and the Nuevo MAS (New Movement for Socialism), both Morenites, with a 40-point platform almost identical to the FIT's reformist program. Bon appetit! Genuine revolutionary Marxists would not vote for any of these pseudo-Trotskyists who peddle devalued, second-hand goods or shoddy knock-off copies of the real thing.

We must be clear in saying that the electoral terrain is the territory of the class enemy. Elections, like the judicial system or any other institution of the capitalist state, are not neutral. They are a rigged *jogo de bicho* (numbers racket), which serves to deceive the masses into thinking that they decide the course of society, when in reality it is capital that does. Authentic Trotskyists are not opposed in principle to participating in bourgeois elections, provided that the candidacy is based on class independence. We categorically refuse to vote for a capitalist party or popular front, an alliance of class collaboration that necessarily has a bourgeois class character. But when we run for election, it *must always be to put forward the revolutionary program*, as the Bolsheviks did in the tsarist Duma. We can also fight for one or another reform, but in this time of putrefying capitalism, a *reformist program* is doomed to failure. Therefore, in general, voting for the reformists serves no purpose. Exceptionally, in the middle of a heated class dispute, where it is imperative to take one side or the other, one could give critical support for a workers' candidacy *in order to draw the class line*. But we do not call for votes to the Argentine FIT because, far from using



**Leon Trotsky opposed running candidates of a united front and insisted the need for a clear program.**

the electoral platform to disseminate revolutionary propaganda, they take advantage of it to sell reformist fool's gold.

Leon Trotsky, in the face of the rise of the fascists in the early 1930s, argued with centrist groups in Germany that sought to dilute the program in election fronts, pretending (as do the members of the Argentine FIT today) that it is an expression of the united front. Trotsky emphasized:

“The united front is to unite the Communist and Social Democratic working masses and not to patch up an agreement with political groups that are without the masses.

“We shall be told that the bloc between Rosenfeld-Brandler-Urbahns is only a propaganda bloc for the united front. But it is precisely in the sphere of propaganda that a bloc is out of the question. Propaganda must lean upon clear-cut principles and on a definite program. March separately, strike together. A bloc is solely for practical mass actions. Deals arranged from above which lack a basis in principle will bring nothing except confusion. “The idea of nominating a candidate for president on the part of the united workers front is at its root a false one. A candidate can be nominated only on the grounds of a definite program. The party has no right to sacrifice during elections the mobilization of its supporters and the census of its strength.”

—*What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* (1932)

The fact that we do not support FIT in Argentina, nor any of the candidates of the opportunist groups (reformists or centrists) in these elections in Brazil, does not mean in any way a passive policy. The real dangers on the horizon – from a bonapartist “strong state” regime under the supervision of the judiciary and the military, or from a *light* version with a PT associated with bourgeois “coup plotters” of yesteryear – in both cases spell harsh attacks on the workers and the oppressed population. We must fight, now, in the midst of the electoral frenzy, to mobilize a workers’ response – working-class and revolutionary – with strikes, protests and plant occupations against the electoral fraud and the capitalist attacks it is facilitating. The League for the Fourth International calls for the *organization of a Leninist-Trotskyist workers party* which fights for a *workers and peasants government* and for *international socialist revolution!* ■

## Matamoros, Mexico...

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The role of the new López Obrador government was also seen during the strike. Several reformist writers and groups have argued that it was the election of this bourgeois populist that encouraged Matamoros workers to rebel. A characteristic example is the article by David Bacon, an American leftist who has written extensively about the struggles of agricultural laborers on both sides of the border. Bacon begins: “The election of Andrés Manuel López Obrador as president of Mexico has raised the hopes and expectations of millions of Mexican workers. There could be no better proof of this than the strike of tens of thousands of workers in Matamoros” (“With López Obrador In, Workers Have the Confidence to Walk Out,” *The American Prospect*, 6 February).

On the other hand, spokesmen for the employers blame AMLO for what they call “*paros locos*” (crazy walkouts, or wildcat strikes). Rolando González Barrón, president of the Maquiladora Association of Matamoros, commented: “We had not seen strikes for years, but now this federal government has come to empower people, but without the weapons to punish them if they do anything beyond what is allowed legally” (“Perfect Storm in Matamoros,” *Excelsior*, January 30). This statement is incorrect: sociologist Cirila Quintero, who has studied the maquiladora industry, points out that “labor peace, as such, has not existed,” that there have been “a multiplicity of conflicts and work stoppages in different sectors” in the border city, and that “strikes have broken out, but they have been declared non-existent” (“Las movilizaciones obreras en Matamoros, Tamaulipas,” *El Colegio de la Frontera Norte*, 7 February).

The “20/32 movement” broke out precisely against the bosses’ attempt to eliminate an “acquired right,” the annual bonus, and their refusal to pay a wage increase as stipulated in their contract. But we can also see how the new government tried to undermine and reverse the workers’ action. The mayor of Matamoros, Mario Alberto López Hernández, an ex-PRI gasoline station owner, who was handpicked by AMLO as the candidate of his National Regeneration Movement (Morena), insisted that there would be no bonus this year and “lamented the outbreak of strikes in more than 40 maquiladoras in the city.” The mayor also sent police to intimidate the strikers. Meanwhile, Alfredo Domínguez Marrufo, the representative of the Labor Department dispatched by the federal government to negotiate the conflict, said that “we consider that the strike explosion does not benefit either of the two parties” (*El Herald*, 25 January).

Then, two days into the strike, the coordinator of the Morena majority in the Senate, Ricardo Monreal, made calls in the middle of the night on Sunday, January 27, to Juan Villafuerte to order the head of SJOIIM to get the workers to hand over the Swedish-American factory Autoliv. Our comrades reported:

“Solicitously, Juan Villafuerte, accompanied by a lawyer who was portrayed as a worker and part of the ‘union,’ along with a retinue of vans full of police, appeared at the strike picket in the early morning hours to warn the strikers that



**Mexico's populist president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, or AMLO, speaking in Reynosa on January 4 to launch the "Border Free Zone Program" to reduce taxes and raise the starvation minimum wage. But his officials called on workers to end strikes in Matamoros.**

on the orders of Senator Ricardo Monreal they had to hand over the factory, with the promise that negotiations would continue in Mexico City. If they did not, he warned them, they would be beaten by the police. At this point in the strike, in the pre-dawn hours, the men and women workers who were maintaining the picket had already lost their fear of the police. On Saturday afternoon, the cops had served as an entourage of an official of the Ministry of Labor, who showed up with a document declaring the strike non-existent, and announced that they had to hand over the factory immediately. Far from being intimidated by the presence of 15 police vans and eight patrol cars, the workers pulled their ranks together and defended the picket line."

Having struck out with Villafuerte, the Morena senator then called Susana Prieto, who was at that very moment on the picket line with hundreds of workers. Complaining about the "clown" of a lawyer who along with Villafuerte had said that the president of the republic himself, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, demanded that they pull down the red-and-black flags and hand over the factory, the strikers' legal adviser demanded, with her phone on loudspeaker, to know from Monreal's mouth if this was true. He told Prieto:

"We won't allow the workers to be deprived of their rights, but neither are we going to let the economy collapse in the state and in the city."

Two days later, at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 29, the company yielded and granted the 20 percent increase and 32,000-peso bonus. By the first week of February, almost all the factories under the SJOIIM contract agreed to grant the "20/32" demand. Over the next few weeks, most of the companies represented by the SITPME also agreed to pay, despite the refusal of this "union" to ask for the bonus. Meanwhile,

the strike movement in Matamoros spread to the Arca Continental (Coca-Cola) bottling plant, which has been occupied, as well as to supermarkets, the non-union Coppel department store, and a daycare center. The Gulf Steelworks is still struck, by the mining and metal workers union: the company offered a 20 percent pay hike and 32,000 peso bonus, but this was rejected as insufficient by the workers, who demanded 48,000 pesos.

The workers of Matamoros did not flinch: by standing their ground, they won 20/32 in almost every case (four companies are still holding out). However, the bosses have not remained idle. A report from the mayor's office indicates that by mid-February about 2,500 workers have been dismissed; Coparmex talks of 4,000 layoffs, no doubt to discredit the strikes. Some companies have announced they are leaving the city, while others say they have stopped work on plans for expansion of their plants. The spectre of a flight of maquiladoras in search of cheaper, non-unionized labor in

other parts of the border strip is bandied about, recalling what happened after the explosive strikes of 1991. However, a campaign to organize real labor unions free of state guardianship in the entire border area could shut down that leak. But this requires clarity about goals, methods and principles.

### **The Struggle for Independent Unions and a Revolutionary Leadership**

The strikers of Matamoros achieved a resounding victory by firmly and repeatedly rejecting the orders of the corporatist labor bodies and not recognizing them as their representatives. Signs and banners in Plaza Hidalgo carried slogans such as "Corrupt Unions Get Out!" And "CTM Get Out!" The workers have seen with their own eyes how these pseudo-unions acted as an arm of the companies and government agencies, at the local and federal level. They perceived that the force of the workers in taking over the factories led the employers to fold and forced a retreat by the police, the armed enforcers for the employers. As our comrades in Matamoros observed, the insurgent workers received "a crash course in Marxism that some salon revolutionaries would benefit from taking from time to time." However, distrust in the corporatist apparatus is only a starting point.

The history of struggles against the bureaucracy of the CTM and other corporatist labor confederations shows that it is essential to have a clear understanding of the class character of the corporatist "unions" in order to break the stranglehold of these organs of the capitalist state. This includes the *charrazo* (the government installation of *charro* "union" leaders) in 1946-49, when they threw out the "reds" and turned the semi-state unions into full-fledged agencies of the PRI-government;



**Workers at January 26 assembly demand that the SITPME pseudo-union and its “charro” boss Jesús Mendoza get out.**

the struggle of the railroad workers in the 1950s, whose leaders were imprisoned for a decade and a half; that of the “democratic tendency” in the STERM electrical workers union in the 1970s, also destroyed by repression; that of the independent electrical workers union, SME, until the state-owned utility they worked for was dissolved in 2009 in order to destroy the union; and the long struggle of the dissident teachers of the CNTE (National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers, from 1979 until today) against the corporatist SNTE (National Union of Education Workers).

Since the beginning of the work stoppages in Matamoros, several analysts have predicted that it represents the “end of charro unionism,” as a columnist wrote in *La Verdad de Tamaulipas* (17 January). The local CTM “unions” have clearly been overwhelmed by workers’ rebellion. Currently, the movement is following the lead of the lawyer Prieto, proclaiming their unconditional support for “Susana.” She herself remarked that, “They love me so much that they want to knock down the monument of Rigo Tovar [a singer from Matamoros] and put up one of me.” On Saturday, February 23, speaking to a workers assembly in Plaza Hidalgo, the defender of the strikers attacked the existing “unions” – SJOIIM, SITPME and others, among them the miners union – calling their leaders “rats” (*El Mañana*, 24 February). She advocated the formation of a new union, not affiliated to the CTM.

As Susana Prieto seeks to found a union of the maquiladora workers that is not a protection and labor contractor for the companies, in a March 5 interview posted on her Facebook site she talks about “challenging the holders of the collective bargaining agreements by means of an independent union already established in the country.” In particular, she referred to a proposal from the New Workers Central (NCT), founded by the SME (Mexican Union of Electrical Workers) in 2014, whose affiliates include SITUAM (representing workers of the Autonomous Metropolitan University, on strike since a month ago) in Mexico City and STEUABJO (representing workers at the Benito Juárez University) in Oaxaca. The lawyer worked with the NCT in 2016

in the struggle of the Lexmark maquiladora workers. Prieto keeps a certain distance from López Obrador, for whom she voted, and Morena, but is far from opposing any bourgeois party and politician on class principle.

In other words, the courageous lawyer, over whom there hangs a constant threat of death, is not, nor does she claim to represent, a revolutionary opposition to semi-colonial Mexican capitalism, the root of the regime of “modern slavery” of the maquiladoras that she condemns. While denouncing corrupt leaders and their “unions,” she accepts the framework of Mexico’s corporatist labor legislation. This is a straitjacket imposed by the Federal Labor Law (LFT) in 1931, during the *Maximato* of Plutarco Calles – when the *jefe máximo* (supreme chief) governed the country through a puppet president – although it was prefigured in Article 123 of the Constitution of 1917. Calles was inspired by the *Carta del Lavoro* (labor charter) of Mussolini’s fascist Italy,

which incorporated unions and companies into “corporations” controlled by the state. The LFT establishes a system of state control of the labor movement, from the tripartite “conciliation boards” to the compulsory arbitration of strikes.

There is, on the other hand, an initiative coming from the federal government, embodied in the person of the Morena senator Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, head of the semi-corporatist mining-metal workers union, which aims to form unions on the border as part of its new International Confederation of Workers (CIT). There is no doubt that the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador requires secure mechanisms of social control such as corporatism provides. The new labor confederation of Gómez Urrutia, subordinating the workers to the government, will end up turning any labor groups that it founds into a Morena neo-corporatist apparatus. Sooner rather than later, as he did as a mining leader, Gómez Urrutia and his henchmen will submit to the labor discipline dictated by the bosses’ state against the workers he now seeks to recruit with honeyed phrases.

What, then, is the policy on unionization of the maquiladoras of groups that claim to be socialist, communist or revolutionary? The main concern of some seems to be to stay in the good graces of the lawyer. Thus, Izquierda Socialista (I.S., Socialist Left, a wing of the former Militant current, linked to the International Marxist Tendency of Alan Woods), in an obsequious “Open Letter to the Workers of Matamoros and Susana Prieto” (February 19), vituperates against “pseudo-revolutionary groups” which “have gone to the city of Matamoros” and “caused great damage to the struggle” with their “methods of intrigues, insulting accusations and their ‘desire to lead’,” which has only succeeded in “causing division ... and discrediting all those who fight for socialism.” The I.S. is pursuing its policy of all-round tailism, chasing after any movement, including bourgeois parties like the PRD and now Morena.

It is not explicit as to whom its vituperation is directed against. Most likely, the target is the Movimiento de Trabajadores Socialistas (MTS, Socialist Workers Movement, which runs the online news

site *Izquierda Diario*). After previously working with the attorney in Ciudad Juárez, it seems that there has been a falling out of late (“public discussions and political differences with Susana Prieto,” reported *Izquierda Diario*, February 23). But any criticism is very discreet and apparently consists of disappearing her from reports of meetings she led. In any case, the voluminous coverage of the struggle in Matamoros by *Izquierda Diario* consists mostly of articles extolling the great combativeness of the strikers, and proposals for solidarity from the independent unions (NCT, UNT, CNTE). About corporatism, not a word.

The Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM, section of the International Communist League) published an article (*Espartaco*, 2 February) that does mention, in passing, the existence of corporatist labor bodies (without specifying who they are), but only in order to equate them with the “independents.” The GEM claims that in both cases the task is simply to chuck out the class-collaborationist bureaucracy. It even pretends that “[t]he workers have also overpowered the leadership of their union,” when in fact they *rebelled against* the CTM pseudo-unions. To the tens of thousands of workers in the maquiladoras who have been emboldened by the strikes to finally remove the dead hand of the corporatist labor police that have impeded their struggles for decades, condemning them to poverty wages, the latter-day Spartacists have nothing to say.

Once upon a time, a quarter century ago, before they left the path of revolutionary Trotskyism, the GEM and the ICL recognized that the corporatist labor bodies are instruments of capitalist state control, and that one had to fight for independence of the unions from the state and the bourgeois parties. Today they quote the apt phrase of Leon Trotsky, who wrote that, “In the epoch of the imperialist decay, the unions can only be independent insofar as they are conscious of being, in practice, the organs of the proletarian revolution.” But these shamefaced revisionists forget the rest of Trotsky’s article (unfinished when he was murdered by a Stalinist assassin), which noted that, already at that time (1940), “In Mexico the trade unions have been transformed by law into semi-state institutions and have, in the nature of things, assumed a semi-totalitarian character.” And this was even before state takeover



Striking maquiladora workers in Matamoros reading *Revolución Permanente*, newspaper of the Grupo Internacionalista.

of labor in the *charrazo* of 1946-49.

Today we are in the early stages of what could be the biggest workers struggle to shatter the remains of the corporatist regime that has enslaved the Mexican proletariat for three quarters of a century. The Matamoros work stoppages threaten to spread throughout the border region. Already in Reynosa, the masters of the city are trembling in their boots in anticipation of the imminent arrival of the lawyer Susana. In Mexico there are more than 2.5 million workers in the maquiladoras. It is a key sector of the Mexican factory proletariat, one in which women workers predominate, and is deeply integrated into the U.S. economy. Along with the presence of 35 million people of Mexican origin living in the United States, 11 million of them born in Mexico, these workers constitute a human bridge to spread the workers struggle into the heart of the imperialist monster.

As in other strikes in the maquiladora zone, women workers have been at the forefront of the battles in Matamoros. This underscores the fundamental character of the struggle for the emancipation of women, which will only be achieved through socialist revolution. As we wrote in an earlier article about the struggle of women workers in the maquila industry, “Mexico: Women Workers Battle Gun Thugs” (*The Internationalist* No. 10, June 2001):

“In opposition to feminism, which envisages a separate struggle by women, we Trotskyists underline the need for a class struggle for the emancipation of women, as part of a struggle for the liberation of all the exploited and oppressed. In the face of massive unemployment, it is necessary to fight for a sliding scale of wages and work hours, demanding jobs for all. In response to attacks by CTM and CROC goons, a revolutionary leadership would sponsor the formation of



The “charro” (cowboy) leaders of the corporatist CTM pseudo-unions in Matamoros, Juan Villafuerte of SJOIIM (left) and Jesús Mendoza of SITPME.



**Maquiladora workers at Duro Bag in Río Bravo waged courageous battle against corporatist “union” gun thugs in June 2001.**

workers self-defense groups to defend strike pickets against these strikebreaking thugs.”

As we emphasized at that time, to break the grip of corporatism, it is not enough to cheer on the strikers of Matamoros, nor to try to build new reformist unions. Reformism is doomed to fail in this imperialist epoch of capitalism in an advanced state of terminal decay, when the gains of workers’ struggles of the past are being destroyed everywhere, from free public education and the public health system to social security. In Matamoros, wages in the maquila industry are one-third of what workers earned 25 years ago; in Mexico as a whole, even with the new increase, *the minimum wage is below the level of 1934* in purchasing power. Only with a revolutionary program to overthrow capitalism can the workers’ struggle be advanced today. As the great Russian revolutionary, exiled in Mexico, pointed out in his article quoted above:

“The trade unions in the present epoch cannot simply be the organs of democracy as they were in the epoch of free capitalism and they cannot any longer remain politically neutral, that is, limit themselves to serving the daily needs of the working class. ... They can no longer be reformist, because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.”

—L.D. Trotsky, “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (August 1940)

Today, the bourgeois populist government of López Obrador is fully aware of the explosive potential of a struggle against *charrismo* even when the leaders of this struggle, and the would-be “revolutionary” left, do not call for a fight against corporatism. Since the dinosaurs of the CTM, CROC, CROM and others are nearing the end of their days, the government is going all out to push through a reform of the Federal Labor Law, in order to maintain state control of the powerful Mexican proletariat. So as Susana Prieto threatens to sue the CTM — that is, she appeals to the capitalist state, the class enemy — we who call for class-struggle unionism insist that the fight

against corporatism must be waged by labor unions and a workers party, completely independent of the bourgeois politicians and parties, and their state.

At the same time, and despite his nationalist pretensions, AMLO meekly accepts a new free-trade agreement, the T-MEC, an instrument of imperialist domination that, like its predecessor, NAFTA, harms Mexican, Canadian and U.S. workers. The Mexican state under López Obrador is serving as border guards for the anti-Mexican xenophobic U.S. president Donald Trump, in even more shameless fashion than the governments of the PRI (Peña Nieto) and the PAN (Calderón, Fox).

He sends Mexican immigration police to prevent members of the Central American caravans, fleeing from the hell of violence and hunger unleashed by the Yankee imperialism, from crossing the international bridges. The League for the Fourth International, in contrast, opposes NAFTA/T-MEC and calls for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, on both sides of the border.

Among the strikers of Matamoros we found that the hostility of many workers towards the pseudo-unions for their betrayals was sometimes generalized into a rejection of unions in general, because those were the only ones they knew. The more advanced workers showed interest in the Grupo Internacionalista’s program of fighting for genuine workers unions independent of the bosses and their state, and for forging a class-struggle, revolutionary and internationalist leadership. All the attempts of “union democratization” that have taken place in Mexico have failed because they were waged within the corporatist framework. It is necessary to understand that in Mexico, corporatism is an essential mechanism of social control, guarantor of “peace” between exploited and exploiters, both for the Mexican bourgeoisie and the U.S. bourgeoisie.

The fundamental question, then, is to forge, in the heat of the class struggle, a revolutionary leadership of the working class. In order to break the *charro* shackles and forge genuine unions, we need a program, like that of the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, to fight for international socialist revolution. On the border, this perspective acquires particular relevance, opening the possibility for workers’ struggles to spread to the other side, into the heartland of imperialism. Today, the struggle to throw off the yoke of imperialist domination requires an international struggle to put an end to capitalist exploitation. There is a real potential for joint workers’ struggle on both sides of the Río Bravo, and the maquiladoras are at the focal point. To make it concrete, we need a workers party that fights for permanent revolution in Mexico, for socialist revolution extending to the imperialist center.

The Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico and the Internationalist Group in the United States, sections of the League for the Fourth International, seek to form the nucleus of cadres of this Leninist and Trotskyist workers party of world socialist revolution. ■



**Fake Trotskyists Can't Tell the Difference Between a Workers Union and a Death Squad**

## **SL on Corporatism in Mexico: Games Centrists Play**



European Pressphoto Agency

**Insurgent teachers in Chilpancingo, capital of the state of Guerrero, taking care of business at office of National Action Party (PAN) and other ruling parties and government agencies responsible for the capitalist counter-reform of education, 25 April 2013.**

*The following article was published as a leaflet and online, in Spanish and English, in July 2013. We reprint it here to provide an in-depth explanation of the the nature of corporatist pseudo-unions in Mexico, and how falsely treating these directly state-controlled institutions as if they were genuine workers organizations places the ex-Trotskyist Spartacist League on the wrong side of the barricades in crucial class battles facing Mexico today, such as in Matamoros (see article, page 7 of this issue).*

In the article “Mexico: For a National Education Strike” (*The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013, translated from *Revolución Permanente* No. 2, May 2013, the newspaper of the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International), we reported on the militant month-long walkout by teachers in the state of Guerrero against the education “counter-reform” being pushed through

by Mexico’s three main capitalist parties, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), PAN (National Action Party) and PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution).

In an accompanying box, “Defend the Independent Teachers of Guerrero!” we reported how angry strikers of the local affiliate of the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (CNTE) stormed the offices of the PRI, PAN, PRD and a minor bourgeois party in the state capital the day after these parties voted to implement the anti-teacher “reform” at a secret meeting of the state legislature hiding out in Acapulco. We noted as well that the strikers and teachers college students torched the offices of the CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) and stoned the headquarters of the SNTE (National Union of Education Workers), both of which are not workers unions but corporatist agencies of the capitalist state whose function is to quell labor unrest.

The fury of the teachers against the state-controlled entities is the result of decades of brutal repression of the teachers by these labor cops of the bourgeoisie. The SNTE has long maintained squads of gunmen who from 1989 to 2006 killed more than 150 dissident teachers, and particularly in the state of Oaxaca have murdered more than two dozen since then. We remarked that, “It would be interesting to know from the fake Trotskyist Grupo Espartaquista de México [GEM], which insists that the CTM and SNTE are workers unions, if it today defends the battle-hardened Guerrero teachers against capitalist repression, or if as the CTM ‘socialists’ they are they defend the hated SNTE against the fully justified rage of the Guerrero teachers.”

In response, *Workers Vanguard* (No. 1025, 31 May), the newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., published a lengthy screed titled “IG Chokes on Defense of Mexican Teachers Union” intended to throw sand in the eyes of its readers with a litany of lies and distortions. The core of the SL’s dishonest attack is to accuse the Internationalist Group (it never mentions the Mexican Grupo Internacionalista) of having a “union-busting line” on the SNTE and “add[ing] grist to the union-busters’ mill.” Our one-sentence response is that the latter-day SL and WV can’t tell the difference between a workers union and a death squad, and are in fact *alibiing the main union-busting agency of the capitalist state in Mexico*.

This is not a minor difference, especially for revolutionaries active in workers struggles in Mexico, as GI supporters are, both in independent unions and in the state-controlled labor agencies. But for the SL, its International Communist League and its Mexican affiliate, the GEM, it’s all a game. The consequences of an incorrect line don’t bother them in the least: it’s just one more polemical stick to use against the LFI. Thus implicitly responding to our challenge, the *Workers Vanguard* article calls to “Drop all charges against the Guerrero protesters,” but in two tabloid newspaper pages *WV never mentions that the arrested union leaders were charged with instigating the striking teachers, who attacked the offices of the very corporatist outfits the SL pretends are unions!*

That corporatist state control of labor continues to be a burning issue in Mexico today was underscored at the end of June when the national SNTE leadership had state police in Chiapas attack and shut down the congress of its state affiliate (Section 7), arresting 29 union leaders and bloodily beating 200, because the dissident teachers of the CNTE had a clear majority of the delegates. And the SL claims the SNTE is a legitimate union! Try telling that to teachers in Chiapas with blood streaming down their faces, to the Guerrero teachers jailed for attacking the SNTE, or to Oaxaca teachers facing SNTE *pistoleros* and death squads.

### Corporatism and Popular Frontism

In order to enlighten readers rather than deliberately obfuscating, as the SL/WV does, a brief description of labor corporatism in Mexico is in order, since most readers in the U.S. and internationally may be unfamiliar with this. Mexico’s labor law was explicitly modeled on that of Mussolini’s corporatist fascist regime in Italy during the 1930s. Like a number of

semi-colonial countries, Mexico was ruled at that time and up until 2000 by a regime that for decades sought to incorporate all sectors of society within the single state party. Unions, peasant confederations, doctors associations, musicians organizations, women’s groups, student leagues, a military sector later folded into a “popular sector” along with small business syndicates, the teachers union, etc., were all officially part of the PRI.

This system took form in the 1930s, was solidified in the 1940s, was repeatedly challenged by worker, student and peasant unrest in the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s and then began to unravel in the 1980s. Because control of Mexico’s powerful working class was key to the regime’s survival, the PRI-government completely took over the unions in the late 1940s in a series of *charrazos*, imposing state-appointed leaders (*charros*, or cowboys) by attacking union meetings with thousands of troops and police and arresting hundreds of union leaders, some of whom were kept in jail for decades.

Even before then, Trotsky described Mexican unions in 1940 as “semi-state institutions,” but with the 1948-49 *charrazos* quantity turned into quality and these bodies ceased to be workers unions at all, turning into, and acting as, labor police. From that point onward, just about every significant labor struggle in Mexico (such as the 1958-59 railroad workers strike and the 1970s insurgency of electrical workers) was directed against these labor cops as workers desperately sought to break out of the straitjacket of state control. Meanwhile, the corporatist bureaucrats would move seamlessly from “union” leader to manager in the state-owned companies that controlled Mexico’s economy to PRI legislative posts. It was all one state-party apparatus.

This is quite different from labor unions in the U.S. and other imperialist countries. On the other hand, it is similar to the situation in other semi-colonial countries with one-party regimes, such as Brazil under Getúlio Vargas’ corporatist *Estado Novo*, Algeria after the FLN took power in the 1960s, or Egypt up until the overthrow of the Mubarak dictatorship in 2011. In Egypt today, as in Mexico, there is a class difference between the official *state* labor bodies and the new “independent” unions: even though the leaders of the latter are still *politically* tied to the bourgeoisie, they are not state or ruling-party functionaries or leaders answerable to the government, not the union ranks.

As the PRI regime began coming apart in the 1980s, in good part because the “free market” economic policies dictated by Washington made Mexico’s state companies an anomaly, some local and state affiliates of the government-controlled “unions” managed to gain autonomy and began acting independently. The CNTE, beginning in Oaxaca, gained control of several state sections of the SNTE. In other cases, national unions such as the telephone workers broke away from the CTM and other corporatist federations, and new independent unions arose as well.

Along with this evolution, in order to keep political control of the unions that had slipped the government’s leash, the Mexican bourgeoisie came up with a new political configuration. Instead of a single all-encompassing state party, an opposition *popular front* was formed around the figure of former PRI leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (and his successor Andrés Manuel López Obrador, or AMLO) and around the PRD, a new nationalist-

populist bourgeois party led by former PRI politicians and staffed by ex-leftists. The popular front was the organizational vehicle to keep the new “independent” unions politically in line.

When the PRI lost the Mexican presidency in the 2000 elections, after running the country for an unbroken stretch of 70 years, it was widely expected that the corporatist “unions” would collapse or break away as the new right-wing free-market clericalist National Action Party (PAN) took over. However, by and large that did not happen. Partly this was because the PRI continued to control a number of state governments, but more fundamentally, the PAN under presidents Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón discovered that it needed the corporatist labor agencies to keep worker unrest from exploding.

A proof that these are not just PRI-led unions as opposed to PRD-led unions, as the SL/ICL and GEM claim, is that under 12 years of PAN governments, the CTM, SNTE, CROM, CROC, STPRM (oil workers), SUTERM (electrical workers, opposed to the independent SME electrical workers union) and other corporatist labor outfits continued to act as state agencies just as they had earlier under the PRI. The SNTE under Elba Esther Gordillo helped line up PRI governors to support PAN candidate Calderón in the aftermath of the rigged 2006 election and even set up its own party, PANAL, to ally with the ruling PAN. At the same time, the SNTE was at the forefront of designing and, as top government education officials, enforcing anti-teacher education “reforms” and shoving them down the throats of its members.

Meanwhile, the popular front did its job of defusing labor militancy among the independent unions. Thus when in October 2009 PAN president Calderón suddenly fired all 44,000 electrical workers of the SME and dissolved the government-owned company they worked for, the SME leadership in alliance with the popular front around AMLO and the PRD managed to divert the ranks’ anger and the solidarity marches of several hundred thousand workers into pressuring Congress and the Supreme Court, eventually running the struggle into the ground. The Grupo Internacionalista actively participated in the defense of the SME while criticizing the policies of the leadership and insisting on the need to break with the popular front (see “Mexico Electoral Farce 2012: Militarization and Anti-Worker Attacks,” *The Internationalist*, May 2012).

The Grupo Internacionalista has fought to break the corporatist stranglehold on the Mexican proletariat at the same time as we call on workers to break politically from the bourgeois popular front. The SL/ICL, on the other hand, denies that there is a qualitative difference between the corporatist “unions” directly controlled by the state and the independent unions whose leaders politically support the bourgeoisie. At the same time they deny that there is, or even could be, a popular front in Mexico, view they came up with in 1997 just as the popular front was poised to take government office for the first time in the federal district (Mexico City).

In both cases, on corporatism and the popular front, they were abandoning what had been *the* characteristic positions of the Spartacist tendency in Mexico up until the ICL expelled long-time leading cadres in the U.S. and the leadership of its Mexican section in 1996. And in both cases, the SL/ICL’s revi-

sions served to justify abandoning struggle within the working class against the mechanisms of organizational and political control by the bourgeoisie (see “Mexico: To Fight the Popular Front You Have to Recognize That It Exists,” reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 3, September–October 1997).

### SNTE Serves as Instrument of Bourgeois Attack on Mexican Teachers

As in the United States, teachers in Mexico have been a prime target of the capitalist offensive against working people. Unlike in the U.S., Mexican teachers have fought back with militant struggles. In the U.S., even though the leadership of the teachers unions (AFT, NEA) have sought to collaborate with the corporate education “reformers,” the latter have directed their fire against the unions which they seek to destroy. In Mexico, the ruling-class offensive is directed against the combative state teachers unions led by the dissident CNTE while the government continues to use the SNTE as a battering ram against *independent* teacher unionism.

This situation came to a head at the end of February the PRI president Peña Nieto ordered the arrest of SNTE president-for-life Elba Esther Gordillo. As we explained in our article (“Mexico: Labor Cop Gordillo Busted to Crush Teachers’ Resistance,” *The Internationalist* No. 35, March–April 2013), the SNTE boss was “the perfect target in order to promote Peña Nieto’s privatization agenda,” not because she opposed it (in fact she emphatically supported the anti-teacher “reform”) but because her obscene corruption made her an ideal scapegoat *in order to go after the CNTE* which was actually leading the resistance.

The *Workers Vanguard* article says “Gordillo’s arrest is a direct attack on the teachers union and the entire Mexican labor movement,” part of a bourgeois drive to “dismantle the unions.” Yet Peña Nieto went out of his way to insist he was not attacking the SNTE, that he would maintain “a respectful and constant dialogue with the SNTE” (*La Jornada*, 28



**Elba Esther Gordillo (right) with then-Secretary of Education Josefina Vázquez Mota of the PAN, back when the SNTE president-for-life had the federal Education Secretariat under her control.**

February). For his part, the new head of the SNTE, Juan Díaz de la Torre, announced upon taking office that he “supports” the education reform and would “calm down” any protests (*La Jornada*, 3 March). He has since repeatedly “reaffirmed” and “ratified” his support to Peña Nieto and his “commitment . . . to concretizing educational reform” (speech on the Day of the Teacher, May 15).

This love fest is not surprising considering that the new SNTE president was hand-picked by the Mexican president. The very process by which Díaz de la Torre was selected shows the corporatist, state-controlled character of the SNTE. Hours after Gordillo was arrested, the union convention meeting in Guadalajara hastily rewrote the statutes to allow Díaz, her top aide, to succeed her. But the next morning, he got a call from Government Secretary Osorio Chong summoning him to Mexico City. Díaz hops on a plane, goes to meet the secretary, is handed a message from the president instructing him to “not get involved in the Elba case and to arrive at solutions . . . on educational reform.” The new SNTE president signs and delivers and heads back to Guadalajara where the “union” congress ratifies Peña Nieto’s man, 268 votes to 0.

None of this, of course, is in the *Workers Vanguard* account which pretends that Gordillo’s arrest was an attempt to “dismantle the unions.” What’s striking is that it is a replay of how Gordillo herself was summoned to the Government Secretariat in 1989 to be installed as SNTE president after her predecessor, Carlos Jonguitud, was called to the presidential residence of Los Pinos to be informed of his “resignation.” In both cases, the ousted leaders were long-time obedient, corrupt and murderous agents of the regime who had outlived their usefulness and were dumped. But the “union” went on functioning as a state agency without a hitch. Díaz de la Torre naturally denounced the militant Guerrero teachers’ actions as serving “outside interests.”

The SNTE not only backs the government against the militant teachers, it actually spearheads the attacks on teachers’ rights. The SNTE helped design the ENLACE student exam whose scores will be used to evaluate teachers’ “value added,” and under Calderón, Gordillo had her son-in-law named assistant secretary of education of the federal government. We have reported how CNTE teachers in Oaxaca, Michoacán and Guerrero boycotted the ENLACE exams and teacher evaluations (see *The Internationalist*, Summer 2012). But in Oaxaca, where at the height of the 2006 uprising the SNTE set up a Section 59 to fight the CNTE-affiliated Section 22, guns in hand, the SNTE loyalists have demanded (unsuccessfully) that the exam be administered in the state (“In Oaxaca, SNTE Asks to Apply ENLACE,” *El Economista*, 5 June).

So there is an offensive against militant teacher unionism in Mexico and it is led by the corporatist, state-controlled SNTE.



**Paramilitary group led by Humberto Alcalá Betanzos (center), founder of Section 59 of the SNTE and PRI politician in Lalloaga, Oaxaca (2009).**

SNTE flunkies in Oaxaca regularly *scab* on teacher strikes of tens of thousands called by the CNTE-affiliated Section 22. And the *murders* of teachers by assassins contracted by or on the payroll of this pseudo-union continue. At least 33 teachers in Oaxaca have been shot down or otherwise killed in the struggle from 2006 on, half a dozen of them by gunmen of the SNTE’s Section 59. Thus in alibiing the SNTE as a supposed workers union, *the SL and the GEM are acting as apologists for scabs and union-busting labor cops who employ death squads.*

### Who Supported Mexican Miners’ Strikes

The *WV* article then tries to generalize its accusation against us as aiding and abetting union-busting by admitting that, yes, corporatism did exist in Mexico once upon a time in the distant past, “But corporatism has been in agony for some time,” it claims, despite the evidence that corporatist “unions” still manage to suppress worker unrest. And not only with the teachers: in 2009-12 the corporatist SUTERM supplied scabs to help destroy the independent SME electrical workers union. “PRI-affiliated unions often engage in economic strikes,” says *WV*. Instead of “often,” try “seldom” or “almost never.” In fact, the corporatist CTM, CROC and CROM labor federations are notorious for signing “protection contracts” with companies in order to keep real unions out and *prevent* economic strikes.

Often workers in plants supposedly organized by these corporatist labor cops don’t even know there is purportedly a union there until they try to organize one. When women workers in the *maquiladora* factories in free trade zones along Mexico’s northern border tried to register a union in 2001, they discovered phantom CTM and CROC (Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants) “unions” located in the company labor relations office. The women expressively wrote “CROC rats out!” on the walls (see “Mexico:

Women Workers Battle Gun Thugs,” *The Internationalist* No. 10, June 2001, and “Mexican Maquiladora Workers Fight for Their Rights,” *The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997).

That’s who the SL and GEM are apologizing for: company “unions” employing gun thugs that the workers call “rats.” But what do these cynical centrists care? Their only interest in the whole question is in order to “get” the IG and GI by pretending that any outfit that calls itself a union is one. With supreme imperialist arrogance (and ignorance) they claim that Mexico is no different than the U.S., that “unions” with death squads killing scores of their members (over 100 teachers in Oaxaca alone) are the same as the Teamsters under Jimmy Hoffa. We wonder how many of them have ever been near a maquiladora, whereas comrades of the IG and GI have been to free-trade zone industrial parks and met with maquiladora workers trying to organize genuine worker unions in Río Bravo, Reynosa, Nuevo Laredo, Tijuana, Guadalajara and elsewhere.

In expanding its smears, *Workers Vanguard* claims that “the IG refused to defend the SNTMMSRM [mine and metal workers] leadership or the union itself against the state” when in 2006 its leader, Napoleon Gómez Urrutia was accused of money laundering by the PAN government, and that we “omitted any call for victory to the strikes or for dropping the charges” against him. For starters, the nationwide strike called by the SNTMMSRM in February 2006 lasted all of 72 hours, and was called off as soon as the government labor arbitrators ruled it “non-existent,” as Gómez Urrutia dutifully followed the corporatist labor laws. We supported that brief strike and opposed the government’s attempt to oust the SNTMMSRM leadership:

“Although it is a settling accounts within the regime it affects the workers, and therefore it is necessary to reject this frontal assault by the government.

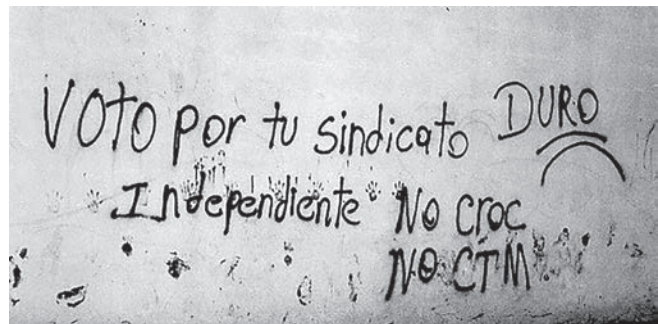
“When the bosses government replaces its labor representatives, it does so in order to intensify repression and implement more ‘labor restructuring’ measures. ... [Miners and metal workers] should resist all attempts by the government to impose or maintain its control over the workers. It is the workers themselves who should get rid of Gómez Urrutia’s corrupt and venal *charro* apparatus, not the bosses’ government that he has served historically.”

– *El Internacionalista* special supplement, May 2006

We also detailed the history of SNTMMSRM integration in the capitalist state, Gómez Urrutia’s role as a top labor lieutenant of the PAN government and his complicity with the “industrial murder” at the Pasta de Conchos mine that sparked the whole confrontation. The GEM made no mention of any of this, no call for union independence from the capitalist state, not a word of criticism of Gómez Urrutia. Also in our supplement, responding to a murderous attack on workers at the Sicartsa steel mill in Michoacán, we called



**CROC thugs at the Duro Bag Mfg. Co. plant in Rio Bravo. The goons were hired in Mexico City by the bosses to ensure victory for phantom “union” of the corporatist federation.**



**Workers at the Duro plant are clear on class character of the corporatist federations, the CTM and CROC. Slogans say: “CROC rats get out” and “Vote your independent union, Not CROC, Not CTM.”**

for a national strike against repression. The GEM mocked our call, leaving Sicartsa workers to strike alone without any support from the SNTMMSRM, ever obedient to Mexico’s corporatist labor laws.

We intensified our call for national strike action as the government attacked peasants in Atenco in May 2006 and Oaxaca teachers in June. The Internationalist Group in the

U.S. initiated several protests in New York against repression in Oaxaca. In Mexico, over the next five months of intense struggle that drove the police and the government from the state capital, the Grupo Internacionalista sent virtually our entire membership to Oaxaca, some for extended periods. We intervened at forums there warning against popular-front sell-out of the struggle and calling for no support to the bourgeois PRD (see *The Internationalist* No. 24, Summer 2006, and No. 25, January-February 2007). In an expression of political bankruptcy, the GEM sat it out.

But the story doesn't end there. When the *Workers Vanguard* article mentions "a series of powerful strikes" in the mining sector it is referring above all to the lengthy strike at the Cananea mine in northern Mexico. Here we confront a contradictory situation as labor corporatism in Mexico partially unravels. The SNTMMSRM, like the SNTE, has not broken with state control of labor, and Gómez Urrutia has been careful to play by the rules. Yet some locals, notably Section 65 in Cananea, have struck independently of (and been stabbed in the back by) the national "union." How then do revolutionaries intervene?

Far from "writing off" the Cananea local, we came to its aid. Supporters of the Grupo Internacionalista in the Comité de Lucha Proletaria (Proletarian Struggle Committee) who were active in the SITUAM university workers union put forward a motion to send a caravan to support the embattled miners. Our comrades organized and led the delegation that traveled to the struck mine in northern Mexico. We published a special supplement with articles supporting their strike, detailing dangerous conditions at the mine and recounting the history of joint struggle by Mexican and U.S. workers in Cananea going back a century (see "Cananea Must Not Stand Alone! For a Nationwide Miners Strike!" *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009, translated from *El Internacionalista* supplement, February 2008).

In those articles, distributed in Cananea, we also spelled out the history of the corporatist SNTMMSRM's betrayal of the combative Local 65, at the same time as we called to "demand that all the charges against leaders of ostensible labor organizations be dropped, since they serve as an attack by the capitalist state against the mine workers." So the situation is contradictory when you have militant locals that have partially broken from corporatist national "unions." And both in the case of the teachers (CNTE) and the miners (Section 65), the Grupo Internacionalista has supported their struggles while fighting for full independence from the capitalist state. The SL, incapable of handling contradictions, resolves them by smearing the IG, and doing nothing.

### From Mexico to Brazil: SL Sophistry and Litany of Lies

Similarly over the conflicts between the dissident CNTE and the corporatist SNTE, *Workers Vanguard* asks, thinking it has somehow nailed us, how can the CNTE lead current protests against the education reform "as a component of what the IG dismisses as a 'labor police agency'." Answer: the CNTE-led state unions are not controlled by, act independently

of, oppose and are opposed by the corporatist SNTE. Next WV asks: "So why would the government weaken" the SNTE by prosecuting Gordillo, if, as we say, it is a "labor police force that blocks the mobilization of the teachers." Answer: the government didn't weaken the SNTE, it dumped its agent who had become a liability and replaced her by another flunkey.

The SL's inability to grasp contradiction reflects a broader loss of capacity of dialectical thought, which has reflected itself in its endless gyrations over whether the Stalinist bureaucracy "led the counterrevolution" in East Germany and the Soviet Union. As this once-revolutionary organization slides deeper and deeper into centrism, discarding one Trotskyist principled position after another – abandoning the call to defeat U.S. imperialism in Afghanistan in 2001 (while vilely smearing the IG as purveyors of "anti-Americanism" for upholding that call), then shamefully supporting "its own" imperialism over the U.S.' invasion of Haiti in 2010 – you can see the Marxist IQ points slipping away. Opportunism blinds people and makes them stupid.

So next up in *Workers Vanguard's* laundry list are its habitual lies about Brazil, that while calling for "total political independence from the bourgeois state," our comrades in the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (which the article also never mentions, just like it pretends the Grupo Internacionalista doesn't exist) supposedly "in the city of Volta Redonda dragged the municipal workers union through the bourgeois courts in 1996-97." This is a monstrous fabrication. *The LQB and its members never took the union to court, and in fact they were the leadership of the union and they were sued in the bourgeois courts by pro-police elements whose lies the SL/ICL repeats* in its factional zeal against the Brazilian comrades it deserted.

We have amply documented the persecution of our comrades and the despicable role played by the SL/ICL in two dossiers, *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil* (February 1997) and *Responses to ICL Smear Campaign Against Brazilian Trotskyists* (May 2010). The latter has a dozen articles responding to and exposing the SL's slanders. Both bulletins are packed with illustrations of the nine different court suits against the Trotskyist union militants, and show that after the courts removed them from their elected positions on bogus charges, when judges finally found in their favor *our comrades refused the offer of the court to reinstate them*, because we oppose any intervention in union affairs by the bourgeois state.

What this was all about is that the Brazilian comrades, encouraged by the ICL, had acted to remove municipal police from the municipal workers union which they had won the leadership of (on a program saying that no cooperation with the police was possible since all police are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie). When supporters of the police pushed back, the ICL jumped ship, breaking fraternal relations with the LQB the day before police shut down the union assembly that was to vote to remove the cops. WV says this was a "cop-infested union," but no more so than unions the SL has had supporters in. Yet while the SL has long purported to be for "cops out of the unions," it has never waged a campaign in the unions to kick the police out, while the Brazilian comrades did. And for that they were persecuted, as the ICL sought to sabotage their defense.

## The SL/ICL on Corporatism When It was Trotskyist

Then we come to a section titled “Norden in His Labyrinth,” which purports to show that when Jan Norden, now editor of *The Internationalist*, was for 23 years editor of *Workers Vanguard*, WV supposedly didn’t hold that the corporatist labor bodies were institutions of the capitalist state. Wrong again. Their supposed proof is that in 1989 when Joaquín Hernández Galicia (known as La Quina), president of the STPRM oil workers, was arrested by PRI president Salinas de Gortari, WV published an article that, while correctly defending La Quina, wrongly equated the STPRM with U.S.-style unions. “The IG is left to explain what has changed since then.”

The fact is that prior to the expulsion of the Spartacist cadres in the U.S. and Mexico in 1996, publications of the SL, GEM and ICL all repeatedly explained – in at least a dozen articles, before, during and after 1989 – that the CTM and other corporatist bodies were agencies of capitalist control of labor, part of the state party, the PRI, not workers unions. The reason *Workers Vanguard* cites the particular article in question is that it is the *only* one in ten years of articles about Mexican labor that is ambiguous and contradictory on this point. (And for the record, Norden didn’t write or edit it, he was in Germany.)

When La Quina was arrested, it was absolutely necessary to defend him and demand his release, because in going after him, Salinas was targeting a leader who had partially broken from the corporatist system, not-so-secretly supporting Cárdenas in the 1988 presidential elections. Moreover, the PRI president was launching an offensive against Mexican workers in general. After taking his opening shot against a long-time regime loyalist, who was unlikely to resist, Salinas proceeded to go after the CNTE teachers and Section 65 mine workers in Cananea later that year. The bulk of the Mexican petty-bourgeois left, however, lacking a class position, supported or did not protest Salinas’ arrest of La Quina, in the name of “union democracy.”

As we have always insisted, it is not possible to achieve union democracy through the intervention of the capitalist state, the repressive apparatus that enforces the interests of the class enemy, the bourgeoisie. That is why revolutionary Trotskyists refuse, on principle, to sue the unions or otherwise bring the capitalist courts or government into union affairs, and we denounce the pseudo-leftists who do so. If union reformers get into office with the aid of the government they are then beholden to the state and must do its bidding. And they do. This has led to countless betrayals by victorious union “reform” slates in the U.S. Teamsters and elsewhere.

So the basic line of the article, “Mexican Rulers Declare War on Labor” (WV No. 470, 3 February 1989) was correct. The article also correctly notes that “the PRI has maintained itself in power by incorporating the unions and peasant associations into its party-state apparatus.” It quotes an editorial from *La Jornada* defining corporatism as “the integration of the unions into the state.” All true. But then it equates the oil workers “union” with the Teamsters under Jimmy Hoffa in the U.S. Yet the Teamsters were hardly part of a party-state

apparatus, because such a corporatist regime does not exist in the U.S.

While the article on La Quina was correct in its line, but somewhat confused and contradictory in its analysis, there are numerous articles in the Spartacist press, in English and Spanish, which were unambiguous on the class nature of the corporatist “unions.” For example:

- “Mexican Auto Workers Play Hardball,” WV No. 435, 4 September 1987, noted that in contrast to the strike by the independent union at Volkswagen, “the union at Ford belongs to the CTM labor federation which is part of the ruling bourgeois-nationalist ‘Institutional Revolutionary Party’ (PRI) and is keeping the strike under rigid government control.”
- “Mexican Women Workers Arise – Class Struggle in the ‘Global Sweatshop,’” *Women and Revolution* No. 34, Spring 1988, referred to “‘charros’ – bureaucrats of the government-controlled CTM union federation, who function as labor contractors enforcing sweetheart deals with the owners.” It also referred to the May Day march of “state-controlled unions” and quoted from a *Wall Street Journal* report on how at a Mexico City dress factory “18 gunmen from the CTM showed up on the day of a union vote, brandished weapons, and terrified the women into voting for a PRI-affiliated union.”
- “Mexico Erupts Over Elections,” WV No. 457, 15 July 1988, refers to “the corporatist, gangster-butressed CTM union bureaucracy which to this day enforces PRI control of the labor and peasant movements.”
- “Labor Showdown in Mexico,” WV No. 476, 28 April 1989, says: “It will take a class-struggle fight for the independence of labor from the bourgeois state to sweep away the labor cops of the PRI-controlled Mexican Workers Federation (CTM).” Today, *Workers Vanguard* claims that this didn’t “write off the SNTE as a bosses’ organization.” How do they get that? By quoting the first half of the above sentence *but cutting off the reference to the “labor cops” of the CTM*. Didn’t they think anyone would track down their quote-chopping, logic-chopping lie?
- “The Only Solution: Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!” *Espartaco* supplement, August 1994 refers to the “CTM ‘unions’ which have maintained their suffocating hold on millions of Mexican proletarians, chaining the working class to the PRI,” noting how “opposition currents are brutally suppressed by CTM thugs working together with the police.” The article also calls to “*elect workers committees* independent of state control and all the bourgeois parties (including the PRD), to throw out the *charros* and lay the bases for real unions as organs of workers struggle.”
- “*Maquiladora* Workers Strike RCA Thomson,” WV No. 616, 10 February 1995, reported on a walkout against the CTM “union” at the RCA Thomson plant in Ciudad Juárez. The strikers, “mostly young women,” were “demanding that the company labor relations chief be fired and the hated local CTM chief Cruz Mendez ousted. As strikers

assembled this morning, some 200 CTM goons, acting in concert with the company, menaced them at the gate.”

- “Mexico Crash Made in U.S.A.,” also in *WV* No. 616, 10 February 1995, noted that “the CTM is officially incorporated into the PRI as the ‘workers sector’ of the government party.” It continued: “The fight is not just for a few more percentage points in government-controlled wage pacts, but to *break the stranglehold of the PRI’s labor police*. This has been underlined in the current walkout by *maquiladora* workers at RCA Thomson in Ciudad Juárez, whose placards declare: ‘Sellout Union Doesn’t Support Us.’ Class-conscious workers must *elect workers committees* independent of state controls and the capitalist parties (including the PRD) to drive out the bureaucrats and lay the basis for genuine unions as organs of workers’ struggle.” The article also advocated: “Against plant shutdowns and attacks by the bourgeois state and its CTM guard dogs, *mass workers mobilizations against repression* together with *plant occupations* backed up by *workers defense committees*....” [all italics in the original]
- “Mobilize the Working Class Against Repression and the Starvation Assault,” *Espartaco* supplement, February 1995. Under the subhead “Unchain the Working Class” the article says: “The *charro* tops, headed by the decrepit ‘Terminator’ Fidel Velázquez, brag once again about supporting the capitalists against the Chiapas Indians and against the workers, naturally including those that he has jailed in the CTM. After signing [PRI president Ernesto] Zedillo’s economic plan, Velázquez promised his bourgeois masters that ‘there will be no disobedience by the workers’,” and called for workers to “donate” a day’s pay to pay off the foreign debt as “a way of showing solidarity with the rich.” Its concluding section, the article says: “Against repression and the starvation assault, it is crucial to now *elect workers committees* – independent of the bourgeois parties – including the PRD – to *break the corporatist shackles* of the CTM (which acts as the labor police of the PRI) on the working class.” [italics in original]
- The first installment of a two-part article, “Labor Organizing in the Maquiladoras,” *WV* No. 620 (7 April 1995), based on a trip to the free-trade zone industrial parks in Tamaulipas and speaking with factory workers there, referred to the “corporatist ‘union’ of the Mexican Labor Federation (CTM),” noting that “the CTM labor federation is a formal part of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).” It added: “The CTM acts more like a labor contractor than a labor union, as it supplies a ‘disciplined’ workforce to North American investors. Indeed, CTM bosses finger potential militants and run them out of the plants, as well as organizing goon squads to put down any protests. They are literally labor cops for the bosses.”
- Part 2 of “Labor Organizing in the Maquiladoras,” *WV* No. 621, 21 April 1995, reported on a strike by women workers at a Sony plant in Nuevo Laredo. The CTM leader warned that “we don’t want strikes because they hurt *maquiladoras* and the investors.” When women struck one plant, the police were sent in. The next day, 200 women were blocking strikebreakers with human chains, the following day there were 300 the article reported, adding: “The CTM unsuccessfully tried to run scabs in with ‘union buses’.” The article summed up: “It will take a class-struggle opposition fighting consciously for the independence of the unions from the bourgeoisie to break the corporatist stranglehold of the PRI-government and the CTM/CT labor cops.” You can’t be any clearer than that.
- “Mexico City: Union-Busting at Gunpoint,” also in *WV* No. 621, 21 April 1995, reported on the PRI government’s mass firing of 13,000 bus drivers of the independent

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Revolución Permanente

**The encampment of striking teachers of the CNTE in Mexico City was violently dispersed by police, September 2013. The corporatist SNTE scabbed on the strike and mobilized squads of armed gun thugs to break it.**

SUTAUR-100 union. The article noted that “the Mexican bourgeoisie aims to snuff out any idea of organized, independent proletarian struggle,” and that the SUTAUR-100 union had “maintained its separation not only from the PRI-controlled ‘labor’ bodies but also from the various independent unions which in 1988 sided with the former PRI leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who headed a ‘popular front’ coalition linking various leftists and labor organizations to a wing of the Mexican ruling class.” It underlined “the fundamental fact that the bulk of the Mexican working class is straitjacketed by the PRI’s corporatist ‘union’ federations.”

- “Break the *Charro* Shackles: For a Class-Struggle Workers Mobilization,” *Espartaco* No. 7, Winter 1995-96, stated: “The role of the venal *charro* bureaucracy headed by the CTM, which acts almost as labor contractors and often as hired gunmen for the bosses, has never been so brazenly shown as today.... The workers have sought to heroically resist the capitalist attacks, from 1989 with the military siege of the Cananea mine, the Sicartsa strike and the national strike of the CNTE teachers, as well as the 1990 struggle by the Ford workers and the recent strikes and work stoppages in the maquiladoras.... But in every case, the workers have confronted the brutality and betrayal of the *charro* bureaucracy, which for decades has been a

central pillar of the bourgeois regime.”

- “Release Leaders of Mexico City Bus Drivers Union!” WV No. 642, 29 March 1996, sums up: “For more than six decades, Mexico’s bourgeoisie has kept the millions-strong proletariat in thrall by smashing or buying off every attempt to break the stranglehold of ‘unions’ directly controlled by the ruling capitalist PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party).”

Note also that virtually every one of those articles from 1988 on stresses that it is necessary to win Mexican workers politically away from the popular front around Cárdenas and the PRD.

So here we have more than a dozen articles from past Spartacist publications, all saying, and often spelling out in detail, that the corporatist “unions” such as the CTM and SNTE, are labor cops, strikebreakers, part of the state party, chaining the workers to and controlled by the state apparatus – exactly as the Internationalist Group says today. *Who has changed its line is not the IG but the SL and its Mexican offshoot, the GEM. And who is actually supporting and alibiing union-busters is the SL and the GEM.*

A word to SLers and GEM supporters who go around with a photocopy of the one article that had a somewhat confused and contradictory line on this, pulling it out of their backpacks with a smug smile thinking they have somehow



Fred Chase/Impact Visuals

**Women workers of the Sony subsidiary Magnéticos de México in Nuevo Laredo repel attempts by “union” bureaucrats of the corporatist CTM to bring in scabs in buses during April 1994 strike.**

“got” the IG: this is not about point-scoring in a game of “gotcha,” it’s about a deadly (literally) serious question for the class struggle in Mexico. It matters to us because we are actively involved in trying to break that corporatist stranglehold, and the ties that politically subordinate the “independent” unions to the bourgeois popular front. The SL and GEM don’t give a damn. And you don’t have to know a lot about Mexico, don’t take our word for it, all you have to do is go back and look at the back issues of *WV* to see that you have been peddling a lie.

Then start asking questions about the lies you have been told about Brazil.

### **Trotsky and the Struggle for Revolutionary Leadership in the Unions**

Trying to give itself a veneer of orthodoxy, the *Workers Vanguard* article quotes at length from Trotsky’s unfinished essay, “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay,” which was still on his desk when he was struck down by a Stalinist assassin in August 1940. Now a good quote from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg or other revolutionary figure can be quite useful, particularly when used honestly and relevantly to the issue at hand. We, too, often cite this text. It is a centerpiece of our bulletin *Trotskyism and Trade-Union Struggle* (December 2005) and guides our work building class-struggle oppositions in the unions on a revolutionary program in the

U.S., Brazil and Mexico.

Trotsky pointed to a worldwide trend of unions “drawing closely to and growing together with the state power” and referred to the “semi-state” character of the unions in Mexico. The SL/ICL would have it that we therefore are contradicting Trotsky when we say that the CTM, SNTE, CROC et al are actually state-controlled bodies. They pretend that nothing has changed from 1940, even though at the end of that decade the PRI-government moved decisively to eliminate the last elements of autonomy of those unions, militarily ousting their leaderships and subordinating them from top to bottom to the state party, turning them into strikebreakers and scab-herders who beat up, expel and not infrequently kill their own members.

Then *Workers Vanguard* quotes Trotsky criticizing those that conclude that “the trade unions cease to be trade unions in the imperialist epoch,” saying that such a position “would be false to the core.” But the League for the Fourth International does not say that unions in general have ceased to be unions, but that the corporatist labor bodies that have been integrated into the capitalist state are not workers unions. The *WV* article then quotes Trotsky saying that any group “which permits itself an ultimatic position in relation to the trade unions, i.e., in essence turns its back upon the working class, merely because of displeasure with its organizations, every such organization is destined to perish.” Trotsky is quite correct. But what is he referring to?

Trotsky is talking about the urgency of doing “work within the trade unions” and criticizing those (like the German ultra-lefts in the 1920s that Lenin went after in *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*) who refuse to work in the unions. Yet the fact is that the sections of the LFI *all* do work in the unions. We politically support the Comitê de Luta Classista (Brazil), the Comité de Lucha Proletaria (Mexico) and Class Struggle Education Workers (U.S.). And in Mexico we work both in the independent unions and the corporatist labor bodies. The sections of the ICL, however, although they have individual members of unions, don’t do systematic oppositional work in the unions anywhere. So who is ultimatistic here?

Just because some entity calls itself a union, or has “labor” or “workers” in its name doesn’t make it a workers organization. Were the fascist labor fronts in Nazi Germany workers unions? No. Were the unions led by the police agent Zubatov and controlled by the Okhrana (secret police) in tsarist Russia real unions? No. But that didn’t mean that revolutionaries refused to work in them. The ICL when it stood on the program of revolutionary Trotskyism used to understand this, pointing out that the Arab-exclusionist, Zionist Histadrut in Israel was not a bonafide union. But no longer.

In Monterrey, Mexico the *sindicatos blancos* of the National Federation of Independent Unions (FNSI) are the main labor organizations in town. Are they workers unions? No, they’re company unions. How about when the CTM was awarded the labor contract at the Cananea mine by the government and brought in scabs to break the strike by Section 65 (“The CTM Practiced Scabbing in Cananea, Expert Says,” *Dossier Político* [Hermosillo], 12 June)? That was a scab-herding, strikebreaking outfit that should be driven out by genuine workers unions. But according to the logic of the SL/ICL, that was just a jurisdictional dispute between two unions. Any group that can’t see the class difference between a scab and a worker, between a company union and a workers union, between bosses’ death squads and workers defense guards, is doomed.

Does this all seem very abstract? Let’s make it concrete and contemporary.

At the Honda auto plant outside of Guadalajara, our comrades have worked with workers there who are fighting to build an independent union, the STUHM. When they started out, they discovered that there supposedly already was a “union” there, the SETEAMI, an affiliate of the CTM. This outfit had signed a “protection contract” with management even though none of the workers had ever heard of it, and never paid dues to it. Trying to track it down, they discovered that its president was the company human resources manager! Now another corporatist outfit, affiliated with the CROC, is claiming to represent the workers (see “Honda Workers Under Siege: Break the Corporatist Shackles,” *Revolución Permanente* No. 2, May 2013). And the SL/ICL/GEM want you to believe these are workers unions.

So in summing up, let’s return to the key section of Trotsky’s essay:

“It is necessary to adapt ourselves to the concrete conditions



La Jornada

**Honda workers members of independent union STUHM wearing bags over their heads to avoid identification, December 2010.**

existing in the trade unions of every given country in order to mobilize the masses not only against the bourgeoisie but also against the totalitarian regime within the trade unions themselves and against the leaders enforcing this regime. The primary slogan for this struggle is: *complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state*. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy.

“The second slogan is: *trade union democracy*. The second slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state....

“The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for the obstruction of the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.”

The latter is what the sections of the League for the Fourth International in Brazil, Mexico and the United States fight for – and the SL/ICL and its moribund Mexican group, the GEM, don’t.

A final note: the *Workers Vanguard* article concludes by saying that in 1996 the comrades who formed the Internationalist Group in the U.S. and the Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico “departed the Trotskyist ICL.” Actually, no. We were *expelled* by the ICL, as it began heading down the yellow brick road of centrist opportunism. Who knows where it will end?

The sections of the League for the Fourth International defend genuine unions against the bourgeois state. We have always opposed intervention in workers’ affairs by the capitalist state. Because of our unflinching stand we have been the subject of state repression, aided and abetted by the SL and its misnamed International Communist League. It is tiresome to spend the time to dig up the proof, especially when our cynical opponents just try to change the subject whenever they get caught out. But by spinning their web of lies in the service of capitulation to “their own” bourgeoisies they will end up trapping themselves. ■

## Venezuela...

*sigue de la página 80*

norteamericano viajó a Miami para dar un discurso belicoso ante las mafias contrarrevolucionarias de los exiliados cubanos y venezolanos para atacar al “tiránico gobierno socialista” de Venezuela que “nacionalizó industrias privadas”; amenazar de ir con todo contra Nicaragua y Cuba; denunciar a “quienes intentan imponer al socialismo en Estados Unidos” y amenazar a los militares venezolanos de que, de no romper con el régimen, “no encontrarán puerto seguro, ni salida fácil, ni vía de escape. Lo perderán todo”. En caso de que alguien no lo hubiera entendido, añadió: “Buscamos una transición pacífica de poderes, pero todas las opciones están abiertas”.

Esta amenaza abierta de invasión militar norteamericana está ligada a una advertencia de no bloquear la entrega de “ayuda humanitaria” que EE.UU. está enviando en aviones militares para almacenarla al otro lado de la frontera, en Cúcuta, Colombia, y en Brasil. Ya habiendo recibido sus órdenes, al día siguiente el títere imperialista Guaidó lanzó un ultimátum al ejército: tenía cuatro días, hasta el 23 de febrero, para tomar una decisión, pues una caravana se dirigiría hacia la frontera colombiana para “recibir” la “ayuda”. Se prepara el escenario para un enfrentamiento con tropas venezolanas que resguardan la frontera. Si hay bajas civiles, que es lo que los golpistas buscan, el caso sería denunciado como una masacre y serviría como señal para el inicio de una invasión de EE.UU. y Colombia.

Lo que está en curso es una *mortífera provocación imperialista*. Si hay bajas, la *responsabilidad será enteramente de los golpistas norteamericanos y sus marionetas*, quienes claramente buscan un *casus belli* – un justificativo inventado para desatar la guerra, como el lema “¡No olvidemos el Álamo!” en la guerra de EE.UU. en 1848 para apoderarse de la mitad del territorio de México; o “¡No olvidemos el hundimiento del navío Maine!” en la guerra de 1898 para arrebatarle a España las colonias de Puerto Rico, Cuba y Filipinas. Ya que no pueden inventar la existencia de “armas de destrucción masiva”, el pretexto usado por EE.UU. para justificar su invasión a Irak en 2003, Trump y Cía. requieren de imágenes de cadáveres y soldados deteniendo la “ayuda humanitaria”. En medio de este escenario, el multimillonario británico sir Richard Branson anunció un concierto de rock “Venezuela Aid Live” en Cúcuta, del lado colombiano de la frontera. Un cartel muestra a Branson sosteniendo al mundo en sus manos. Maduro respondió con planes para un concierto a realizarse en el lado venezolano, en otra garita.

Mientras la situación se precipita hacia un choque frontal, el Grupo Internacionalista y la Liga por la IV Internacional defienden a Venezuela en contra de la arremetida imperialista,



**Contingente internacionalista en la protesta en Nueva York el 23 de febrero contra el golpe derechista orquestado por el gobierno de Trump con apoyo de los demócratas.**

ya sea mediante un ataque militar, o mediante un golpe orquestado por EE.UU. Nadie debe equivocarse en lo que toca a las consecuencias que tendría el derribo de la populista “Revolución Bolivariana” proclamada por Hugo Chávez. La oligarquía local y los imperialistas yanquis han buscado sin descanso derribar al régimen desde hace 20 años, incluso mediante el intento de asesinato del presidente venezolano con un ataque de drones en agosto pasado. Aunque Venezuela sigue siendo un país bien capitalista, cuyo gobierno bonapartista es nacionalista burgués, no obstante sus pretensiones socialistas, su política exterior inconformista (y sobre todo la ayuda que ha brindado a Cuba) y su postura desafiante con respecto al Tío Sam la han hecho un blanco de la agresión imperialista.

Si las fuerzas ultraderechistas, usando a Guaidó como figurín, y la oposición burguesa de los *escuálidos*, con su odio visceral contra las “harapientas masas” chavistas, se hacen del poder, se desembocaría seguramente en un sangriento ajuste de cuentas. Habrá asesinatos de miembros del partido gobernante, el Partido Socialista Unificado de Venezuela (PSUV), muy probablemente un reino de terror en barrios marginados de los cerros que han sido bastiones del PSUV, caza de sindicalistas combativos, dirigentes campesinos y una represión brutal de izquierdistas en general, incluyendo a muchos de los que han sido críticos de la política capitalista de Maduro.

El éxito de este golpe por la “democracia” incluiría un ataque draconiano contra los derechos democráticos a manos de generales chaqueteros. La política económica impuesta por los golpistas haría que la austeridad impuesto por Maduro palideciera en comparación. Su *Plan País*, presentado por Guaidó a finales de enero, llama a restablecer los mecanismos de mercado y las libertades económicas”. Lo que esto significa es la reducción a la miseria absoluta a los millones que han resistido las privaciones gracias a los alimentos y los medicamentos subsidiados y el combustible baratísimo (cuyo precio sería elevado a los niveles internacionales).

Si Trump recurriera a la “opción militar”, contra la cual

han aconsejado los menos enloquecidos en Washington, se podría desencadenar una guerra civil en Venezuela. Si generales carreristas deciden pasarse del lado de los golpistas, se desencadenaría un baño de sangre. En esta grave situación, los trotskistas de la LIVI llamamos por *contundentes acciones obreras para aplastar el golpe de estado de EE.UU.* En particular, esto incluiría la formación de *milicias obreras armadas para aplastar a Guaidó y los golpistas* teleguiados desde la Casa Blanca. Esto implicaría un *bloque militar con las milicias bolivarianas*, pero los revolucionarios proletarios insisten en que es cuestión vital mantener la independencia política y organizativa con respecto al estado burgués.

Sólo una lucha *revolucionaria* podrá derrotar la toma de poder imperialista, el ruinoso status quo es insostenible. Esto implica movilizarse independientemente para implementar *reivindicaciones transicionales* que ataquen los fundamentos del régimen capitalista. En contra de la hiperinflación, los obreros deben imponer una *escala móvil de salarios* indexada al costo de la vida. Los empleados deben *tomar las empresas imperialistas y los conglomerados capitalistas locales*, como Banco Bradesco, clave para el lavado de dinero realizado por los capitalistas venezolanos y de la boliburguesía (la burguesía “bolivariana”). Los sindicalistas con conciencia de clase tendrían que *imponer el control obrero* de la industria para poner alto al sabotaje económico. La provisión de alimentos puede asegurarse mediante la *toma del monopolio de alimentos y bebidas Polar* y se puede asegurar la *distribución mediante comités barriales sustentados por los sindicatos* para impedir la especulación.

Sobre todo, al luchar en contra del golpe, la clase obrera *no debe depositar confianza alguna en Maduro y el PSUV*, cuya política de austeridad capitalista (devida en parte, pero sobre todo agravada severamente, por las criminales sanciones económicas imperialistas) ha desembocado en la desesperada situación económica actual para las masas y así ha abierto la vía para el golpe. Durante varios años, mientras que muchos izquierdistas daban apoyo político a Chávez, ya no tanto a Maduro, aunque siguen invocando a la “Revolución Bolivariana”, algunos oportunistas consumados se han alineado con los golpistas (mientras cínicamente dicen oponerse al imperialismo). Otros declaran una “neutralidad” traicionera (“ni Maduro ni Guaidó”) que tácitamente implica connivencia con el golpe.

En contraste, la Liga por la IV Internacional busca forjar un *partido obrero revolucionario sobre la base del programa de Lenin y Trotsky*, que luche por un *gobierno obrero y campesino* en Venezuela y la *revolución socialista internacional*. Esto incluye acciones combativas para *defender a Cuba*, el blanco secundario del gambito de Trump en Venezuela, así como los demás estados obreros burocráticamente deformados (China, Corea del Norte y Vietnam). Esto significa *solidarizarse con la revuelta haitiana en contra de la política hambreadora del gobierno títere impuesto por EE.UU.*, luchar por la *independencia de Puerto Rico* en una *federación socialista del Caribe*, como parte de unos *estados unidos socialistas de América Latina*. En EE.UU. llamamos a realizar *huelgas obreras en contra de una invasión de Venezuela*.

## Golpe de estado imperialista bipartidista *Made in U.S.A.*

Tras nombrar el 23 de enero a Guaidó como “presidente encargado” de Venezuela, una suerte de encargado de negocios norteamericanos, el gobierno de Trump se ha adueñado de los bienes de Venezuela en Estados Unidos, principalmente la petrolera Citgo, y ha prohibido la importación de petróleo de la compañía estatal venezolana PDVSA, además de prohibir las exportaciones de combustible refinado para diluir el pesado petróleo crudo de Venezuela para su transporte. Esto eliminaría gran parte de la fuente de divisas del asediado país para pagar las importaciones vitalmente necesarias de alimentos, medicinas y maquinaria.

Luego de su incautación de los bienes venezolanos, Trump nombró a Elliott Abrams encargado de la operación en Venezuela. Durante el gobierno de Reagan, Abrams fue el responsable del encubrimiento de la infame masacre de campesinos en El Mozote, en El Salvador, donde un batallón entrenado por militares estadounidenses masacró a todos los habitantes del cantón (aldea), niños incluidos. Más tarde, Abrams fue enjuiciado y encontrado culpable de mentir al Congreso norteamericano con respecto al plan Irán-Contras para enviar armas subrepticamente a los sanguinarios ejércitos contrarrevolucionarios (los contras) que asediaron al gobierno nacionalista de izquierda de los sandinistas en Nicaragua. Ahora Abrams está supervisando el golpe en Venezuela, actualmente desde Cúcuta, Colombia, donde junto con el senador *gusano* Marco Rubio, supervisa la provocación de los “suministros de emergencia” a Colombia que Trump quiere utilizar como pretexto para la guerra.

El gobierno venezolano ha acusado que las armas para los golpistas estarán mezcladas con los cargamentos “humanitarios”, que es una de las vías mediante las cuales EE.UU. armó a los contras. Entretanto, se ha informado que fuerzas especiales norteamericanas están llegando a Colombia y que una fuerza de ataque de la Marina de Guerra norteamericana en torno al portaaviones *Abraham Lincoln* está en ejercicios preparativos en Florida. El presidente Trump ha querido lanzar acciones militares de EE.UU. desde que tomó posesión del cargo. El reciente libro testimonial del subdirector del FBI Andrew McCabe, *La amenaza*, describe una reunión de agosto de 2017 en la Casa Blanca:

“Entonces el presidente habló sobre Venezuela. Ese es el país contra el cual deberíamos iniciar una guerra, dijo. Tienen todo ese petróleo y están justo en nuestra puerta trasera”.

El año pasado, la Associated Press (4 de julio de 2018) informó sobre la misma reunión:

“El presidente Donald Trump se dirigió a sus principales asistentes y les planteó una pregunta inquietante: dada la intensificación de las amenazas a la seguridad regional en Venezuela, ¿por qué no podría EE.UU. simplemente invadir al atribulado país?... Listó los casos pasados que consideraba exitosos de diplomacia cañonera en la región, según un alto funcionario presente en el lugar, como las invasiones de Panamá y Granada en los años 1980”.

Pero Venezuela no es Granada ni Panamá. Las Fuerzas Armadas Bolivarianas tienen 350 mil efectivos y más de 1.6 millones de elementos uniformados de las Milicias Bolivarianas, cifra que se cuadruplicó en el último año. Éstas han dado todos

los indicios de que están dispuestas a pelear. Aunque no están armados en estos momentos, los miembros de las milicias han recibido entrenamiento militar y, a partir de principios de febrero, han realizado ejercicios conjuntos con el ejército en bases militares en todo el país. Si el golpe tiene éxito, los chavistas saben que serán perseguidos. Y al proclamar tan abiertamente el patrocinio norteamericano de la intentona golpista, Trump ha despertado la resistencia nacionalista entre la población empobrecida y trabajadora que forma parte de las milicias.

Lo que presenciamos no es el usual golpe de estado respaldado por Estados Unidos que con tanta frecuencia ha habido en América Latina, siendo el caso más reciente el de Honduras en 2009, o el sanguinario golpe de estado de Pinochet en Chile en 1973. En ambos casos, la burguesía local tomó la iniciativa, con el respaldo decisivo de los imperialistas yanquis. En el caso de Venezuela se trata de una operación imperialista sin ambages, totalmente orquestada por Washington. La marioneta que la encabeza, Guaidó, era un *donnadie* político. Ni siquiera era jefe de la Asamblea Nacional hasta que EE.UU. lo sacó secretamente del país en diciembre para presentarlo con el nuevo gobierno derechista-militarista de Jair Bolsonaro en Brasil, el presidente de los escuadrones de la muerte Iván Duque en Colombia, y funcionarios norteamericanos en Washington.

El escenario en el que esta marioneta fuera nombrada como presidente de la “Asamblea Nacional”, luego autoproclamado como presidente del país, ha sido cocinado por EE.UU. El *Wall Street Journal* (26 de enero) informó que el vicepresidente Pence le dio a Guaidó luz verde en una llamada telefónica la noche anterior. Si el complot tiene éxito, la industria petrolera será entregada a las multinacionales norteamericanas, al mismo tiempo que el dólar se convierte en la moneda de circulación nacional. Así, en lugar de ser una semicolonias del imperialismo norteamericano, lo que ha sido Venezuela a lo largo del último siglo junto con la mayor parte de los países de América Latina, será una en todo aspecto menos el formal, sin más independencia que la que hoy tiene Haití bajo la férula norteamericana, o que tienen los países de África Occidental cuyas economías están controladas por Francia.

Hoy los medios están llenos de reportes sobre la escasez de alimentos y la falta de medicinas, pero no dicen nada sobre el hecho de que éstos resultan de la guerra económica de EE.UU. contra Venezuela. El enviado especial de las Naciones Unidas Alfred de Zayas, quien viajó a Venezuela en 2017, informó que “Los efectos de las sanciones impuestas por los presidentes Obama y Trump y las medidas unilaterales de Canadá y la Unión Europea han agravado directa e indirectamente la escasez de medicinas, tales como la insulina y los medicamentos antirretrovirales”. Ahora EE.UU. se ha apoderado de 7 mil millones en valores de Venezuela, mientras que Inglaterra ha robado 1,200 millones de oro venezolano ahí depositado, mientras los imperialistas ofrecen unos cuantos millones en “ayuda humanitaria” (¡!).

En la guerra contra la Venezuela bolivariana, el Partido Demócrata ha participado plenamente desde el principio. Mientras que Trump acaba de declarar una emergencia nacional para construir su muro a lo largo de la frontera con México, debe recordarse que el demócrata Barack Obama declaró una emergencia nacional en 2015 para imponer sanciones económicas contra Venezuela.



Estas sanciones prohibían la transferencia de miles de millones de dólares de ganancias a PDVSA de su subsidiaria, Citgo, y hacían imposible que Maduro renegocie la deuda externa de Venezuela. Dado su condición de gobierno capitalista, sujeto a la dictadura del mercado, a pesar de su retórica radical, Venezuela siguió pagando miles de millones de dólares a los bancos imperialistas, mientras que la importación de alimentos fue seriamente recortada.

Aún antes de que Trump “reconociera” a Guaidó como su presidente títere en Venezuela, dirigentes demócratas en el Congreso, incluidos los senadores Richard Durbin y Robert Menendez habían pedido al gobierno en múltiples ocasiones que lo hiciera. Ya hemos señalado que en el informe presidencial ante el Congreso, la senadora demócrata Kirsten Gillibrand y la presidenta demócrata de la Cámara de Representantes, Nancy Pelosi, aplaudieron la “valiente” iniciativa de Trump para derribar a Maduro. Describimos también cómo hasta las dizque “socialistas democráticas” del Partido Demócrata Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez y Rashida Tlaib votaron a favor de un presupuesto de 20 millones de dólares para “promover la democracia y el imperio de la ley en Venezuela” (véase “Imperialist Feminism and the Democrats” en la página 40 en este número).

Los demócratas que se han atrevido a cuestionar el consenso bipartidario con respecto a Venezuela han sido contadísimos. Una fue la representante Ilhan Omar de Minnesota, quien en una audiencia en la Cámara de Representantes el 14 de febrero interrogó al encargado de la operación en Venezuela Elliott Abrams: “¿apoyaría una facción armada en Venezuela que perpetre crímenes de guerra, crímenes contra la humani-

dad o genocidio en caso de que crea que están al servicio de los intereses de EE.UU., como usted hizo en Guatemala, El Salvador y Nicaragua?”

Poco tiempo antes que eso, Omar, una de las primeras musulmanas elegidas como congresista, fue blanco de una vil difamación, falsamente acusada de antisemitismo por decir la verdad con respecto al American Israel Public Affairs Committee: que el AIPAC, que se autodenomina el lobby sionista, literalmente compra apoyo a favor de Israel. (Véase, por ejemplo, la rúbrica “Congressional Club” en el sitio web de AIPAC.) Altos dirigentes demócratas exigieron que se disculpara, y cuando cedió, Omar fue apuñalada por la espalda por “AOC”, quien alabó su disculpa forzada – dando así su imprimatura a la ecuación de antisionismo con antisemitismo. Nosotros decimos: *Ilhan Omar no tenía nada por lo cual disculparse* – y el Partido Demócrata ha mostrado una vez más cómo ahoga toda oposición al imperialismo.

Hay ahora unas cuantas protestas tardías en EE.UU. en contra de la intervención en Venezuela, casi enteramente enfocadas en protestar contra Trump. Habrá algunas críticas rutinarias en contra de los demócratas, pero el pequeño tamaño de estas manifestaciones es testimonio del hecho de que, a diferencia de las protestas contra las guerras en Irak o Vietnam, tienen muy pocos políticos del Partido Demócrata para presentar en las tarimas de sus coaliciones de “frente popular” contra la guerra. Desde Fox News hasta el *New York Times* y el *Guardian* de Londres, la maquinaria de los “medios mainstream” publica a diario una ininterrumpida cadena de mentiras. Hay un apoyo imperialista prácticamente monolítica a favor de la arremetida de Trump contra Venezuela, incluso de parte de los más virulentos fanáticos de las teorías conspirativas como el “Russiagate”.

### ¡Luchar contra la guerra imperialista con guerra de clases!

El imperialismo yanqui se ha desmandado, y sus peones y aliados se han sumado a la embestida. Hasta los pocos gobiernos que se han resistido a seguir a Trump, como el de Uruguay o el de México bajo el presidente populista Andrés Manuel López Obrador, están promoviendo un “golpe blando”, hablando de la no intervención mientras llaman a Maduro a emprender un “diálogo” con los conspiradores que buscan derribar al régimen bolivariano. El hecho es que, para combatir el ataque contra Venezuela, así como las guerras y los golpes de estado desde Afganistán hasta Honduras, es necesario movilizarse contra el sistema imperialista mismo. Esta fue la lección de las masivas movilizaciones contra la guerra de Vietnam, cuando los políticos “pacifistas” demócratas se convirtieron en halcones de guerra con respecto a Israel en Medio Oriente.

También con respecto a Venezuela, los revolucionarios llamamos a *combatir la guerra imperialista con guerra de clases*. Esto se contrapone tajantemente a la política de los populistas nacionalistas burgueses como Maduro y Chávez, que en vano esperaban lograr la “coexistencia pacífica” con el imperialismo y los capitalistas criollos. Ahora estamos viendo los frutos amargos de su fallida búsqueda. Para *aplantar el*

*golpe*, es necesario movilizar a la clase obrera, independientemente, y en contra, de todos los partidos capitalistas, lo mismo conservadores que “progresistas”.

La acometida actual contra Venezuela es una confirmación plena de la validez del programa de León Trotsky de la *revolución permanente*, que sostiene que en esta época de putrefacción capitalista, hasta la realización de las conquistas de las revoluciones burguesas, entre ellas la independencia nacional, la democracia y la revolución agraria, exige que la clase obrera, a la cabeza del campesinado y todos los oprimidos, tome el poder en una revolución socialista que se extienda a las entrañas de la bestia imperialista. Desde Venezuela hasta EE.UU., la lucha por la construcción de una vanguardia revolucionaria internacionalista, basada en el programa bolchevique de Lenin y Trotsky, es la tarea de la Liga por la IV Internacional hoy en día. ■

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**Trump elige su marioneta, convoca una asonada, amenaza con invadir ... y los demócratas aplauden**

# Venezuela: ¡Acción obrera revolucionaria para aplastar el golpe de EE.UU.!

*El artículo que reproducimos a continuación fue traducido de un volante que se repartió en protestas celebradas el 23 de febrero en Nueva York y Oakland, California convocadas bajo el lema “¡No a la guerra contra Venezuela!”*

El 23 de enero, los medios internacionales (imperialistas) anunciaron súbitamente la “noticia de última hora” de que un tal Juan Guaidó, jefe de la Asamblea Nacional en Venezuela, se había autoproclamado presidente del país, alegando que el verdadero presidente electo, Nicolás Maduro, era ilegítimo. En pocos minutos, el presidente norteamericano Donald Trump, reconoció al presidente fingido, y en poco más de una hora, gobiernos derechistas de América Latina y el de Canadá hicieron lo mismo. Europa se sumó a la operación una semana después. En EE.UU., destacados congresistas demócratas se sumaron a las alabanzas de los republicanos a la maniobra de Trump. Se trata de un golpe de estado imperialista descarado. Los trabajadores del mundo deben actuar para aplastarlo.

Sin embargo, para disgusto de los golpistas de Washington y sus mandaderos en Caracas, el gobierno de Maduro no cayó. La oficialidad del ejército declaró su lealtad al gobierno y ridiculizó al aspirante a “presidente encargado” designado por Trump. Repetidos llamados del vicepresidente norteamericano Mike Pence, el secretario de estado Mike Pompeo, el asesor en seguridad nacional John Bolton y el senador republicano Marco Rubio al ejército venezolano para derribar al presidente (en nombre de la “democracia”, por supuesto) no tuvieron ningún efecto. En los días que siguieron hubo enormes movilizaciones para protestar en contra del golpe (de las que no se informó en los medios imperialistas) en la capital y en las principales ciudades de Venezuela.



Tribuna Popular

**Trabajadores venezolanos marchan en 2018 con manta exigiendo “La clase obrera al poder contra el imperialismo y por los derechos del pueblo trabajador” .**

**¡Milicias obreras armadas para aplastar al títere Guaidó y a los golpistas derechistas!**

**Por un bloque militar con las milicias bolivarianas. ¡Ninguna confianza en Maduro!**

**No un régimen militar populista burgués, sino un gobierno obrero y campesino.**

**¡Forjar un partido trotskista que luche por la revolución socialista internacional!**

**¡Abajo las sanciones contra Venezuela!  
¡Por la defensa revolucionaria de Cuba,  
China, Corea del Norte y Vietnam en contra del imperialismo y la contrarrevolución!**

Entonces, en una dramática intensificación del enfrentamiento, el 18 de febrero el comandante en jefe del imperialismo sigue en la página 76

**¡Defender Venezuela contra el imperialismo yanqui!**