

Trump Looks to Cops and Fascists, Democrats Appeal to Pentagon Brass

Repression Elections 2020

You Can't Fight Trump with Democrats

OCTOBER 30 – U.S. capitalism is in a heap of trouble, and as usual, the working class and oppressed are paying the price. It's about to get a lot worse. The country is beset by a deadly plague, the worst in a century, which is intensifying. The economy is in a new depression, the deepest since the 1930s, with long-term consequences that are just beginning to be felt. An explosion of outrage over racist cop brutality brought millions into the streets daily in the largest sustained protest movement in U.S. history, as the orgy of police murder continues unabated. The ruling class is sharply divided after a failed impeachment process, while U.S. society is deeply polarized over just about everything. And now we are on the eve of an election which could easily – even likely – set off weeks of turbulent unrest and perhaps a constitutional crisis not seen since 1876.

Of these many crises, the most immediate is the election, not only for president but also for control of Congress. President Donald Trump is stumping the country with incendiary speeches laced with racist appeals, shout-outs to fascist thugs and

paean to kill-crazed cops while conjuring up hordes of antifa protesters invading white suburbs. The white-supremacist-in-chief vows that the only way he could lose is if the vote is rigged, and refuses to say he would hand over office. Meanwhile, Republican operatives are recruiting armed “poll watchers” to intimidate voters, particularly in black and Hispanic areas, and Republican lawyers are gearing up to throw out mail ballots and jam vote counts. Meanwhile, Walmart, foreseeing looting and civil unrest, as a “precautionary measure” has pulled guns and ammunition off the sales floors of its stores.

In answer to Trump's “law and order” campaign, Democratic standard-bearer Joe Biden calls to shoot “rioters” in the leg (he just did it again) while his running mate, Kamala Harris, brags she was California's former “top cop.” Biden & Co. seem to be sleepwalking through the campaign, holding no mass rallies, no door-



Internationalist contingent at May Day march in New York City, 2018.

to-door canvassing, encouraging mail ballots, relying on huge TV ad buys while Trump dominates social media. The Dems figure that anger over Trump's COVID-19 denial and revulsion against the racist misogynist president will be enough to win. They're appealing to people yearning to return to “the way things used to be,” with nothing for workers who still haven't recovered from the depression following the 2008 crash.

Repugnance for the immigrant-bashing, woman-hating, fascist-loving white supremacist in the White House who is running for reelection as president of the Confederate slavocracy is utterly justified. Trump's victory is a threat to the entire black population of the U.S., even as cynical millionaires like 50 Cent and Ice Cube back him. But the Democrats, the party that has led every major war U.S. imperialism has

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In Wake of Upsurge Against Racist Cop Terror

Democrats' Pro-Cop Ticket Vies with Trump Over “Law and Order”

SEPTEMBER 18 – So this is what “democracy” looks like, USA-style, as election season enters its final stretch: a hellscape for the oppressed, workers and youth. Just being black can get you killed by the racist cops, as we keep seeing day after day. Amid unending fear of catching the coronavirus, the threat of mass evictions looms. If you're not already one of the millions of workers who have already lost their jobs, there's the constant worry that you could be next. In Wisconsin, anti-racist protesters are gunned down by a white-supremacist vigilante. And now much of the West Coast has gone up in flames, literally.

It's not an apocalyptic movie out of Hollywood – it's what the “death agony of capitalism” looks like in 2020.¹ Forty years ago, when voters were given the “choice”

in the 1980 presidential elections between a reactionary, segregationist Democrat and a reactionary, openly racist Republican – both of them virulent anti-labor warmongers – the newspaper then representing revolutionary Marxism headlined: “Reagan, Carter? Oh Shit!”²

Today, after four more decades of capitalist decay, what is the “choice” being presented? On one side is Donald Trump, the vicious bigot, racist inciter and grifter who (as both liberals and old-line conservatives decry) has made the Republican Party his own. On the other is Joe Biden, the segregationist, saber-rattling Democrat who fueled mass incarceration. An example that says it all: when Trump threatened anti-racist protesters by tweeting “when the looting starts the shooting starts,” Biden's response was that instead of shoot-

ing people in the heart, cops should “shoot them in the leg.”

With the choice for Biden's running mate of Kamala Harris, California's former “top cop” (her words), the Democrats are putting forward an ostentatiously pro-police ticket. They are vying with Trump for who can best uphold the “law and order” of racist U.S. capitalism. They are going all out to line up with the Pentagon brass dissed by Trump along with U.S. imperialism's intelligence apparatus. And they pitch themselves as the more consistent warmongers against China, Russia and – of course – North Korea.

Far from a surprise, what we're witnessing anew is how this Wall Street party “for the people” operates. After millions come out in the streets demanding an end to police terror; after “progressive” Democrats (and their echo chamber on the reformist left) work overtime to channel protest into calls for “defunding” the cops;

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¹ *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, known as the “Transitional Program,” is the founding document of the world party of socialist revolution established by Leon Trotsky in 1938.

² The headline is from the 25 July 1980 issue of *Workers Vanguard*; published by the then-revolutionary Spartacist League. The WV of that era was the forerunner of *The Internationalist*.

As U.S. Convulsed Over Racist Police Murder

SL Silence = Capitulation to the Democrats

OCTOBER 2 – Decaying American capitalism is mired in deep crisis. In the half-year since mid-March, 200,000 people have died of COVID-19, the worst plague in a century, due to the inability of the U.S. medical system to protect the population. Since April, over 50 million people have lost their jobs, and now temporary layoffs are becoming permanent unemployment. For more than four months, the country has been in uproar over the unending pandemic of racist police murder: 1,235 civilians killed by cops so far in 2020 (as of September 29), 760 since George Floyd was asphyxiated in Minneapolis in May.

On top of this, we are now deep into a putrid election campaign in which the Democratic and Republican parties vie over who can best carry out racist repression, imperialist aggression and the continued political subjugation of the workers and oppressed. The Democrats have answered mass protest against cop terror by presenting the “law and order” ticket of Joe “Shoot ‘Em in the Leg” Biden and Kamala “Top Cop” Harris. Exploiting mass revulsion against Donald Trump’s bigotry and threats, they have gone into overdrive to line up labor, black people, Latinos and youth behind the pro-cop duo. Most of the left goes with the flow. For those who lay claim to the program and heritage of revolutionary Marxism, the onslaught of bipartisan capitalist reaction makes more urgent than ever the fight for the political independence of the working class.¹

So who has been fighting *against* the Democratic Party and its “left” adjuncts’ attempts to channel outrage over racist repression into bourgeois politics and fakery about “reforming” the police, and fighting *for* a revolutionary workers party? The Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International has done so since Day One of the current wave of anti-racist protests, in our press, in polemics, placards and banners, in chants and speeches in mass marches. See, for example, our articles “To Uproot Racist Oppression: Socialist Revolution” and “Abolish the Police’ Under Capi-

¹ See “Democrats’ Pro-Cop Ticket Vies with Trump Over ‘Law and Order’” (bottom of page 1 of this issue).



Internationalist contingent in in Brooklyn in June 19 march against racist police violence.

talism?” in *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020; and “Only Revolution Can Bring Justice!” in *Revolution* No. 17, August 2020).

Contrast this with the Spartacist League, which once upheld revolutionary Marxism (and still claims to do so today) but has had *nothing to say* about the momentous events convulsing U.S. society. Activists familiar with the U.S. left keep asking us: What on earth is going on with the SL? How is it that their shameful silence continues month after month? There is talk of a faction fight, but that is hardly an excuse for the sepulchral silence from the moribund SL. Politically, their absence from the battlefield destroys any remaining pretense of providing leadership, much less revolutionary leadership. These ex-Trotskyists *turn their backs on youth seeking to fight racist oppression*. The latter-day SL provides *no opposition to the Democratic Party*. On its epitaph, we can read: *when the U.S. blew up over racist cop murder, they did nothing*.

Back in June we wrote:

“Amid the most massive protest movement in decades, as it has continued week after week, the Spartacist League has not published a paper, put out a leaflet or posted a single statement on its

website on the killing of George Floyd or the mass protests against racist police terror. And this despite the fact that the core issue posed is black oppression, which the SL, from its inception, crucially emphasized as key to proletarian revolution in the citadel of imperialism. Their silence speaks volumes: the SL’s abject abdication is a *declaration of political bankruptcy*.”²

That was more than three months ago. Since that time, the SL/U.S. still has not uttered a peep. That certainly takes some doing, given the intensity and importance of political events throughout this period. In rare encounters with downcast SLers who go through the motions of sheepishly peddling months-old issues of their paper, a few have now ventured a new claim: that marching with revolutionary slogans (including, prominently, “Democrats are the bosses of the racist killer cops”) in mass protests against racist police terror means backing the Democrats. They are drilled to repeat this cynical sophist blather to justify failing to fight bourgeois politics. *So where were you, SL, when Democrats were misleading millions into a dead-end, with a little help from their friends on the opportunistic left?* Answer: the SL was AWOL.

How has the Spartacist League abdicated the elementary duty of even the pretense of putting forward a revolutionary position? Let us count (just some of) the ways. Since the May 25 cop murder of George Floyd this has included:

- Silence on the continued protests against police terror and racist “justice” in the cases of Breonna Taylor, David McAtee, Jamel Floyd, Jacob Blake, Dijon Kizzee and innumerable others, all in cities governed by Democrats. *The SL has not had a word to say on any of this.*
- The occupation of Minneapolis and other cities by the National Guard, called

² “Silent Amidst Mass Upsurge Against Racist Oppression: Spartacist League Declares Bankruptcy,” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020.

in by Democratic governors, together with Democratic mayors, bringing massive police repression to bear against anti-racist protesters from Rochester to NYC to Chicago to Portland, Los Angeles and innumerable other cities across the country. *Ditto*.

- Murderous provocations by racist and fascist groups in Portland, Oregon and in Kenosha, Wisconsin, where a racist vigilante murdered two anti-racist protesters and wounded a third. *Ditto*.
- Trump’s military mobilization against anti-racist protesters in Washington, D.C.; federal “snatch squads” and occupation forces in Portland; a federal kill squad’s blatant assassination of an anti-fascist activist from Portland. *Ditto*.

- Amidst the mass protests, concerted efforts by the Democratic Socialists of America and innumerable reformist leftists to snare newly politicizing youth via illusions in “defunding” the police (or “abolishing” capital’s repressive forces under capitalist rule). *Ditto*.

- As election season has heated up, the Democrats have escalated saber-rattling threats and provocations against the Chinese deformed workers state, while lining up support for Biden-Harris among the military and intelligence “community,” including talk of the armed forces intervening if Trump tries to steal the election. *Ditto*.

As we noted in our June article, the SL has been undergoing yet another phase in its endless internal crisis. Is its paralysis partly the result of the downward spiral of its ever more wacked-out internal life? No doubt about it. Does its utter incapacity to respond to what’s happening in the real world outside its endless internal fever dream display stunning incompetence by its leadership, and the emptiness of their claims to be building a revolutionary party? Self-evidently.

But the root of it all is politics. The SL’s inability to put forward a class program to fight racist capitalist repression is there for all to see. As we have detailed in prior articles, this comes on top of one capitulation after another to “their own” imperialist bourgeoisie, as they have embraced nationalism and outright chauvinism.³ From the SL’s vile “anti-American” baiting of the Internationalist Group for our Leninist call to defeat U.S. imperialism in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars (2001-2003); to its social-imperialist support for Democrat Barack Obama’s invasion and occupation of Haiti (2010); to its grotesque opposition to calls to “Let Refugees In” (2017); to its silence amid mass anti-racist protests sparked by the cop murder of George Floyd and its utter prostration in the face of the Democrats’ and reformist left’s drive to herd workers and youth into the “law and order” campaign of Biden-Harris today, *the politics behind the SL’s months-long silence is capitulation to the Democratic Party of U.S. imperialism*. ■

³ See, for example, “As ‘Chauvinist Hydra’ Devours SL/ICL: Some History Ex-Trotskyists Would Like to Keep Hidden,” *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020.

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Police State Portland Cops and Feds Get Out!

Mason Trinca for The New York Times

Trump and Democrats Assault Protesters

Federal agents emerge from the boarded-up federal courthouse in Portland, Oregon, in the early morning hours of July 21, seeking to intimidate and disperse protesters against racist police brutality. The protests only grew larger.

PORTLAND, Oregon, July 21 – Unidentified federal agents in unmarked vans cruising city streets, kidnapping protesters to haul them in for “questioning.” Others shooting unarmed protesters in the face with impact munitions. Feds holed up in a boarded-up U.S. District Court, firing through peepholes cut in the plywood that covers doors and windows, periodically charging out to attack protesters with tear gas. City police outfitted in camouflage, riot gear and gas masks, tossing flash-bang grenades and firing plastic bullets, working in tandem with the feds. This scene that could be from a film about some U.S.-backed Latin American military junta has been playing out in real time on the streets of Portland for days, as federal paramilitary forces and city cops have sought to intimidate protesters against racist police brutality – to no avail.

The feds’ provocative tactics and police-state measures have stoked massive opposition, here and nationally. As outraged protests grew into the thousands, the mayor, governor, both U.S. senators from Oregon and virtually every other local and state official called for the federal forces to leave Portland. The state attorney general filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other federal agencies for violating constitutional guarantees. Acting DHS chief Chad Wolf retorted that “I don’t need invitations by the state, state mayors, or state governors,” adding that the feds were staying, “whether they like us there or not.” Next up: with 150 federal agents poised to go to Chicago, Trump yesterday took aim at New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore and Oakland, California, “all run by liberal Democrats.”

The pyromaniac in the White House is throwing fuel on the fire, overtly seeking to provoke explosions of unrest as an election tactic, in order to pose as the “law-and-order candidate.” He wants to frame the vote as Trump vs. antifa. This is the sequel to his attempt to impose martial law in Washington, D.C., in the first days of June.¹ Yet at that same time, Democratic mayors decreed curfews and Democratic governors mobilized National Guard units to put down protests over the racist police murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis cop on May 25. The bipartisan repression backfired, as Black Lives Matter marches grew and spread spectacularly. Now, once again, after Trump denounced protesters as “anarchists and agitators” on Sunday, on Monday thousands converged on downtown Portland, led by a “Wall of Moms”: “I am the face of anarchy,” said one grandmother defiantly.

Trump’s use of his Gestapo of secret police forces, assaulting protesters to sow terror, is an ominous threat to the democratic rights of all. It is a major step toward the imposition of direct military/police (“bonapartist”) rule. But while Democrats pose as heroes of the “resistance,” the reality is that the vast majority of the thousands of arrests and innumerable brutal beatings of protesters in the last few weeks have been carried out by police forces under the command of Democratic mayors and governors. The Democrats threaten lawsuits and legislation, but that won’t stop Trump and his stormtroopers. The Internationalist Group calls for *workers strikes and mobilizations together with all the oppressed, against racist repression and martial law threats*. In the present sharp crisis, the IG and Class Struggle Workers – Portland raise the call: **“Cops and feds get out!”**

¹ See “Trump and Democrats Stage Ominous Trial Run for Martial Law,” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020.

“This Is What a Police State Looks Like”

For the past 54 days and nights, protests against police terror have shaken downtown Portland. Across the U.S., millions have joined in Black Lives Matter marches in at least 2,500 cities and towns (see “To Uproot Racist Oppression: Socialist Revolution,” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020). In Portland, where police have a history of working hand in glove with fascist groups like Patriot Prayer and even have officers who have celebrated Nazi war criminals, the repression has been particularly vicious. Cops fired gas grenades against anti-racist protesters so wantonly that Democratic mayor Ted Wheeler, who is also in charge of the Portland Police Bureau (PPB), was nicknamed “Tear Gas Teddy.” Just about everyone wanted him gone.

But after demonstrators on June 13 tore down a statue of Thomas Jefferson in front of the high school bearing his name in an historically black neighborhood of north Portland, and then on June 18 toppled a statue of George Washington, racist Republican president Donald Trump set his sights on the city. Ranting about “anarchists and left-wing extremists,” Trump signed an executive order on June 26 announcing his intention to prosecute “desecration” and “vandalism” of federal property and monuments. The next day, federal officers in camo with military-style helmets showed up at the federal courthouse, next to the Justice Center, site of the Portland Police Bureau and Multnomah County Jail, where protesters have been rallying for weeks. The feds’ provocative presence stoked further protests.

On July 4, as Oregon Public Broadcasting (19 July) reported: “After more than a month of police using tear gas, impact munitions and flash bang devices to disperse enormous crowds and largely nonviolent demonstrations, the protesters on Inde-



Following the racist cop murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, there were massive “Black Lives Matter” marches in Portland that have continued ever since. Above: July 10 demonstration against racist police brutality outside the Multnomah County jail and Portland police headquarters.

David Killen / The Oregonian

pendence Day had a fireworks display of their own.” After cops shot randomly into the crowd, volleys of fireworks were fired at the “Justice Center” and courthouse, which “had come to represent everything the demonstrators were protesting: racism, police brutality and an unjust criminal justice system.” In the following days Portland was flooded with police from the DHS and other federal agencies, including the Federal Protective Service, U.S. Marshals Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.), and the paramilitary Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC).

Using graffiti on federal buildings as an excuse, federal officers have been running amok in downtown Portland. A video shows heavily armed men in fatigues jumping out of an unmarked van and nabbing a suspected protester. A woman cries out, “Who are you? Use your words.” Silence. “I was terrified,” Mark Pettibone told the *Washington Post* (17 July), saying he “did not know whether the men were police or far-right extremists” who often don military gear. *The Nation* (17 July) reported that the kidnapers were from BORTAC. A few days earlier, federal officers were caught on video shooting 26-year-old Donovan La Bella directly in the head with a “less-lethal” projectile, fracturing his face and skull and requiring him to undergo surgery. And on July 18, a video showed U.S. Marshals beating and pepper-spraying a stoic Navy veteran, Chris David, 53, who wanted to ask them why they were violating their constitutional oaths.

Voices of the capitalist establishment complained that this slap-dash army was not trained in crowd control. Yet their purpose was not to “control” protesters but to terrorize and provoke. The sight of snatch squads in unmarked vans tooling around town abducting protesters recalls the Argentine military junta in the 1970s, as it dispatched green Ford Falcons without insignia or license plates to grab leftists off the streets. *This is what a police state looks like.* And it’s not new. For years I.C.E. cops have prowled immigrant neighborhoods across the U.S. in unmarked vans, hauling off detainees in unmarked buses for deportation. (The Nazis deported people in box cars.) *For the 15 million undocumented immigrants and their families living and working here, the U.S. was already a police state under Democrat Barack Obama . . . and continues to be so today.* Now the rest of the population is getting a taste.

But the feds have a little problem: the fascist-infested Portland police have used such tactics so often in the past that they

have ceased to intimidate. As a freelance journalist who had reported from Iraq and is now tracking the far right in Portland commented: “nobody is scared of the cops anymore. At a certain point of being subjected to police flash bangs and gas, you stop fearing it” (“50 Nights of Unrest in Portland,” *New York Times*, 18 July). Asked if the image of feds in unmarked vans, “which feels so nakedly authoritarian,” was “the purest example of American militarized policing” or “something different,” the journalist, Robert Evans, replied: “It’s something different. . . . Portland is being used as a bellwether to see what this administration can get away with. And also what works to quell protest. The police tactics don’t work.”

A spokesman for the Oregon chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) said the same: “I think Portland is a test case . . . they want to see what they can get away with before launching into other parts of the country.” Portland is just the most recent instance. In June, heavily armed police in Columbus, Ohio, were filmed tossing an arrested protester into an unmarked van (*Raw Story*, 25 June). Key to this operation is cooperation with the local police. While Mayor Wheeler pretends the city is not cooperating with the feds, the PPB said it provided “help” to federal officers on the night of La Bella’s shooting, and police chief Chuck Lovell “confirmed the two forces share real-time plans with one another,” sometimes pushing demonstrators down parallel streets (*The Oregonian*, 19 July).

For Labor/Black/Immigrant Mobilization Against Racist Cop Terror

Chapman Square is surreal. Federal agents emerge at night from the barricaded federal court building to fire tear gas into the crowd, stand around for a while like ghosts in the darkened park, then retreat as hundreds cheer. “Feds Gas Moms & Dads” read the headlines (*Portland Mercury*, 21 July). Along with the several hundred moms in yellow t-shirts, many with helmets, masks and goggles, PDX Dads now bring leaf-blowers to clear tear gas. PPB police cover their name tags with tape bearing city personnel numbers, supposedly to prevent “doxing” of officers (actually to make it difficult to sue them). City cops and feds justify attacking journalists and legal observers on the grounds that their presence makes clearing the area “complicated.” A livestreamer is disappeared. DHS chief Wolf responds to “feds out”: “If we



Ted Wheeler/Twitter

Portland mayor Ted Wheeler and commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty in January 2019. Wheeler unleashed the police who repressed protesters following the murder of George Floyd while Hardesty initiated the curfew to squelch protests.

left tomorrow they would burn that building [their bunker] down.” Maybe.

Wolf complains that federal agents are getting bad press: “These police officers are not stormtroopers, they are not the Gestapo.” (Kind of like Richard Nixon declaring, “I am not a crook.”) Meanwhile, liberal columnist Michelle Goldberg asks in today’s *New York Times*, “Can we call it fascism yet?” This is a common liberal/reformist conception, applied to any particularly repressive regime. But as Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky underlined in “Bonapartism and Fascism” (1934) and other writings on Italy and Germany, fascism is a movement based on the ruined petty bourgeoisie, or middle classes, from which Mussolini recruited his black-shirt thugs and Hitler his Nazi brown-shirt squads. Pinochet’s Chile or Franco’s Spain, on the other hand, were bonapartist military dictatorships based on the capitalist state apparatus.

It’s not just a matter of definitions: behind labeling Trump an actual fascist lurks the political program of forming an “anti-fascist” *popular front* chaining workers and the oppressed to a wing of the bourgeois ruling class. In the U.S., various Stalinists and social democrats, each in their own way, are looking to the Democratic Party, or sections of it. The Democratic Socialists of America jump right in, running for election as Democrats, while the eccentric, Maoist-derived “Revcom” personality cult and its Refuse Fascism front group, with their calls to “drive out the Trump/Pence regime,” want to hook up with wayward liberal Democrats. Yet not only are Democratic mayors “the bosses of the racist killer cops,” as we have emphasized, but Democratic administrations have done as much or more than Republicans to beef up the police apparatus, while basing their “resistance” largely on appeals to the U.S. military and intelligence apparatus.

For decades, in and out of the White House, Democrats have been key to ramping up the forces and powers of the central apparatus of reactionary repression (which the fascist groups work to augment): the capitalist state. Barack Obama greatly expanded the Border Patrol and I.C.E. immigration cops, while the 1994 Clinton-Biden “Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act” created the COPS program, which has funneled \$30 billion to local police (and Clinton’s 1033 program provided them with billions more in

military equipment). In the guise of “community policing” and fighting “terrorism,” the Democrats are directly responsible for the cop infestation of African American and Latino neighborhoods and militarizing the police. And most Democratic Senators voted for the 2002 Homeland Security Act that Trump is using as the “legal” basis for sending in the feds.²

The actual fascist groups in the U.S. today are relatively small and populated with bizarre figures (“Baked Alaska,” “Based Stickman”), compared to the mass fascist militias of the 1930s. But fascist/ultra-rightist forces have been emboldened by Trump and often (like the III Percenters) interpenetrate with police forces, which are shot through with fascistic elements prominent among cop “unions.” Moreover, the marauding feds with their snatch squads send a signal to their fascist auxiliaries. As U.S. capitalism’s “triple pandemic” of the deadly COVID-19 plague, mass joblessness and racist police murder intensifies, with tens of millions set to lose supplementary unemployment benefits, there is a potential for explosive social struggle, but also for sharply increased repression. The federal body snatchers could soon appear in a city near you. The outcome depends on the political program of those who seek to wage effective struggle against the reactionary onslaught.

Everywhere and always, the key is to **fight for working-class independence**. This means: **kick cop “unions” out of the labor movement**. Police are not workers but the armed fist of the ruling class, professional strikebreakers and enforcers of racist capitalist “law and order.” It means: **break with the Democrats**. Today Democrats are cynically posing as staunch defenders of the protesters. Mayor Wheeler called the feds “uninvited, untrained, and unwelcome.” Governor Kate Brown’s spokesperson called the arrests by federal officers “a violation of their civil liberties and constitutional rights.” Oregon Attor-

² Having failed to get the Pentagon brass to go along with invoking the 1807 Insurrection Act, Trump is using that law for his police-state measures. Under 40 U.S. Code § 1315, the Secretary of Homeland Security can use DHS personnel and deputize other “officers and agents” to “make arrests without a warrant for any offense against the United States” or for “any felony cognizable under the laws of the United States.” All they have to do is claim reasonable suspicion. Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton, Chuck Schumer and Ron Wyden all voted for that law.



Feds fire tear gas at crowd besieging their bunker on July 21. Portland cops have used gas and flash bang grenades so often while defending fascists that protesters are no longer intimidated.

Noah Berger / AP

Now Even More Police Are Occupying Portland

PORTLAND, Oregon, August 3 – After weeks of nightly attacks on anti-racist protesters by paramilitary forces operating out of the barricaded U.S. District Court here, on July 29 Oregon governor Kate Brown announced that a deal had been reached with the Trump administration for a phased withdrawal of federal forces it had sent to the city. However, later that day, the acting secretary chief of the Department of Homeland Security Chad Wolf told the media that the feds would remain in Portland for now, and on August 1 President Donald Trump tweeted that DHS would stay “until local police complete cleanup of Anarchists and Agitators!”

The racist-in-chief had dispatched more than 100 federal agents to suppress Black Lives Matter demonstrators who have protested daily in Portland since the May 25 police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Portland Police Bureau cops repeatedly attacked protesters with baton charges and tear gas, so much so that a federal judge issued an injunction against the PPB gassing demonstrators. Far from ensuring “law and order,” the feds went on a rampage, gassing, pepper-spraying, beating and firing impact munitions at demonstrators and abducting protesters in unmarked vans (see “Police State Portland: Cops and Feds Get Out!” *The Internationalist*, 21 July). By now so much gas has been discharged that the city Bureau of Environmental Services is investigating whether it has contaminated the water system.

The supposed “deal” with Washington stipulated that “crowd control” in the squares in front of the federal court, city/county “justice center” and federal office building would be taken over by state police. But although Governor Brown claims that the feds have “withdrawn,” Portland mayor Ted Wheeler declares himself “excited” to move on, the police chief Chuck Lovell says this should be viewed as a “victory,” and the bourgeois establishment media sees “an opportunity to close this chapter,” there is no evidence that the feds gone away. On the contrary, Portland is now occupied by the PPB police, Multnomah County Sheriff’s deputies, Oregon state police, and federal forces including Border Patrol and I.C.E. (Immigration and

Customs Enforcement) tactical squads, U.S. Marshals and the Federal Protective Service.

After a last violent foray by the feds storming out of their boarded-up fortress on Tuesday, June 30, for the next three days police presence was limited at the nightly demonstrations which continued to number over 1,000. On Saturday evening, partly in response to Trump’s declaration that the feds would be staying, over 2,000 showed up. Supporters of the Internationalist Group, Class Struggle Workers – Portland and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth had a contingent at the meet-up point for the protest at the Salmon Street Fountain, where there was a drumline and some speakers. As a sales team circulated through the crowd, we met members of the Pipefitters, Iron Workers and AFSCME, which had called for a “union bloc.” We also met up with IA-TSE (stage hands) members who have been livestreaming from the protests.

As the demo kicked off, we marched to the courthouse, chanting “Only revolution can bring justice,” and “Break with the Democrats, build a workers party.” Police were conspicuously absent on the west side and the feds hid out in their fortress. However, reports began flooding in of cops macing and pepper-spraying protesters at the Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office in East Portland. In addition, Portland and Oregon state police were circling on their riot vehicles. These “Ninja Turtle” vans are outfitted with running boards holding up to two dozen cops with riot shields and batons, ready to hop off on signal to start beating protesters. The state version resembles the “Black Maria” vans used by U.S. police in the 1920s. They have been repeatedly used to try to intimidate demonstrators protesting fascist provocations in Portland.

There has been some falling out in the Wall of Moms, who marched away from the demo early on. The WOMs in their yellow t-shirts have been lionized by the media as shielding BLM protesters. No longer, it appears. The dispute is reportedly over setting up a 501(c)(3) non-governmental organization for fundraising and a 527 Political Action Committee (referred to by their IRS tax code numbers). It’s all

ney General Ellen Rosenblum accused the Trump administration of choosing Portland “to use their scare tactics to stop our residents from protesting police brutality and from supporting the Black Lives Matter movement” (*The Oregonian*, 18 July). These bourgeois politicians must think Portlanders have a short memory.

In the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder, it was Wheeler and his rabid PPB cops who went after protesters with batons, tear gas, rubber bullets and flash-bang grenades. The violence was so bad that Jami Resch had to resign as police chief and a federal judge issued an injunction limiting the use of gas. Last summer, Wheeler requested National Guard troops be deployed to Portland against anti-fascist protesters, but was denied. Last weekend, City Commissioner

Jo Ann Hardesty, the former president of the Portland NAACP, held a candlelight vigil and called on the mayor to put her in charge of the police. Yet it was Hardesty who initiated the curfew to squelch protests in May: “As the acting president while the Mayor was out of town last night, I was the one to call for a curfew this weekend” (*The Oregonian*, 31 May). And it was Governor Brown who sent the National Guard to Portland to quell protests in June. **Looking to these Democrats or other capitalist politicians is a recipe for defeat.**

The *class-collaborationist* politics of the popular front always spell defeat because they serve as a *barrier to class struggle* and a *roadblock to the struggle for revolution*. Yet only a socialist revolution can bring justice and put an end to racist cop ter-



Internationalist Group, Class Struggle Workers – Portland and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth at August 1 protest against cop/fed occupation.

ror. Democrat or Republican, PPB or DHS, the state with its forces of repression and the politicians who lead them are *class enemies*, wholly invested in maintaining capitalism’s racist killing machine. While defending anti-fascist against the bourgeois forces (and their reformist camp followers) who demonize them, Trotskyists emphasize that mass action by working people and the oppressed is necessary to stop the fascists and thwart bourgeois state repression. We call for *labor/black/immigrant mobilization* against cop terror and to stop deportations. To protect against racist/fascist threats and attacks, class-struggle militants should initiate the formation of *workers defense guards*.

Picket at Whole Foods Over Ban on Anti-Racist Buttons

On Sunday, August 2, a walkout and picket was initiated by Whole Foods employees over retaliation against employees wearing buttons with anti-racist slogans. Class Struggle Workers – Portland attended the picket in solidarity with Whole Foods workers, giving their picket a boost. Workers chanted, “We refuse to live in fear, racism has no place here!” The last half is a slogan printed on company-issued buttons, which employees are now being disciplined for wearing! Around the U.S., Amazon (which owns Whole Foods) has banned employees from wearing anything with the slogan “Black Lives Matter.” So much for cynical corporate BLM messaging.

Workers spoke out about their working conditions, citing racism on the part

of management, lack of safety, stress, and Amazon’s decision to eliminate hazard pay for their grocery employees who are still working on the front lines during a pandemic. Workers remembered co-workers who have lost their lives to COVID-19, stressing the need for sanitation and safety practices. The picket continued with chants against Amazon owner Jeff Bezos, the richest man in the world, as well as “Defend Black Lives, Now’s the time to Unionize!”

CSWP supporters spoke in solidarity, stressing the importance of forming a union and bringing out the rest of the labor movement to defend future pickets. We highlighted the need for workers to not look to the National Labor Relations Board, an agency of the bosses’ government, or the capitalist Democratic Party, but to rely on their own power and organization. As Sunday afternoon shoppers arrived, picketers chanted “Loyal to the workers, never to the boss, a picket line means do not cross!” alerting arriving customers that the store was being picketed.

The walkout and picket was an important step for Whole Foods/Amazon workers who have been working under tremendous pressure and are in desperate need of some relief. Drawing the fight against racism together with the fight for a union, these workers are struggling on the front lines of labor. ■

resolved in August 2016, on a motion put forward by supporters of Class Struggle Workers – Portland, that the union “does not support the Democrats, Republicans or any bosses’ parties or politicians,” and that “we call on the labor movement to break from the Democratic Party, and build a class-struggle workers party.” The same union, a week after the election of Donald Trump, noted that “there has been a sharp increase in racist and anti-immigrant attacks across the country in recent days,” and resolved that it “stands ready to join with the community in mobilizing against the clear and present danger that the KKK and other racist organizations pose to us all.” That call for independent working-class mobilization points to the road forward today. **Cops and feds, get the hell out of Portland!** ■

Cops Shoot Jacob Blake in the Back, Shackle Him to Hospital Bed Anti-Racist Protesters Murdered by Fascistic Gunman

Cops, Feds and Fascists Unleash Racist Terror in Kenosha, Wisconsin

For Mass Worker/Black/Immigrant Action!

A slightly abridged version of this article was issued as an Internationalist Group leaflet on August 29.

AUGUST 28 – Shot repeatedly in the back by the cops, Jacob Blake lies paralyzed in his hospital bed after being gunned down in the streets of Kenosha, Wisconsin. His “crime”: barely escaping death at the hands of the racist police who shot him on August 23. And like an escaped slave, the wounded 29-year-old black man was then shackled by ankles and wrist to his hospital bed, as his captors inflicted more racist torture on him. Only after his father’s denunciation of this barbarity did the cops uncuff Blake, whose spinal cord was severed as at least seven bullets fired at his back.

Then, two nights after the racist maiming of Jacob Blake, anti-racist protesters in Kenosha were confronted by National Guard troops, BearCat armored vehicles, city police, county sheriffs, and armed white racists of a fascistic local militia group brandishing semi-automatic rifles. Kyle Rittenhouse, 17, who was with the militia and had been greeted by the police, shot and killed anti-racist protesters Anthony Huber and Joseph Rosenbaum, and seriously wounded medic Gage Grosskreutz. We say: **Cops, Feds and Fascists, Out of Kenosha!**

Despite millions marching in the streets, day after day, night after night, in Black Lives Matter protests across the U.S. this summer, **racist police repression just won’t stop.** To fight it, we urgently need to bring out the power of the multiracial working class. The Internationalist Group calls for **mass worker/black/immigrant action against racist terror.** And that’s only the first step. The fight to unchain that vast potential power must lead to and be part of the struggle to end, once and for all, the subjugation of the exploited and oppressed to the parties, politicians and institutions of this racist capitalist system. **For black liberation through socialist revolution!**

Deadly Racist Rampage

The scenes from Wisconsin bear witness to one more deadly rampage of white-supremacist terror. In Kenosha, the young white killer proclaimed himself to be a back-up to the official forces of “law and order” – that is, of racist repression. And it was those forces that, once again, had shot down an African American for existing while black.

Almost three months to the day since George Floyd was choked to death on May 25 by a Minneapolis cop, the Kenosha, Wisconsin police cut down Jacob Blake. Seeking to de-escalate a dispute on the street, he was tasered by police. As he opened the driver-side door of his car, where his three sons – ages 3, 5 and 8 – were sitting, officer Ruseten Sheskey fired seven bullets at his back. Now paralyzed from the waist down, Blake’s liver and kidney were damaged, and nearly his entire colon and small intestine were removed. Yet another black man marked for death U.S. capitalism’s racist repressive forces, Jacob Blake may – unlike George Floyd and so many others – survive lynch-law “justice.” Right now he is fighting for his life.

Dozens of Kenosha residents gathered at the scene of the police crime on August 23 to protest the racist shooting. Later that night, demonstrators took to the streets of the city of 100,000, a former auto industry hub on Lake Michigan south of Milwaukee. They marched on a police station, where a dump truck had been parked to block access, setting the truck on fire along with a truck parked outside a courthouse. Police fired off tear gas and rubber bullets. The Democrat-controlled city government, headed by Mayor John Antaramian, who has held the job for a total of 20 years, declared a state of emergency. A racist curfew was imposed. Democratic governor Tony Evers deployed 125 troops of the Wisconsin National Guard on August 24, doubling the

number to 250 the next day and again to 500 by Wednesday, August 26.

Outrage and indignation at the new racist atrocity swelled. Professional athletes took the lead. On the night of August 26, players from the Milwaukee Bucks refused to participate in their National Basketball Association (NBA) playoff game. Players from the Oklahoma City Thunder, Houston Rockets, Portland Blazers and Los Angeles Lakers struck in solidarity. All three Women’s National Basketball Association games, three Major League Baseball games and five Major League Soccer games were postponed as well. Japanese tennis champion Naomi Osaka, whose father is Haitian, withdrew from her match. The next day, the New York Mets and Miami Marlins walked off the field, leaving a Black Lives Matter t-shirt on home plate, and the National Hockey League postponed playoff games. The impact of this solidarity by striking professional athletes is huge. Billionaire sports franchise owners stand to lose big bucks if high-profile playoff games are postponed, especially after months of inactivity due to the pandemic.

Above all, what’s urgently needed is to mobilize key sectors of the working class, whose labor makes the entire U.S. economy run. That includes fighting for **workers strikes against racist police terror**, as the Internationalist Group has advocated during the mass upsurge of past months. On Juneteenth (June 19), the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) provided a taste of that power by shutting down all 29 U.S. West Coast ports (plus ports in Canada) against police brutality and systemic racism. In 2011, Wisconsin unions brought out tens of thousands in daily marches against Scott Walker’s union-busting law, only to have the labor bureaucracy call off the struggle in favor of voting for Democrats. Today Wisconsin labor must use its power, along with Midwest industrial unions (UAW, electrical workers), the ILWU and other dock and transport unions (ILA, Teamsters, TWU, ATU), municipal (AFSCME) and service employees (SEIU) and teachers to spark powerful **strike action to shut U.S. cities down.**



Jacob Blake with one of his sons.

Fascistic Militias Aid Cops, Guard and Feds

As of today, nearly 1,000 National Guard troops, including from Arizona, Michigan and Alabama, and over 250 federal agents have been deployed to Wisconsin by Donald Trump, with the agreement of Democratic Wisconsin governor Tony Evers. Despite the foam-flecked diatribes of the bigot-in-chief about Democrats supposedly being soft on anti-racist protesters, it is the Democratic mayor who presides over Kenosha police and who imposed the racist curfew, and the Democratic governor who brought in the National Guard. This is what happened in one city after another as anti-racist protests flared in May and June.

By the second night of the Kenosha protests, on August 25, the fascistic militia group Kenosha Guard had put out a literal call to arms on Facebook: “Any patriots willing to take up arms and defend out [sic] city tonight from the evil thugs?” Another post from the group that night addressed Kenosha Police Chief Daniel Miskinis: “We are mobilizing tonight and have about 3,000 RSVP’s.... I ask that you do NOT have your officers tell us to go home under threat of arrest as you have done in the past.” One user identified himself as a “state officer” with the fascistic Three Percenters Original (TPPO) militia



Protesters face off against National Guard behind fence in front of courthouse in Kenosha, August 25.

Kamil Krzaczynski / AFP



Racist vigilante Kyle Rittenhouse (left) with fascist militia members in Kenosha on August 25, before he murdered Anthony Huber and Joseph Rosenbaum during Black Lives Matter protest of shooting of Jacob Blake.

group, attempting to coordinate with the Kenosha Guard. In the Stand Up Kenosha Facebook group, another rallying point for armed reactionaries, posts included directives to “start busting heads” and to “shoot to kill folks.”

Shoot to kill is exactly what 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse of Antioch, Illinois did. Claiming to be “defending property,” on August 25 the self-proclaimed police supporter shot three anti-racist protesters, killing Anthony Huber, 26, and Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, both of whom leave children behind. Video footage shows Rittenhouse with a group of armed men, about 15 minutes before the first shooting. Far from telling them to go home, police in armored vehicles give the group some bottles of water and tell them “we appreciate you guys, we really do.” Six minutes later, Rittenhouse fires four shots at Rosenbaum, who is unarmed, striking him in the head as Rosenbaum tries to take away the gunman’s rifle. Fleeing the scene, Rittenhouse is chased by a group of protesters. Anthony Huber with his skateboard tries to stop the racist killer. Rittenhouse then fires four shots, hitting Huber in the chest and Gaige Grosskreutz in the arm.

Police in armored vehicles stationed one block away looked on as Rittenhouse calmly walked toward them. Bystanders called out that Rittenhouse had just shot

people, but cops drove right by him. It was only the next day that he was arrested, in Illinois. Fascist groups and fascist right-wing militias often act as auxiliaries to the police – as has been the case in Portland, Oregon. The day before Jacob Blake was shot in Wisconsin, Portland cops watched as Proud Boys and Patriot Prayer fascists and armed militias assaulted antifascist demonstrators (after which federal agents pushed the leftists out). Even bourgeois media have documented an increasing presence of such groups within the police and armed forces. Rittenhouse is a former youth cadet of the Grayslake, Illinois police department, which “offers participants from ages 14 to 21 ‘the opportunity to explore a career in law enforcement’ through ride-alongs with officers on patrol and firearms training, according to since-deleted pages on its website” (*Washington Post*, 27 August).

Like Ricky Best and Taliesin Myrdin Namkai-Meche, murdered by a Nazi in Portland in 2017 as they came to the aid of two young black women, and Heather Heyer, the anti-racist protester murdered by an Ohio Nazi in Charlottesville, Virginia not long after, Anthony Huber and Joseph Rosenbaum join those who have been murdered for standing up against fascist and white-supremacist rampages in recent years. To defend themselves, workers and the

oppressed cannot look to the official forces of state repression that gun down black people almost daily while protecting and often working with racist vigilantes. As for calls by Democratic liberals for “gun control,” this slogan was coined to prevent black people from defending themselves against racist terror. As revolutionary Marxists, we uphold the **right of armed black self-defense** and have called for the formation of **workers defense guards**, based on the mass organizations of the working class, against racist and fascist threats.

Solidarity with Anti-Racist Protesters!

In the wake of the horrifying racist shooting of Jacob Blake, and the killing of anti-racist protesters in Kenosha, scattered solidarity actions have taken place so far in New York, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Oakland and elsewhere. Yet these do not even begin to approach the scale of protests in May and June after Minneapolis police murdered George Floyd. Why not? Because the Democrats worry they would be vulnerable to Trump’s claims that they allow “anarchy” in the cities they govern. With the objective of “getting out the vote,” their organizational apparatus has sought to channel protest into “Commitment March 2020,” on the anniversary in Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1963 March on Washington. Official civil rights groups and ministers told marchers that voting to remove Trump is “the first step toward a solution” (*New York Times*, 28 August).

Yet the events of this past week have shown once again that it is the Democrats who are the bosses of the racist killer cops in nearly every major U.S. city, who unleash violent repression against those who protest the endless police terror. Now two of the most blatantly pro-cop politicians on the national stage, Joseph Biden and Kamala Harris, are the Democratic “law-and-order” duo vying for the White House. Together they have a record of locking up black people and blocking school integration that outstrips even the likes of Donald Trump. The segregationist Biden opposed school busing in the 1970s and crafted the 1994 crime bill that turbocharged the mass incarceration of African Americans and Latinos. Kamala Harris spent her days as San Francisco district attorney locking up black people, and as California’s attorney general fought to make sure they stayed behind bars, despite evidence of their innocence.

The triple pandemic of economic crisis, COVID-19 and incessant racist police murder casts a stark light on the fact that ruling class of this country is increasingly desperate to maintain its decaying social order. Both Republicans and Democrats have decided that this means increasing reliance on the forces of repression to head off and suppress unrest, rebellion and revolt. **Capitalism is killing us.** To defend our lives and the most basic rights of all, to unchain the power of the working class in the fight against racist repression, is it urgently necessary to **break with Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist parties and politicians! Build a revolutionary workers party to fight for a workers government! Only revolution can bring justice!** ■

Democrats...

continued from page 1

after these same “progressives” fall in line behind the upcoming nominee – the result is *the most ostentatiously pro-cop Democratic ticket in decades.*

With this latest round in the Democrats’ endless cycle of deception and demobilization of mass protest, drawing the lessons is a life-and-death question, now more than ever. Facing accumulating dangers, in order to defend their most urgent needs, rights and interests, workers and the oppressed need to unchain their class power. To do this, they need to break free of the bourgeois politics and politicians that subjugate them to this dying system. For labor, African Americans, Latinos and other doubly oppressed groups, as well as youth, the central mechanism that U.S. capitalism uses to divert and bury mass struggles has long been the Democratic Party. The basic principle of Marxist politics is the political independence of the working class from the bourgeois ruling class. In the U.S., this means concretely to break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties and forge a **revolutionary workers party** that fights for a workers government. That is the only genuine choice today. But you won’t find it on the ballot.

Trump Runs Against Antifa, Biden Against COVID-19

Breaking from the Democrats means seeing through Donald Trump’s unhinged press conferences and egomaniacal Twitter outbursts to discern the underlying continuity his presidency represents. Virtually every one of the sitting president’s policies has direct antecedents in the Obama administration, which vigorously prosecuted whistleblowers, lavished Wall Street with billions in bailouts, deported over 5 million undocumented immigrants, built migrant detention cages, and maintained secret kill lists (including names of U.S. citizens), all while delivering more than a billion dollars of military-grade equipment annually to local police departments. Upon leaving office in January 2017, the last Democratic administration bequeathed a legacy of ramped-up repression that the current White House has continued with its trademark ranting, bluster and open incitement of racist violence and vigilantism.

The racist-in-chief’s erratic, polarizing style has ripped the veil of respectability from U.S. bourgeois democracy. In the process, he has openly appealed to groupings the bourgeoisie keeps in reserve to supplement its central, official forces of repression, including fascist and out-right fascist elements. His campaign has made overt and explicit a series of racist themes that Democrats themselves have long exploited with a wink and a nod. Whereas Hillary Clinton inveighed against “super-predators,” while Biden opposed desegregation in the 1970s and now lectures audiences on who is really black, Trump has once more made overt racist fear-mongering the centerpiece of his campaign strategy.

As for a platform, on the eve of its bizarre national convention the Republican Party declared that it wouldn’t adopt one – instead it just pledged to “enthusiastically” support Donald Trump. Over the past weeks, Trump has been running against “antifa” and “anarchist jurisdictions” in Democratic cities (where, as we



Internationalist Group, Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and Transport Workers Against Racist Police Terror at downtown Los Angeles protest against the shooting of Jacob Blake, August 29.



Joe Biden and Kamala Harris launch their presidential campaign, August 12, wrapping themselves in the flag.

have underlined, the Democrats are in fact the bosses of the racist cops that Trump is praising to the skies). And, oh yes, Trump is also running on not being Joe Biden. For his part, Biden is running against COVID-19, and not being Donald Trump.

As was the case when Warren Harding promised a “Return to Normalcy” in his 1920 presidential campaign, the Biden campaign is running on thinly veiled nostalgia for pro-business social and political stability. In the Democrats’ bleak vision, the only choice for capitalism’s victims is to knuckle under and “vote blue no matter who,” even if it means strengthening the very institutions – like the police – that keep them at the bottom of society.

Known for his phony “Lunchbox Joe” shtick and hokey, fake-blue-collar, regular guy pose, Biden 2020 barely bothers to pretend to offer the working class anything. He mouths platitudes about “building back better,” even though workers’ discontent with the way things were paved the way for Trump.³ Throw in a pledge to favor a \$15 minimum wage, and promises to tinker with the tax code in favor of “Buy American” protectionism – in line with the anti-China drive, and echoing Trump’s poisonous economic nationalism – and that’s pretty much it.

The Democrats’ first-ever virtual convention was a veritable celebration of “moderate” Republican policies and politicians, even showcasing Ohio’s Republican ex-governor John Kasich. When so-called progressives did surface, as Bernie Sanders did on the first evening, it was to grovel for “unity” around the party’s right-wing pitch. The party’s message to its liberal/“progressive” wing is clear: you did your job to rope people in – now you get zero, or more precisely a minute and a half for Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez at the convention show.

Figuring that voters will support Biden simply because he isn’t Trump, the Democrats have refused to give ground to even the most modest demands of anti-racist protesters. “Defund the police”? As more police shootings of black men, like Jacob Blake in Kenosha, ignite fresh waves of protest, Biden and Harris denounce Trump for “calling for cutting half a billion dollars in local

law enforcement.” Meanwhile, they claim the protests are really for “accountability and consequence for anyone who breaks the rules or breaks the law” (*ABC News*, 23 August).

Biden-Harris: Blue Through and Through

Presenting two virulently pro-cop, lock-’em-up politicians who have inflicted untold misery on African American, Latino and poor people in the name of “law and order” is a deliberate choice for the Democrats as they seek to outdo Trump in order to regain the White House. In the Democrats’ 2020 campaign, “voting blue” means going for candidates whose careers have been based on identification with capitalism’s blue-uniformed enforcers. The idea that racist oppression can be fought by backing them is worse than a sick joke – it is a sinister and dangerous deception.

Joe Biden’s selection as the Democratic nominee was due not to his mediocre political skills, but to his staunch support for the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state at a time of accelerating social instability. His decades-long “service” in government is punctuated with paeans of praise to the police, together with demands to “crack down” on the “crime problem.” Numerous articles and videos feature his racist rants in the Senate calling to “lock the S.O.B.s up” as he pushed for the sweeping 300-page crime bill he helped write in 1994.

The infamous 1994 Clinton-Biden law provided billions of dollars to fund new prisons and police officers, expanded the racist death penalty and instituted a new “three-strikes” provision mandating life sentences. Among its blatantly racist provisions was criminalization of “gangs,” leading to “gang data bases” used to indiscriminately repress black and Latino youth, and much stiffer penalties for crack-related offenses than for “regular” cocaine. Writing in 1994 from Pennsylvania’s death row, former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal aptly dubbed Biden’s pet project a “Death Bill,” warning that it constituted a “declaration of war on black men.”⁴

The escalation of that war in the 1990s was not a coincidence. Emboldened by the 1989-92 counterrevolutions in the Soviet Union and East Europe, the triumphal U.S. imperialist rulers launched a major social offensive backed by bloody state repression. Over the next 20 years, Democratic and Re-

⁴ “Voting for Your Own Repression,” reprinted in *Writing on the Wall: Selected Prison Writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (2015).

publican administrations took turns gutting social welfare programs and trapping millions of African Americans and Latinos in a mass imprisonment system. And for students and large numbers of poor people, Biden promoted the draconian 2005 bankruptcy “reform” bill ensured that they would remain in perpetual servitude to the banks.⁵

As for “foreign policy,” pitched as Biden’s strong suit, he continued to support the imperialist slaughter in Iraq long after the public soured on it. As Barack Obama’s vice president, he was co-responsible for continuing that war, for the ongoing colonial occupation of Afghanistan, for the U.S. terror-bombing of Syria, and for deadly drone strikes from the sky, from Pakistan to Yemen and Africa. Together with Obama he helped ramp up the military/spy apparatus, internationally and domestically. Now, as the Democrats hail the FBI, CIA and NSA – U.S. imperialism’s blood-soaked Murder Inc. – many military and security bigwigs return the favor. “More Than 70 Republican Ex-National Security Officials Endorse Joe Biden,” reported the Huffington Post (22 August).

Biden’s vaunted friendships with notorious Jim Crow Dixiecrats – he gave a eulogy for arch-racist Strom Thurmond – are well-known.⁶ This was no quirk – Biden went all-out to show that he is himself a segregationist, systematically carving out a profile as “a leading opponent of integrating schools through busing in the 1970s and the 1980s” (*New York Times*, 28 June 2019), when racist mobs were rampaging against it.⁷ Biden even warned that non-“orderly” integration would lead to his children growing up in “a racial jungle.” Last year, Kamala Harris made headlines when she went after him on his anti-busing record in a primary debate face-off. Reminded of this last month, she cynically laughed it off, saying: “It was a debate!”

Class Collaboration’s Fatal Logic

So while many organizers of Black Lives Matter protests this summer urged people to vote (Democratic) in November, this is what they get: a “shoot ’em in the legs” segregationist for president and a “lock ’em up” top cop for veep. Yet at a time when revolutionary working-class opposition has never been more urgently needed, much of the “left” is pulling in the opposite direction, once again lining up behind the Democrats. It’s what they do, and they do it over and over.

The characteristic “fight the right” pitch of the former Soviet-line Communist Party USA, which has regularly backed Democrats since Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936, sets the pattern. Echoing it are other open

⁵ This “Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention” law made it “vastly more difficult for struggling former students to rebuild their lives by discharging [school loan] debts.” Representing Delaware, where many of the largest financial corporations are headquartered, Biden’s relationship with the credit-card giant MBNA (now part of Bank of America) was so close that in 1999 he felt compelled to state: “I’m not the senator from MBNA” (“How Biden helped create the student debt problem he now promises to fix,” *Guardian*, 2 December 2019).

⁶ See, for example, “‘Segregationist’ barely begins to describe the racist Dixiecrats that Joe Biden worked with in the Senate,” *Washington Post*, 23 June 2019; “Joe Biden didn’t just compromise with segregationists. He fought for their cause in schools, experts say,” NBC, 25 June 2019.

⁷ See “How Joe Biden Became the Democrats’ Anti-Busing Crusader,” *New York Times*, 15 July 2019.

proponents of Stalinist popular-frontism like the Maoists of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (“Trump Must be Defeated,” friso.org, 7 September) and the Revolutionary Communist Party, a/k/a revcom.us, Refuse Fascism, The World Can’t Wait, etc.⁸ Whether it’s sold as antiwar, antifascist, anti-racist or anti-Trump, the political thrust behind these appeals – to build class-collaborationist popular fronts with “progressive” Democrats – is shared by most of the left.

Calling to “drive out” Republican administrations – and install Democratic ones – has for years been a calling card of the RCP. While it is an increasingly odd personality cult around its vacuous leader Bob Avakian, its appeals for “unity” (against Bush-Cheney, against Trump-Pence, etc.) are common ground for reformists and the liberals they yearn to unite with. To maintain a minimal pretense of being “communist,” following CPUSA tradition the RCP used to avoid overtly calling to vote Democrat. But now the RCP has replaced the wink-and-nod approach with an open call by Avakian for “actually voting for the Democratic Party candidate, Biden, in order to *effectively vote against Trump*” (revcom.us, 1 August, emphasis in original).

To justify backing back Democratic architects of imperialist war, racist cop terror and mass imprisonment, they argue that with Trump in office the U.S. is ruled by “a fascist regime.” If this were true – which it is not, otherwise revcom (and the rest of the left) would be behind bars – it would be *even more dangerous and absurd* to pretend that you can fight fascism by backing a bourgeois “lesser evil.” In 1932, the German social democrats did just that, and the candidate they voted for (General von Hindenburg, army chief in World War I) promptly turned power over to Hitler. Such class collaboration, formalized in “popular fronts” in which social democrats and Stalinists bound the exploited to their exploiters, literally led millions to their death.

Today, the largest forces on what passes for a left in the United States are those that built their brand by backing Bernie Sanders for the Democratic nomination. In doing so, they went all out to channel youth and dissatisfied working people into the Democratic Party. Now, as foretold (not least by Sanders himself), their hero is all in for Joe Biden. Some are still working hard to unsee or deny it all. Yet the plain fact is that boosting Sanders “socialism” fed right into the mechanisms that the Democratic Party has traditionally used to subordinate labor and the oppressed to capitalist rule. Come November, their “political revolution” means aiding their hero “Bernie” in once again handcuffing social movements to the “establishment” pols they railed against last Spring.

Going with the Flow for Joe

Quite a few supposed Marxist groups sought ever-new opportunist pretexts for their yearning to get a piece of the Sanders action, helping him market illusions in reforming U.S. imperialism’s Democratic Party. Putting the small fry aside, the Democratic Socialists of America now claiming 70,000 members (up from a nominal 6,500 pre-Trump). Having done the donkey work of knocking on doors and stuffing en-

⁸ Chiming in with the Stalinists is the deeply Stalinophobic League for the Revolutionary Party, which displays its complete demoralization by beseeching people to vote Biden-Harris, in line with its terminal project of “rethinking voting for capitalist parties.”

velopes for Sanders in the primaries, after he dropped his campaign in April the DSA tweeted: “We are not endorsing Joe Biden.”⁹ But, of course, the absence of a formal endorsement hardly means that the DSA has somehow come to see the light about class independence against bourgeois politicians.

Naturally the DSA’s super-star, Democratic congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez announced: “In November, I’m going to be voting for Joe Biden.” So, too, DSA Democratic state senator Julia Salazar said months ago that she will “vote for the Democratic candidate,” adding: “I think a lot of DSA members will too” (*Queens Daily Eagle*, 20 April). That comes with the territory of being bourgeois politicians. But aside from the media stars in its firmament, how does the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America go with the flow for Joe while kinda-sorta claiming not to? For starters, in the massive BLM marches, it pushed the hype about “defunding the police” in order to join in with and strengthen its ties with liberal Democrats on the local level.

There’s also what this outfit of tens of thousands of activists nationwide is *not* doing. Ask yourself, where are the mass protests demanding continuation of the \$600-a-week supplemental employment insurance, which kept the DSA’s millennial base afloat through the George Floyd protests and whose cutoff threatens to sink them (and innumerable others) with unpayable rent and student loans? There aren’t any. Why? Because the Democratic Party wants things chill for the elections. Instead they want you to e-mail, Facebook message and fill the Twitter feeds of your Congresspeople with appeals to approve the Democrats’ HEROES Act. Meanwhile, they are out canvassing to send DSA Democrats to Congress and to elect “socialist squads” of Dems in city council elections.

Back in 2016, while not formally “endorsing” Hillary Clinton, the DSA said that “in swing states where we have the capacity to make an impact” it expected chapters to focus on “Dump Trump” campaigning (dsausa.org, 16 August 2016). Growing rapidly through the Sanders campaign, the rejuvenated DSA moved ever deeper into Democratic politics. Basking in the 2018 election of AOC, it has run ever more so-called socialists on the Democratic ticket. Now that Bernie is ancient history, some DSAers try to bury themselves in local “base-building” or “mutual aid.” Here and there, some have opted for a bourgeois protest vote for the tiny Green Party, but not in a swing state where they could be accused of being spoilers for Trump.

Despite the qualms and collectively holding their noses, plenty of DSAers are now openly lining up behind Biden, as the DSA’s *Jacobin* (August 2020) gives helpful hints on how Biden could “win big” and not “screw this up.” DSA apparatchik David Duhalde (a top honcho in Sanders’ Our Revolution operation) noted that while “defeating Trump” in the election “does mean a President Joe Biden,” in fact “Biden likely doesn’t want our public support” (*In These Times*, 17 June). But as the DSA’s Metro DC chapter wrote: “The DSA Isn’t Endorsing Biden. That Doesn’t Mean Their Members Can’t Work for Him” (*Washington Socialist*,

⁹ This evoked an embittered scolding from some former Students for a Democratic Society leaders, calling on the DSA to “face facts,” follow Sanders’ lead and “work hard to elect” Biden (“Open Letter to the New New Left from the Old New Left,” *The Nation*, 16 April).

Democrats’ Response to Protests Against Racist Police Abuse The Rap Sheet of “Top Cop” Kamala Harris

Kamala Harris, the senator and former state attorney general from California, is a fitting vice-presidential choice for a Democratic Party “law-and-order” campaign. Born to Jamaican and Indian immigrants, she became a prosecutor in 1990. For the next 27 years, Harris dedicated herself to putting people behind bars, and particularly to keeping them there. Endorsed by the San Francisco police and deputy sheriff “unions,” in 2004 she was elected San Francisco District Attorney running on a “tough on crime” platform against the incumbent DA, Terry Hallinan, who was from a prominent SF “progressive” family. (He was a member of the Communist Party’s W.E.B. DuBois Clubs, his father Vince ran for U.S. president in 1952 for the CP-backed Progressive Party.)

Then, from 2011 to 2017, Kamala Harris was California’s “top cop,” as she herself put it. In these days of bourgeois identity politics, Harris is billed as representing women, black people and Asians, yet her career was based on unleashing the terror of the capitalist criminal “justice” system against black people, poor people and those doubly and triply targeted by capitalist oppression. Today she paints herself as a “progressive” supporting bail reform, but as SF DA she fought to *increase* bail costs, saying “people come to San Francisco to commit crimes because it is cheaper to do it.”¹ She has said she opposes the death penalty, but as state AG, she defended California’s death penalty even after it was ruled unconstitutional by a federal court.

From putting trans women in male prisons, where they are subject to sexual assault and even murder,² to enforcing brutal mandatory sentencing minimums, to evading even token calls for requiring body cameras for police or a special prosecutor to investigate deadly police shootings, Harris carefully cultivated her “tough on crime” reputation. She took the lead in championing California’s grotesque 2011 truancy law, which punished poor parents, largely black and Latino, with steep fines and jail time if

¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/kamala-harris-supported-raising-cash-bail-costs-district-attorney-2004-2019-3>

² In 2013, Carmen Guerrero, a trans woman, was bound, gagged, tortured and murdered by her cellmate in a California state prison (NBC News, 6 December 2019).

June 2020). For opportunists, double-talk is the name of the game. But the DSA is and always has been Dems.

The Only Choice: Build a Revolutionary Workers Party

The deepening decay of capitalism in the United States and internationally has brought us to the 2020 triple pandemic of coronavirus, economic crisis and racist police terror. Now bourgeois politicians, along with their leftist enablers and apologists, are trying to shove the “choice” between two virulently pro-cop tickets down our throats: Trump, the embodiment of capitalist rot, or Biden, the same-old, same-old Cold War relic – pick your poison. This horror show was prepared by



Kamala Harris, then California attorney general, with Long Beach police chief Jim McDonnell (left), Los Angeles police chief Michel Moore, and Los Angeles interim county sheriff John Scott.

their children missed too many classes. Today Harris says she’s for marijuana reform, but during her stint as the state’s chief “law enforcement” officer, more than 1,500 Californians were jailed for marijuana-related offenses.

Kamala Harris is the very embodiment of prosecutorial abuse. She wrote in her campaign memoir, *The Truths We Hold* (2019), “America has a deep and dark history of people using the power of the prosecutor as an instrument of injustice.” She added: “I know this history well – of innocent men framed, of charges brought against people of color without sufficient evidence, of prosecutors hiding information that would exonerate defendants, of the disproportionate application of the law.” Yes, she knows it well, because she was a prime perpetrator.

The following are just some of the examples of what this meant:

- In 2010, a state supreme court judge slammed the SF DA’s office for violating defendants’ constitutional rights by withholding information about a crooked drug lab technician. As a result, 600 drug cases were dismissed.

- Then, as state attorney general, after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that California’s prisons were so overcrowded that it violated the Constitutional prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment, her office fought against releasing prisoners who were eligible for parole, citing a need for cheap prison labor (the state uses inmates to fight wildfires for \$2 a day).³

³ “Kamala Harris’ AG Office Tried to Keep Inmates Locked Up for Cheap Labor,” *Daily Beast*, 11 February 2019.

- Harris’ office fought for years against the release of Daniel Larsen, sentenced to 28 years to life for supposed possession of a concealed weapon, after his innocence was determined by the Innocence Project, a judge and an appeals court, and after he was finally released, fought against him being compensated for wrongful imprisonment.⁴

- And then there is Kevin Cooper, who, as Judge William Fletcher of the U.S. Court of Appeals Ninth Circuit wrote, “is on death row because the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department framed him.”⁵ Harris now says she supports obtaining advanced DNA testing of evidence used to convict him, a black man, of a quadruple murder that the sole survivor said was committed by three white men. But as California AG she refused to order the testing which could prove the innocence of Cooper, who has spent 35 years on San Quentin’s death row.⁶

The nomination of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris is the Democrats’ answer to the mass movement against racist police terror, as they seek to show that they are the best and most effective enforcers of capitalism’s murderous “law and order” repression. ■

⁴ See “When Kamala Was a Top Cop,” *The Atlantic*, 28 August 2019, and “‘Top Cop’ Kamala Harris’s Record of Policing the Police,” *New York Times*, 9 August 2020.

⁵ Nicholas Kristof, “Was Kevin Cooper Framed for Murder?” *New York Times*, 17 May 2018.

⁶ See “Protesters Warn of San Quentin Prison Death Trap,” *Revolutionaries in the Class Struggle*, 15 May.

decades of defeats of a labor movement saddled with a pro-capitalist bureaucracy that chains the unions to the Democrats; by endless imperialist wars abroad and ramped-up state repression “at home”; and by the mechanisms of control and cooptation of any movement that could even potentially pose a challenge to the rulers’ profits and domination.

The crisis of working-class leadership is acute. To face the accumulating crises and fight for a genuine way forward for those whose labor really is essential for society to function, it is vital to unmask and politically defeat all those who call on the working people yet again to back the very forces and parties – the capitalist duopoly of Democrats and Republicans that has governed the Unit-

ed States for a century and a half – whose misrule has created this horrendous situation.

The potential power of the multiracial, multiethnic working class is immense. The task of genuine Marxists is to help it attain the class-consciousness and organization needed to bring that power to bear in defense of all the oppressed, to break from and *defeat* the parties of racist cop terror, poverty and war. Basing ourselves on the program of Lenin and Trotsky, the Internationalist Group says that the answer to the parties of bankrupt U.S. imperialism is to undertake the difficult job of building the nucleus of a workers party to fight for a workers government and international socialist revolution. For those on the receiving end of bourgeois “law and order,” it’s the only choice. ■

Mobilize Workers Action Against Racist State Terror!

Los Angeles: Outrage Against Murder of Dijon Kizzee

LOS ANGELES, September 6 – On August 31, 29-year-old Dijon Kizzee was gunned down in a hail of bullets to the back after being stopped by sheriff’s deputies in Westmont, for supposedly riding his bike in an “illegal manner.” The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department claims they opened fire when they spotted a gun drop to the ground with a bundle of clothing Kizzee had been carrying. Their “case” amounts to an assertion that if a black man *had* a gun – even if he no longer has it – that justifies summary execution.

But eyewitnesses report that there was no gun at all. “He never had the gun. He had no gun. They said they heard a gun fall. What fell was his cellphone,” said Deja Roquemore, who witnessed the shooting,” reported KABC Eyewitness News (1 September). Planting a weapon on a victim would be nothing new in the history of the racist capitalist state, particularly in L.A. It is doubly unsurprising when it involves the LASD, which brutally lords it over the oppressed black and Latino population of those parts of South Los Angeles outside the jurisdiction of the equally brutal Los Angeles Police Department. In the 1990s, the CRASH anti-gang unit of LAPD’s Ramparts Division became notorious for unprovoked beatings, shootings, extortion and planting false evidence, while the elite SIS (Special Investigation Section) acted as a virtual “death squad.”

The day before the murder of Dijon Kizzee, a whistleblower’s testimony surfaced, shedding more light on a murderous gang within the LASD’s Compton station called the “Executioners,” which recruits members based on their “success” in committing racist murders in the streets (Spectrum News, 30 August). In this report, the June 18 murder of 18-year-old security guard Andres Guardado was identified as having been committed by “prospects” of this sheriff’s gang who were “chasing ink” (that is, seeking to get their Nazi-inspired deputies gang membership tattoo). Guardado was down on his knees with his back to the sheriff’s deputies when they shot him five times in the back in broad daylight.

Some have illusions that the announced federal inquiry will clean up the Compton sheriff’s station and make its officers “accountable.” Yet under the Democratic administration of Barack Obama, federal investigations were launched into the police departments in Baltimore, Chicago, Ferguson, Missouri, and other cities, but the murderous racist actions of cops across the country didn’t change one bit. And remember that under the infamous COINTELPRO program the feds declared war on the Black Panther Party, murdering at least 38 Panthers, among countless others.

Louisville, Minneapolis, Kenosha, Syracuse, L.A.: the racist police murder machine doesn’t stop. This summer, millions of people took to the streets in Los Angeles and across the U.S. to protest racist police brutality. Yet as of September 4, U.S. police have killed 1,471 civilians this



Dijon Kizzee

year, 619 of them since George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis cop on May 25. In those three months, LASD deputies shot and killed *Robert Avitia, Robert Colvin, Jarrid Hurst, Michael Thomas, Andres Guardado, Terron Jammal Boone* and now *Dijon Kizzee* (listed by attorney John Raphling on Facebook).

The police continue their endless racist killing spree year after year with near-total impunity. They think they can get away with murder, and they do. Police, sheriff deputies, prison guards and security guards, courts and jails are key parts of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state to “serve and protect” the ruling class and enforce its laws against the mass of workers and oppressed. Racist terror has been part and parcel of this task ever since American capitalism was formed on the basis of genocide against the Native American population and chattel slavery of black Africans. That heritage continues today in the form of the racist death penalty, mass incarceration and cop terror in the streets.

The Police Can’t Be Reformed – Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The black ghettos and Latino barrios of Los Angeles facing brutal racist terror by the police and sheriff paramilitary forces can become a powder keg of explosive righteous rebellion, as they have in the past (Watts, 1965; Rodney King, 1992). But what was the response of the ruling class? It brought in the National Guard and federal troops to suppress those rebellions. The bourgeoisie will stop at nothing to defend the forces whose job is to guard the profits they squeeze out of poor and working people. To have a positive outcome, the

pent-up anger and mass outrage must lead in the direction of socialist revolution. That requires mobilizing the power of the multiracial working class on a class-struggle program, starting *NOW*.

The Internationalist Group calls for *labor/black/Latino/immigrant mobilization against police terror*. On May Day 2015, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in the Bay Area shut down the Port of Oakland and led a march of thousands to City Hall demanding “Stop Police Terror.” Local 10 also stopped work to protest the police murder of Oscar Grant in 2010 and the slap-on-the-wrist verdict for the killer cop. And this past June 19 (Juneteenth), the ILWU shut down all West Coast ports, from San Diego to Canada and Alaska, denouncing police brutality and systemic racism. The ILWU can play a key role in



Internationalist Group and Transport Workers Against Racist Police Terror march in September 5 protest in South L.A. against cop murder of Dijon Kizzee.

L.A. today – the port of Los Angeles/Long Beach is only a few miles from where Dijon Kizzee was murdered.

Yet many liberals and pretend-socialists seek instead to divert struggles against cop terror into the dead end of trying to reform the unreformable police. They promote the dangerous illusion that somehow the enforcers of capitalist “law and order” can be made “accountable” to the “will of the people.” This summer, that was reflected in calls to “defund” and even “abolish” the police under capitalism. Recently in L.A. this has been seen in calls for “community control” of the police/sheriff’s department. The Coalition for Community Control Over the Police calls for “Local city and county governments should amend their respective charters to grant external civilian oversight bodies to make disciplinary, budgetary, hiring and firing decisions.”

Hasn’t happened, won’t happen, even though calls for “community control of the police” have been bandied about by liberals and leftists since the 1960s. Above all, the idea that the ruling class – the capitalists and their politicians – would let those whom the police are intended to repress control the repressors shows a fundamental (and in the case of would-be socialists, willful) misconception of the nature of the capitalist state. As Friedrich Engels explained in 1885, the state consists of special bodies of armed men, prisons, courts and other coercive institutions to defend the ruling class. And as Lenin elaborated in *The State and Revolution* (1917), “A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power. But how can it be otherwise?”

How about electing sheriffs? This happens all across the U.S. Anyone who thinks that makes any difference can just look at the racist sheriff Joe Arpaio in Maricopa County, Arizona, who was elected again and again. Or look at Cowitz County, Washington, where the elected sheriff sent scores of deputies in riot gear and an armored car with a gun turret against ILWU members and supporters blocking a train during the 2011 strug-

Internationalist photo

gle against the scab EGT terminal (see “Showdown on West Coast Docks: The Battle of Longview,” *The Internationalist* supplement, January 2012). Or look at Los Angeles County, where Sheriff Alex Villanueva (elected in 2018) simply refused to appear before the toothless Civilian Oversight Commission this May.

So how about black police chiefs, or women police chiefs? In Minneapolis, a black police chief was in charge when George Floyd was killed. He followed a Native American woman chief, who was in charge when Jamar Clark was killed. As we wrote in an article about the Socialist Alternative (SAIt) city council member Kshama Sawant in Seattle, who voted for black woman police chief Carmen Best:

“Since ghettos and barrios across the country erupted against racist police terror in the 1960s, the ruling class has allowed some black faces in high places, insultingly hoping this could piece off the black population that continues to face cop terror. This racist repression goes on today, regardless of whether the person heading up the institution enforcing it is black, a woman, or both. Just look at Baltimore, where there was a black woman mayor and black police chief, and almost half the cops on the force were black, when the police murder of Freddie Gray shook the city and the country.”

–“SAIt’s Sawant Backs Seattle’s Top Cop,” *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018

Chief Best had to resign in August after the explosion of protests against the racist repression by her cops. Yet SAIt has the gall to call for community control of the police, to claim that cops are workers rather than hired guns of the bourgeoisie, and to defend the presence of cop “unions” in the labor movement, so long as they pretend to be anti-racist – which the cops naturally refuse.

Another group active in protests is the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), which also calls for community control of the police. The PSL gives this a more leftist veneer, writing in an article titled “How will the police be abolished? A Marxist perspective” (*Liberation*, 11 July) that the police are one of the core institutions of the capitalist state, that can’t be reformed and “must be abolished by means of a revolution.” Right. But then these pseudo-Marxists turn around and say, “We support the demand of oppressed peoples for community control” because it represents a “progressive yearning,” even though “every scheme to put the police under ‘civilian’ or community control ... has never been even partially won and implemented in the United States.”

So rather than saying forthrightly that calls for “community control of the police” are a liberal diversion, the PSL embraces the demand because it’s popular, while adding that, by the way, it’s not real. The PSL article also has a lengthy justification for its longstanding call to “Jail Killer Cops.” We have explained that, while these racist murderers surely belong behind bars, for leftists to promote the illusion that the state will jail and convict its innumerable killer cops expresses confidence in the capitalist courts. How bourgeois rulers can coopt this demand, attempting to defuse protests and direct them into pressuring the state, was shown when the Democratic mayor of Minneapolis quickly ordered the arrest of the cop who killed George Floyd, and the Minnesota attorney general then ordered

Defeat Uber and Lyft Bosses’ Prop 22 in California!

California is the land of propositions, which purport to allow “the people” to vote on laws, as if under capitalism the ruling class won’t run and rig the vote. While on occasion some limited reforms may be passed, more often the rulers use propositions to get popular “approval” for reactionary attacks on workers, black people and immigrants. In the 1990s, reactionaries pushed through a racist triple whammy, with **Prop. 187** in 1994, which sought to exclude undocumented immigrants from schools; **Prop. 209** in 1996, which banned affirmative action for women and racial/ethnic minorities in education; and **Prop. 227** in 1998, which effectively banned bilingual education. A generation earlier, in 1978, **Prop. 13** wrote strict limits on property taxes, the main source of revenues for public schools, into California’s constitution. Together these propositions were a massive attack on the right to quality education for all.

This year there is a new reactionary proposition on the ballot. A vote of national importance for the working class is **Proposition 22**, which is written on behalf of the bosses of the Uber, Lyft, Doordash and Instacart “app-based” taxi and delivery companies. The measure would roll back AB5, a California law enacted last year that required app-based employees to be given the same rights and protections as any other workers under the labor laws (see “Finally! California AB5 Law Says App-Taxi Drivers Are Workers,” *Internationalist* No. 58, Winter 2020). **Prop. 22** is a naked cynical attempt by the gig economy bosses to maintain the scam that their millions of employees are “independent contractors,” so that they can continue to dictate low pay and miserable working conditions. **Vote No on Prop 22!**

• Other propositions on the California ballot where we recommend a position are:

Proposition 20 is supported by the cops – if passed it would eliminate the right of parole for many prisoners and require DNA collection for certain misdemeanors. **No on 20!**

• **Proposition 15** is a partial rollback of the 1978 Prop. 13, which led to huge cuts to education and social services. Prop 15 would allow big commercial properties to be taxed at current market values. If passed it would increase funding for community colleges and public school districts, though charter schools would also get money. We say: No to charter schools, but **Yes on 15.**

• **Proposition 16** would repeal Prop. 209 that banned affirmative action. **YES on 16.**

• **Proposition 17** gives the right to vote to those who have finished their prison term but are on parole. Prisoners and convicted felons should have full voting rights. **Yes on 17.**

• **Proposition 18** allows 17-year-olds to vote in primaries and special elections if they will be 18 at the time of the next general elec-

tion. We’re for lowering the voting age to 16, so **Yes on 18.**

• **Proposition 21** allows local governments to adopt rent control on a greater number of housing units. **Yes on 21.**

• **Proposition 23** calls for increased staffing and higher standards for dialysis clinics, which are a vital lifesaving treatment for workers and poor people. **Yes on 23.**

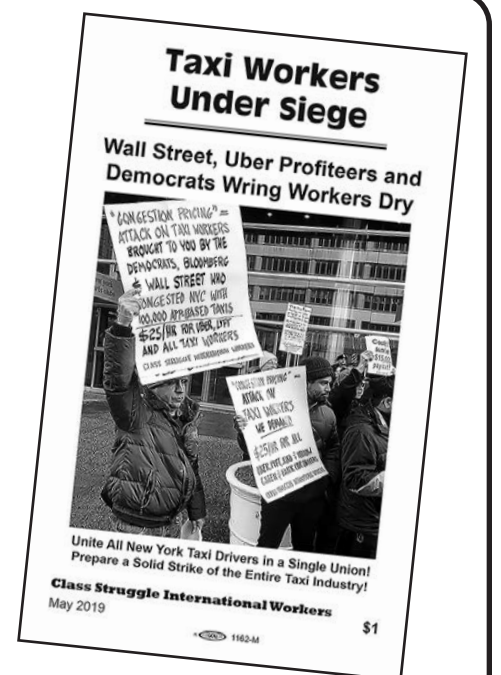
Voting down Prop. 22 will stave off the attack by billionaire “gig economy” employers, but securing labor rights will require an intense unionization drive. This, together with the fight for quality education, housing and health care for all, and to put an end to the racist system of capitalist injustice, will never be solved through the ballot box – what’s needed is hard class struggle leading to a socialist revolution that will establish a centralized planned economy. ■

Order Now!

Taxi workers in New York and around the world are being bled dry. In New York City a number of drivers have committed suicide. Class Struggle International Workers has published this 48-page pamphlet analyzing “Uber-Exploitation,” the “Medallion Taxi Racket” and their links to Wall Street and the Democrats. It presents a class-struggle program to unite all sectors of this fragmented industry in an all-out battle against capital.

US\$2 (includes postage)

Order from/make checks payable to: Mundial Publications, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, New York 10008, U.S.A.



him tried for homicide. We say *there is no justice in the capitalist courts.*

Meanwhile, with its Mao-Stalinist style “mass line,” the PSL calls demonstrations (as in Philadelphia on June 6) to “defund the police.” This is tailing after and promoting the masses’ illusions, which bind them to the capitalist politicians and parties. Nowhere in the PSL article is the Democratic Party even mentioned, although “progressive” Democrats and their hangers-on, such as the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) – which has long called for community control of the police – have been working overtime to divert the protests into safe electoral channels. In contrast, the IG said straight-out that calls to defund/disarm/abolish the police are “Opportunist Word Games to Justify Tailing Democrats” (“Abolish the Police? Under Capitalism?” *The Internationalist*, July 2020). Real Marxists tell the truth to the masses.

The Democrats are all over these protests. When in the wake of the police shooting of Jacob Blake professional basketball teams in the NBA playoffs refused to take the court in protest and threatened to boycott

the rest of the season, Barack Obama personally called LeBron James and other influential players to convince them to return to the courts. While Democratic Rep. Maxine Waters made her celebrity appearance at a protest following the murder of Dijon Kizzee, the Democrats are, literally, “the bosses of the racist killer cops” in L.A. and nearly every major U.S. city. Now “two of the most blatantly pro-cop politicians on the national stage, Joseph Biden and Kamala Harris, are the Democratic ‘law-and-order’ duo vying for the White House” (“Cops, Feds and Fascists Unleash Racist Terror in Kenosha, WI,” *The Internationalist*, 28 August).

We in the Internationalist Group call to **break with Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist parties and politicians.** Amid the orgy of racist police murder, as pandemic capitalism has thrown masses of poor, black, Latino and immigrant families into total financial ruin and a tidal wave of evictions looms, many can see that *capitalism is killing us.* The fight must be to *raise the consciousness* of the working class to the need to mobilize its power in defense of all of the oppressed: for **labor/black/Latino/im-**

migrant mobilization against racist attacks, deportations and evictions; to occupy unoccupied hotels, luxury apartments and second homes of the rich to house the homeless and those in dangerously crowded housing; to **fight against the denial of pandemic support for undocumented immigrants**, and for **full citizenship rights for all!**

In the recent protests against the murder of Dijon Kizzee we have raised the calls “For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!” and “Workers Revolution Will Avenge Dijon Kizzee and A.J. Weber” (18-year-old A.J. Weber was murdered by sheriff’s deputies just two blocks from where Dijon Kizzee was killed). While many leftists are getting ready to vote for Biden/Harris while holding their noses, we insist that the struggle requires the leadership of a multiracial workers party fighting for a transitional program leading to socialist revolution. In short, we need to forge a proletarian vanguard, with a core of cadres tested in the class struggle, like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky which led the October 1917 Russian Revolution that **smashed** the capitalist state. ■

Brazil: Workers Power Candidacy Against Capitalist Rule

The following article is translated from a special supplement of *Vanguarda Operária* (October-November 2020), published by the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil*, section of the League for the Fourth International.

On October 16, the Regional Electoral Court of the State of Rio de Janeiro (TRE-RJ), Brazil, denied the independent candidacy for mayor of Volta Redonda of Carlos Alexandre Honorato (Cerezo), spokesman of the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil* (LQB – Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil), of the Class Struggle Committee (CLC) and of the Union of the Working Class of Southern Rio de Janeiro State (UCTSF); and of Geraldo Ribeiro, also of UCTSF, CLC and LQB, for deputy mayor.

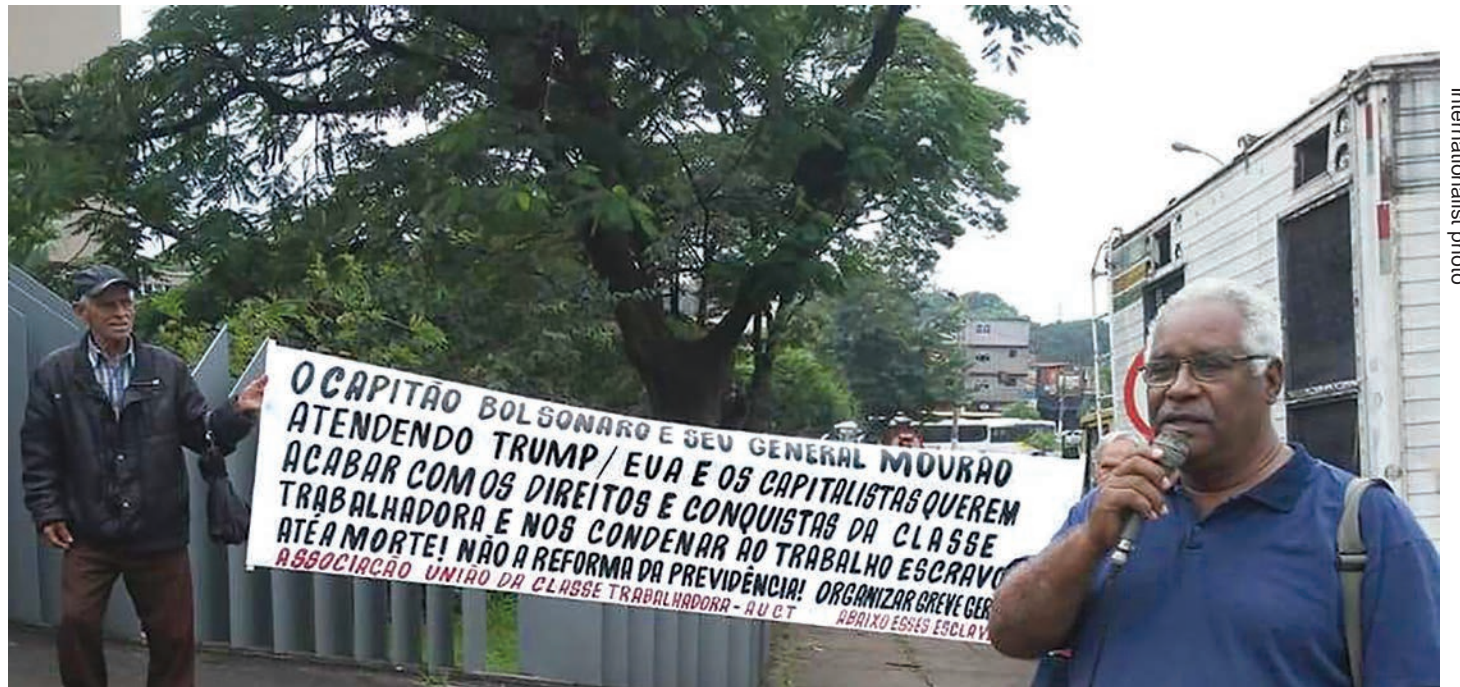
The electoral tribunal thus denied voters the possibility of voting for these working-class fighters running independently of the registered parties. We have appealed this anti-democratic ruling by the TRE-RJ and are continuing to campaign. If that is refused we will call for a blank ballot.

Despite the refusal of the capitalist justice system, the campaign of revolutionary struggle against the authoritarian bonapartist government of [Brazilian president Jair] Bolsonaro, the conservative right wing and the reformist popular-front left continues. We publish below the program of struggle of the Workers Power Candidacy Against Capitalist Rule.

Volta Redonda can and must be a stronghold of workers power in the national and international struggle for the emancipation of workers and all the oppressed!

Against the contempt shown for the lives of workers and the poor in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we demand **free and rapid COVID-19 tests for everyone now** and the immediate **expansion of the public health system to provide high-quality hospital care to all the sick, under workers control and led by medical professionals.**

Against the poverty wages and the fraudulent and wholly inadequate welfare “*bolsas*” (stipends), both from the PT [Workers Party] and now from Bolsonaro, we demand **a huge increase of the monthly minimum wage to at least the level of the DIEESE [Interunion Statistical Department], i.e., R \$ 4,342.57 [US\$806] for all, and a sliding scale of wages to be ad-**



At the gate of CSN steel plant during general strike, 28 April 2019.

justed for inflation.

In the face of the constant killings of the population (in particular black people) by the police and the militias, we demand: **Military Police, Military Firefighters and all armed agencies out of the slum districts (*morros e favelas*), and police of all kinds out of the unions.**

In the face of the elimination of job stability (“precariousness,” including jobs akin to slave labor) and the runaway increase in hours and speed-up, we demand **a six-hour work shift with no loss in pay, continuing contracts for all workers and union control of hiring.**

Against the attempts to destroy public education and gag teachers with the “school without parties” law, we demand that the **schools be controlled by councils of teachers, students, parents and school workers, under union leadership.**

Against the corruption and privatization of Petrobras, mainly carried out by the “neoliberal” job killer FHC [Fernando Henrique Cardoso, president of Brazil from 1995 to 2002] and his minions in other parties (as happened with CSN, the mining giant Vale do Rio Doce, which with criminal negligence buried an entire city, Brumadinho [in the state of Minas Gerais], under a mudslide of mineral waste. After those privatizations other piratical privatizations took place, including of the telephone company and others. We demand **full state ownership of the oil and energy industry** and the imposition by oil workers of **workers control of production, to sell cooking gas to the population at R\$1 per liter.**

Against the harassment of the super-exploited immigrant population, notably Peruvians, Bolivians and Haitians, we fight for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants and against any participation by Brazil in imperialist aggression** and occupation, today against Venezuela, and in the past against Bolivia and Haiti.

The current government of Bolsonaro and his imitators at the state and municipal level represent a *bonapartist* danger, of

imposing a police-military type of “strong state,” constituting a threat to democratic rights, the existence of the workers movement and the very lives of black people, Indians, slum dwellers, homosexuals and all the oppressed.

However, the rise to power of the bonapartist regime was prepared by 14 years of government by the *popular front* led by the Workers Party, which under Lula’s and Dilma’s governments attacked workers’ rights, strengthened the police apparatus (forming the National Security Force, putting Police Pacification Units in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro) and spread the lie of having created a “new middle class.”

Today, the conservative bourgeoisie of the “centrão” [broad center, referring to the traditional right wing], together with important sectors of the capitalist state apparatus (the “justice” system, and others), offers itself as an “alternative” to Bolsonarism. The remnants of the popular front want to join these “coup” plotters of yesterday in a mega coalition of class collaboration, within the framework of bourgeois parliamentarism. Against all bourgeois parties, politicians and alliances, our candidacy seeks to initiate a revolutionary workers party to fight for a **workers and peasants government** to expropriate capitalism in the framework of **socialist revolution and a Socialist United States of Latin America.** ■

Not the Way It Used to Be Nor How It Is Now **Power to the Working Class!**

We who are signing this document are not electoralists; we say it is crucial to fight at all times on all issues involving the interests of the working class. On the basis of that daily struggle, those of us who have followed this path make our own the phrase of the German poet Bertold Brecht: “Indispensable are those who struggle all their lives.”

Unite Struggles from the City to the National and International Levels

Cerezo is a metal worker and the Poder Operário (Workers Power) candidate for mayor of Volta Redonda in the November 2020 elections. He has a long history of struggle in defense of the working class, starting well before the great 1988 strike at the CSN national steel company. For his leading role in the 1990 CSN strike and occupation, Cerezo was one of the activists put on the army’s “death

list.”¹ His running mate Geraldo, our candidate for vice-mayor, has been a city worker for three decades and led the fight to oust police from the municipal workers union.² He also played a leading role in struggles over the PCCS (salary steps for public employees) and other demands against the government’s attacks, as when the Popular Front mayoral administration of Paulo Baltazar took over city hall [in 1993] and tried to lay off almost 3,000 workers, an attack which the struggle succeeded in reversing.

The Poder Operário candidacy main-
continued on page 15

¹ See “Army Death List Targeted Brazilian Worker Militants,” *The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000. Built in Volta Redonda in 1941 with backing from the U.S., the Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional (CSN – National Steel Company), Latin America’s largest steel producer, was state-owned until its privatization in 1993.

² See Internationalist Group pamphlet, *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil* (February 1997).

VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA
Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, seção da Liga pela IV Internacional
Suplemento especial outubro-novembro de 2020 preço R\$ 1,00

Candidatura Poder Operário contra o domínio capitalista

Justiça burguesa quer barrar candidatura avulsa operária que não aceita nenhum financiamento de governos e partidos

...A campanha de luta clasista continua

Contra o domínio do capitalista, a luta dos trabalhadores é a luta pela conquista da cidadania operária, independente das parcas e mesquinhas concessões do governo burguês. A luta dos trabalhadores é a luta pela conquista da cidadania operária, independente das parcas e mesquinhas concessões do governo burguês.

Declarar o Poder Operário

Cerezo

1988

Close the Camps – Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants! Down with Racist Fortress Europe!

Greece: Moria Fire Ignites More Racist Repression

As flames engulfed the Moria refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos on September 8, burning it to the ground, Europe's "forgotten" crisis was made visible once more. In the midst of a global pandemic that has claimed over a million lives, when 35 camp residents tested positive for COVID-19, Greek authorities locked down the open-air prison with its nearly 13,000 migrant refugees. After protests against the lockdown, and pushed to the edge by spending many months and even years in the notoriously squalid camp, Europe's largest, some camp residents set it ablaze. The desperate act of rebellion was fueled by years of humiliation and dehumanization carried out under the racist immigration policies of the German-dominated European Union (EU) and its Greek border guards, who at times crammed up to 20,000 refugees into a facility meant to house only 3,000.

Greece's right-wing New Democracy (ND) government, headed by Kyriakos Mitsotakis, a Harvard- and Stanford-educated former banker and member of one of Greece's oldest political dynasties, refused to let the displaced refugees off the island, except for a small number of children requiring urgent medical care. Instead, the authorities moved 9,000 to a nearby camp and 1,000 onto a passenger ferry, with hundreds more on two additional naval vessels. Thousands were left homeless and hungry after the fires, with many sleeping in the roads. Some local residents attacked migrants fleeing the flames, preventing them from passing through a nearby village. Refugees held a protest near the town of Mytilene against the construction of a new camp, for the right to leave the island, and calling for help from the German government. Their pleas were met with tear gas and an insulting "promise" by German interior minister Horst Seehofer to take in 100-150 of the refugees.



Elias Marcou / Reuters

Migrants flee the Moria concentration camp after fire reduced it to ashes.

From early 2015 until last year, Greece was governed by the populist SYRIZA party, which despite its name (Coalition of the Radical Left) dutifully imposed the harsh austerity measures dictated by the European central bankers. With the population exhausted by privations, in July 2019 the rightist ND won a majority in the Greek Parliament on a national chauvinist, anti-immigrant program. It then spent the next year unleashing a brutal wave of anti-immigrant repression. Appealing to the electoral base of the fascist Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi), Mitsotakis undertook a program of kidnapping refugees in the dead of night. They were then abandoned in engineless and rudderless dinghies in the Aegean, while the kidnapers made sure to rob them of their belongings first. As of mid-August, at least 1,072 asylum seekers had been abandoned at sea since March 1, in at least 31 separate expulsions (*New York Times*, 14 August).

One Syrian refugee described the harrowing ordeal to Human Rights Watch: "[T]hey [Greek police] put us in a military boat and pushed us [from the deck] to a small [inflatable] boat that doesn't

have an engine. They left us on this boat and took all our private stuff, our money, our IDs. We were on the boat and we were dizzy. We were vomiting. They [the Greek Coast Guard] didn't tell us anything.... [W]e were in the middle of the sea. We called the Turkish Coast Guard. They came and took our boat."

Moreover, the Greek Coast Guard has been preventing migrants from even landing on Greek islands. One refugee recounted how Greek officials stopped the boat she was on, off the shores of Lesbos, removed its fuel and towed it back to Turkish territorial waters. Other migrants were intercepted at sea and transferred to flimsy life rafts off the island of Samos, while in some instances refugees were abandoned on the uninhabited island of Ciplak.

This is all part of the Greek government's plan to crack down hard on refugees. In an interview with CNN Greece (2 June), Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarachi boasted that "the first step for us was to better guard the borders and already in the last quarter the flows [of migrants] have been reduced by more than 90% thanks to the great effort of the

Armed Forces, the Police and the Coast Guard." In January, the government announced plans to construct a "floating barrier" in the Aegean to keep migrants out. "The 2.7km-long netted barrier will be erected off Lesbos.... The bulwark will rise from pylons 50 meters above water and will be equipped with flashing lights to demarcate Greece's sea borders" (*The Guardian*, 30 January).

But anti-migrant repression is not a novelty of New Democracy. The prior bourgeois "left" government of SYRIZA, headed by former prime minister Alexis Tsipras, for four years carried out the EU's racist Dublin III regulation, which prevents refugees from leaving Greece and Italy for wealthier northern European countries. It was on Tsipras' watch that squalid conditions on Lesbos, Chios, Samos and other migrant landing hotspots were allowed to fester, as he dutifully implemented Germany's *diktat* to process asylum claims in Greece. Of course, many claims never got processed and some that did took years to move through the state bureaucracy, effectively stranding refugees on the islands.

Likewise, it was under SYRIZA that the hated "third memorandum" (with the European Central Bank, European Commission and International Monetary Fund) of banker-imposed austerity was adopted, further pushing Greece's already suffering masses deeper into poverty. Tsipras vowed to "rip up" the previous two memoranda, only to then impose SYRIZA's own austerity measures after a phony July 2015 referendum in which "NAI" (yes) meant austerity and "OXI" (no) meant austerity. In contrast to the bulk of the Greek left (minus the Greek Communist Party, KKE) which followed Tsipras in voting "no" in this "bait-and-switch" ploy, the League for the Fourth International opposed all sides in the fraudulent referendum and called on the workers to take action to block fur-

Petros Giannakouris / AP



Thousands of displaced migrants and refugees stage protest outside the town of Mytilene on Lesbos, September 11.



Panagiotis Balaskas / AP

The Moria fire reduced the 3,000-capacity Moria refugee camp to ashes, leaving some 13,000 migrants stranded on Lesbos without shelter.



Migrants from Gambia and the Republic of Congo land on the shores of Lesbos via dinghy, February 2020.

ther austerity.¹ Now Mitsotakis and New Democracy are pushing labor “reforms” to “free up” Greece’s domestic market to foreign investment and further appease the eurobankers, continuing the work of his “leftist” predecessor.

The 26,000+ refugees currently languishing in Greek detention camps have fled devastation and privation in the Middle East, Africa and parts of Asia wrought by imperialism, as did the millions who tried to enter Europe in 2015 and 2016. Many of the migrants currently on Lesbos are fleeing Afghanistan, a country blighted by decades of U.S.-imperialist occupation under a “war on terror” that has been waged by three consecutive American presidents, Republican and Democratic. Moreover, many of the Taliban jihadists that U.S. forces have been fighting since 2001 were originally mujahedin financed, trained and armed by the CIA (under its “Operation Cyclone”) to fight a holy war in the 1980s against a Soviet-backed Afghan reform government.

Whether SYRIZA or New Democracy, “left”- or right-wing, capitalist governments serve the interests of capital. In this epoch of decaying imperialism, amid the proliferating wars following the counter-revolution that destroyed the Soviet Union, millions have been forced to flee their devastated homelands. As a result, after the flood of one million Syrian refugees in 2016, the borders of racist Fortress Europe have been beefed up to keep refugees out, while the eurobankers continue to impose austerity to shore up the profits of the shaky German banks. Greece’s gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 33% from 2007, at the start of the world capitalist economic crisis, to the end of 2018 (MacroPolis, 6 March 2019). Now, due to shutdowns because of the coronavirus pandemic, it fell another 15% in the first half of 2020.

More than 400,000 people have emigrated from Greece over the last decade, half of them youth. Now with the official unemployment rate at 18% (the highest in the European Union) and youth unemployment a stratospheric 38%, plus a coronavirus slump in tourism, the crisis over the refugees crammed into the overcrowded detention camps has come to a head. With a rightist government and outright fascists cooperating in immigrant-bashing rhetoric and actions, the League for the Fourth International

¹ See “Greek Workers: Defeat the Bankers’ Diktat, Occupy the Banks and Ports!” and “What Road for Greece: Perpetual Debt Peonage or Workers Revolution?” in *The Internationalist* No. 41, September-October 2015).

calls to *shut down the concentration camps, free all migrants* and allow them the same *freedom of travel* as everyone else while demanding *asylum for refugees* and *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. We also call for *workers action against racist attacks* on immigrants. And for those refugees fleeing the devastation caused by imperialism who want to move on to northern and western Europe, we say: *let them in!*

These are not easy demands to raise in the present reactionary political climate. Class-conscious workers and fighters for the oppressed must stress that the same reactionary anti-immigrant forces are also mortal enemies of the Greek working class. Along with a push to expel refugees, the ND government is seeking to enact unrelenting austerity and anti-union labor “reforms.” The Greek proletariat, although diminished by the draconian cuts, has the power to defeat racist repression and bust the union-busters. Port workers of Piraeus (and Thessaloniki) along with transportation and refinery workers, healthcare, education and tourism workers have the power to bring Greece’s economy to a screeching halt, as is shown every time ferry workers strike. But to win requires going beyond the borders of a nation of 11 million people.

The key is forging the nucleus of a genuinely *Leninist-Trotskyist workers party* to lead the struggle for *socialist revolution in Greece and Turkey, the Balkans, and all of Europe and the Near East*.

Mobilize Workers to Defend Immigrants and Refugees

What has been the response of the Greek left to the events in Moria? The Communist Party of Greece (KKE), the largest remaining mass Stalinist party in the capitalist world, with tens of thousands of supporters and its own trade union federation (PAME), called to “close Moria, no new camps,” to “release the refugees and immigrants from Lesbos” and to transfer refugees and migrants to safe facilities in mainland Greece “to facilitate by any means their transition to other European countries, for which they emigrated” (*Rizospastis*, 10 September). But what if other European countries don’t let them in, what if they want to stay in Greece? In the absence of a call for asylum for refugees and full citizenship rights for all immigrants, demands that genuine Marxists – Trotskyists – have championed for decades, the reformist KKE’s position amounts to a barely disguised chauvinist call to get the refugees out of Greece.



Thousands fleeing imperialist-sponsored wars and devastation brave the Mediterranean each year to seek refuge. LFI says: *let them in!*

OKDE-Spartakos, affiliated with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI, formerly United Secretariat) of the late Ernest Mandel, calls for “joint labor struggles” of locals and immigrants, as well as international mobilizations. In a statement on the Moria fire, they call for “free movement and integration of refugees and migrants, without limits,” for “open borders and documents for all, their integration into the cities in commandeered buildings with decent living conditions,” to “repeal the Greece-EU-Turkey agreement” and “jobs for the whole working class.” Calls for local and international labor action are correct and necessary, yet the Mandelites, too, fail to call for full citizenship rights while their utopian-reformist call for “open borders” fosters illusions that the capitalist state – which cannot exist without borders – would somehow magically disappear.

Meanwhile, the Socialist Workers Party (SEK), affiliated with the British Socialist Workers Party, heirs of the anti-Trotskyist renegade Tony Cliff, called for “asylum and shelter for all,” to close the camps and “connect the labor demands with the demand for asylum and housing for refugees” and, of course, “open borders so that refugees are welcomed here and throughout Europe.” A similar position is put forward by the EEK (Revolutionary Workers Party), once allied with Jorge Altamira of the Argentine Partido Obrero (which expelled him last year). After pious vows to “stand by the refugees, in order to meet all their demands and live with dignity and freedom,” the EEK calls for: “Opening the borders to the freedom of movement of refugees and at the same time welfare measures for health, housing and work” (*Nea Prooptiki*, 9 September). While saying that such measures are “incompatible with the government of enemies of people’s lives,” – i.e., with New Democracy – it says nothing about revolution to overthrow the *capitalist state*.

Standing notably to the right of much of the Greek left is the Trotskyist Group of Greece (T.O.E.), of the ex-Trotskyist International Communist League (ICL) led by the Spartacist League/U.S. The T.O.E.’s last published article dates from March 2020, of which a “revised” translated version was published in *Workers Vanguard* (29 May), which in turn is the last the world has heard from the SL/U.S. The *WV* article titled “Down with the War on Refugees!” has as its main demand: “Full Citizenship Rights for All Who Have Made It to Greece!” An interesting and telling call, as the article pointedly does *not* call

for asylum for refugees and raises no demands on behalf of the refugees trying to enter Greece. We have earlier polemicized against these “‘Communists’ Who Oppose Calls for Asylum for Syrian Refugees,”² but here their line is shown in stark relief.

The T.O.E./ICL reported that Mitsotakis had “dispatched army units and riot police to the Evros border region, where state forces have used tear gas, stun grenades and water cannons to drive back migrants,” and that a video showed a “coast guard vessel firing into the sea near a refugee dinghy and attempting to capsize it as it approached the island of Lesbos.” So does the ICL call to let those refugees braving gas, grenades and gunfire into Greece? It does not. Or does the ICL denounce the brutal chauvinist repression being unleashed against refugees just as they reach Greek territorial waters? It does not. Do these pseudo-Trotskyists even bother to denounce the Greek government’s kidnapping of refugees “who have made it to Greece” to push them into the sea? They do not.

The ICL (which went along with Tsipras’ referendum ploy in 2015³) once again denounced calls for abolition of the racist Dublin III accord, suggesting – in one of their trademark straw-man arguments – that opposition to a “particular EU regulation” amounts to “tacit support to the EU.” Yet they themselves admit that Dublin III means “thousands of refugees languish in concentration camps in Greece and elsewhere, set up at the behest of German imperialism.” And since their article admits that areas of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria from which refugees have fled “have been reduced to rubble by wars carried out by the U.S., British and French imperialists in particular, impelling millions to seek asylum elsewhere,” does the ICL demand that the U.S., Britain or France admit these victims of imperialist slaughter? It does not. Instead it claims that any “call to ‘open borders’ to refugees” will “promote illusions in the Greek bourgeoisie and in the ‘humanitarian’ face of the imperialists in the EU.”

But if you look carefully, it turns out that the T.O.E. had some trouble with the chauvinist line of the ICL, even after four years of spouting it. Alerted by the reference to a “revised” version of the article, we took a look at the Greek version on the ICL web site. There we read a footnote saying:

“* In the previous version we wrote: ‘As

² See our article “Strange Encounters with the ICL,” *The Internationalist* No. 44, Summer 2016.

³ See “The ICL on Greece: Goodbye Trotsky, Hello Minimum Program,” in *The Internationalist* No. 41.

Marxists, our prospect is to mobilize the multinational working class in the fight against all the racist laws of the capitalists on immigration.' The above proposal contradicts our line in the rest of the article, implying an open border position in relation to the bourgeois state...."

So the simple statement by the T.O.E. calling to mobilize workers to fight against all racist capitalist immigration laws was slapped down by the ICL leadership! "Although we oppose racist laws," the footnote piously claims, the ICL's empty "opposition" is limited to "those who have arrived in the country." So while the KKE wants to quickly hustle refugees out of Greece, the ICL wouldn't even let them in!! Different brands, same social-chauvinism.⁴

As we have noted before, "back when the Spartacist League stood for revolutionary Trotskyism," its call for full citizenship rights for everyone who made it here was a call for equal rights for all, and "went together with calls for asylum for refugees, from Haiti, Central America, Sri Lanka and elsewhere."⁵ Now the ex-Trotskyist ICL has turned this inclusionary call into a policy of exclusion of those who *haven't* "made it here." The LFI explains, as did the then-revolutionary ICL, that borders cannot be abolished under capitalism or even in the period after a revolution (which will have to defend itself against counter-revolution) but only in a stateless, classless socialist society with abundance for all. Until we get there, we indeed seek to mobilize workers against all racist, capitalist immigration laws, and when the desperate victims of imperialist depredation are at the door, we say "let them in."

Bring Out Workers Power to Stop Fascist Attacks!

Despite heavy attack by the banks and capitalist rulers, Greek workers are fighting back. On September 24, five maritime unions held a 24-hour strike for a "new collective labor contract, wage increases and better benefits for unemployed sailors" (*ekathimerini.com*, 21 September). That same week, aviation workers went on strike against "unfair income deductions," grounding 58 domestic flights. On October 15, public employees held a 24-hour strike for better pay for health and education workers and more hiring during the pandemic. In June, hospital workers flooded the streets of Athens in a 24-hour strike, and back in February, public sector workers and transport workers went on strike against a pension bill that "privatizes social security and pushes thousands of young workers to seek private insurance" (*Greek Reporter*, 18 February).

These labor actions must be linked up with the struggle against racist, anti-immigrant repression and nationalist chauvinism. The recent court ruling against former Golden Dawn MPs for "leading a criminal organization" and "participating in a criminal organization" was widely hailed by leftists of different tendencies. Golden Dawn leaders, including its "neo"-Nazi founder Nikolaos Michaloliakos, were sentenced to 13 years in prison. The verdict

⁴ As we have previously reported, at a meeting of the ICL leadership last year, two members who had been involved in the work of the T.O.E. were ousted on accusations of "racist" conduct. See "Spartacist League Declares Bankruptcy," *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020.

⁵ See "Spartacist League vs. Refugees," *The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017.

was a culmination of a years-long trial that started with the brutal murder of Greek anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas in 2013 by Golden Dawn member Giorgos Roupakias. Roupakias was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment, while 15 others were found convicted as accomplices. Another five fascists were convicted of attempted murder of three Egyptian fishermen in 2012 and four more were found guilty of assaulting members of the KKE's PAME trade union in 2013.

Criminal murderers they certainly are, and fascist organizations are a deadly threat to all the oppressed. But while the ND government for its own reasons may go after Golden Dawn, which lost all its parliamentary deputies in last year's election, the bourgeoisie will keep the fascists in reserve. Other racist ultra-rightist groups have appeared, including Elliniki Lysi (Greek Solution), which already has ten members of parliament. Moreover, charges of leading and participating in a "criminal organization" are conspiracy laws that can and will be used against the left and labor, as RICO (Racketeer-Influenced Criminal Organization) laws have been against unions in the United States. Such broad and vaguely worded laws would doubtless be wielded against workers defense guards. The working class must bring out its own power to defeat the fascist threat, not look to the capitalist state.

The coronavirus pandemic and the unfolding global economic depression have accelerated the decay of imperialist capitalism. Today, a class-struggle fight against xenophobic and fascist reaction in Greece urgently needed. Yet the Greek pseudo-left, and particularly the Stalinist-reformist KKE, have mired their supporters in the morass of bourgeois politics for decades, and they continue to do so. To combat the ever-increasing repression against refugees and immigrants, and the continued attacks on the working class, the most urgent task is the formation of a genuinely Leninist-Trotskyist workers party that can lead the struggle for international socialist revolution to do away with capitalist barbarism once and for all. ■

Brazil...

continued from page 12

tains that it is crucial to know how to combine the most basic struggles in Volta Redonda with the more complex ones at the national and international level, bringing together the interests of the downtrodden who are systematically crushed by capitalist oppression and exploitation. A key example is the emphasis that must be put on saving our lives, as is the case with the COVID-19 pandemic. It is ridiculous that health workers who are risking their lives are not even getting paid on time. They are being treated like playthings by President Jair Bolsonaro, whose absurd denial of the pandemic is passed along by the governor of Rio de Janeiro state, Wilson Witzel. Both have been denounced for pulling off con jobs with public funds that were supposed to be used for dealing with the pandemic, acting in tandem with the current mayor of Volta Redonda and "Pastor Everaldo" [of the Assembly of God church], who notoriously sells votes to the big political parties.

We demand the immediate establishment of **adequate working conditions and wages – paid on time – for health care workers; cutting the workday with no loss in pay; immediate hiring of those who have passed**

the qualifying exams; immediate expropriation of the CSN central office building (a white elephant used for pure and simple real-estate speculation) and its **conversion into a field hospital for the fight against COVID-19** and other deadly diseases.

Capitalist society worldwide is in deep crisis. We need to fight unemployment in order to provide work and shelter for all, including the artists from many parts of Latin America who have come to our city; and to fight against repression and the attacks on the rights and conquests of the workers and oppressed in Brazil and other parts of Latin America, linking this with the case of George Floyd and the massive anti-racist protests in the United States.

Here in Volta Redonda, the "Steel City," the proletariat has a tradition of combating the bourgeoisie, but the Popular Front has always been a roadblock to this struggle. Today, facing great dangers, it is urgent that the power of the working class be strengthened, mobilized and provided with a class-struggle program. In order to do this, it is crucial to draw the lessons of these struggles in order to break with popular-frontism and every kind of class collaboration, which have led to terrible defeats.

We are not electoralists: our candidacy is fundamentally different from all others. We of the Poder Operário candidacy **refuse to accept even one real [the Brazilian currency] in campaign financing from the state**. We would not govern from the easy chairs of city hall, based on the apparatus of the bourgeois state that always represses us. On the contrary, **we struggle to form workers councils in the factories and the proletarian neighborhoods, as the basis for a workers and peasants government**. The goal of our campaign is to advance this work of organization and promoting class consciousness, to put forward a revolutionary and internationalist program for the emancipation of the exploited masses.

In line with these points, the six-hour workday which features in our program is part of this great tradition of struggle. The beginning of Brazilian bourgeois "democracy" was marked by the military repression unleashed against the workers occupation of CSN in 1988, when we won the six-hour day. Later we fought to defend it against the bourgeoisie and the sellouts of the union bureaucracy. With a class-struggle program, we fought the privatizations, at CSN and the FEM (Metal Structures Factory) in particular, and the mass layoffs. We fought and won amnesty for the CSN strikers, against the resistance of the popular-front government.

On the health question, which is so central now amidst the COVID crisis, we fight to **end the privatization of health care being pushed through contracts with "social organizations,"** a central topic in the impeachment of Rio governor Witzel, currently underway. With the same emphasis on defending the workers' health, as shown in our posters, leaflets and other publications, at the CSN we exposed the company's anti-working-class and racist lies about leukopenia.³ We were in the forefront of the fight to **rehire the 6,000 "mosquito killers"** in

³ This medical condition, in which white cells in the blood are reduced, affected many steel workers because of exposure to benzene gas produced in the coke ovens. Company officials claimed it was a "black disease." See "Brazilian Metal Workers Struggle Against Racism" in "Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil."

Rio.⁴ We have fought against the pollution of working-class and poor people's neighborhoods, particularly in the Volta Grande I, II, III and IV neighborhoods; and against the terribly unhealthy working conditions for city workers.

The Comitê de Luta Classista (Class Struggle Committee) and the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, of which Cerezo and Geraldo are members, have fought tooth and nail against the municipal governments of Baltazar, Antônio Neto, Gothardo Netto and Samuca Silva, to make city hall pay up the salary steps for municipal workers. We are also fighting for CSN to pay the cost-of-living raises, which are now in the process of being paid out. It is particularly important to point out that at the same time, it has been necessary to struggle against the pseudo-leftist parties, the PT, PSOL, PCdoB, PSTU and PCO,⁵ whether for their omissions, their sabotage or at times their open opposition in those struggles.

Against racist discrimination and the oppression of women, we led the defense of city worker Regina Célia and – facing a campaign of repression from the police and popular front – we carried out the *historic 1996 struggle to expel police from the union*. *One of the municipal cops was responsible for the murder of Ernane da Silva Lúcio, a black child, on 22 October 1995*. Today the demand for **cops out of the unions** is being put forward by anti-racist protesters in the United States and other countries.

An Internationalist Fight Against Oppression

We brought to Brazil and all of South America, for the first time, the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther imprisoned in the U.S., and organized the first strike for his freedom anywhere in the world, by the education workers of the state of Rio de Janeiro in April 1999, an example which spread to the U.S.⁶

We fight intransigently against the campaign that Yankee imperialism, Bolsonaro and Co. are carrying out against Cuba and China. Our demand for Brazilian troops to be driven out of Haiti was adopted by the Rio education workers union. We also organized the solidarity actions with the courageous Mexican teachers strike in 2016.

Under the red banner of the international working class, we fight to carry through the great motto: Workers of the World, Unite! Our program is the only path forward for putting an end to capitalism. Long live socialism! It is the only solution that can save humanity from barbarism. ■

⁴ This poorly paid, largely black workforce was part of Rio de Janeiro's campaign against dengue fever.

⁵ For more information on groups mentioned here, see "The Electoralist Campaigns of the Brazilian Left," *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018. The PT is the reformist Workers Party of former presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff; PSOL, Party of Socialism and Freedom, an equally reformist split from the PT; PCdoB, formerly Maoist, now social-democratized Communist Party of Brazil; PSTU, United Socialist Workers Party, part of the International Workers League (LIT) notorious for pro-imperialist positions; PCO, Workers Cause Party, a satellite of the PT formerly associated with the Argentine Partido Obrero.

⁶ The day after the strike in Brazil, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union shut down all West Coast ports in the U.S. for 10 hours demanding Mumia's freedom. (See "Brazilian Workers Mobilize for Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal" and "ILWU West Coast Port Shutdown Showed Labor's Power in Fight to Free Mumia," *The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000.)

CLASS STRUGGLE EDUCATION WORKERS

Prepare a Joint UFT/AFSCME/TWU Strike Against “Doomsday” Cuts NYC Teachers: Use Your Union Power to Make Schools Safe to Reopen

By Class Struggle Education Workers/UFT

SEPTEMBER 6 – New York City mayor Bill de Blasio’s plans to reopen city schools on September 10, after they have been shut down since March due to the coronavirus pandemic, sparked widespread unrest among teachers and other school employees. Many are concerned over unsafe classrooms, others want the schools to stay closed until there are no cases of COVID-19. The pressure from the ranks was so strong that, on August 19, United Federation of Teachers (UFT) leader Michael Mulgrew held a press conference in which he presented a checklist of conditions to be met before reopening and vowed that “every single person, both adult and child, who is to enter a New York public school must have evidence that they do not have the COVID virus.” If the UFT’s demands were not met, the UFT leader said, “the union is prepared to go to court and/or go on strike if we need to.” The UFT has not struck in 45 years, and doing so would clearly violate the state’s vicious Taylor Law banning strikes by public employees.

De Blasio’s July 31 submission to state education authorities of unspecific plans for school reopening had set off weeks of turmoil. AFSCME District 37, which represents school staff, objected that conditions in the schools were not safe, principals represented by the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators said they were not ready. As the deadline approached, the UFT and NYC Department of Education (D.O.E.) announced separate teams to inspect the schools, plans for a chaotic “hybrid” model



Class Struggle Education Workers, the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth on August 3, protesting against NYC mayor de Blasio’s plans for unsafe school reopening.

of “blended learning” (with staggered days of in-person and remote instruction) were discussed, parents were polled on whether they would send their children to school or opt for “remote-only.” But on September 1, Mulgrew and de Blasio announced a deal to delay reopening until September 21, while teachers (except those with medical accommodations) were told to report to the schools on September 8. The tabloids declared that the mayor “backed down” (*Daily News*) and was “outclassed again” (*New York Post*).

In reality, it was the UFT leader who caved. Schools were clearly not ready anyway, but the union negotiators abandoned demands that everyone be tested before reopening. Instead *no* tests will be required at reopening. Ventilation reports from the D.O.E. or the UFT are still unavailable. But even the union’s original demands were far

too limited. A spokesman for Class Struggle Education Workers insisted that “every classroom in New York City has got to be made safe, every school building has to be approved by a committee of educators and families in that school,” that “we need thousands of new teachers and educators hired,” and it should be a joint strike with transit workers and all city employees that could shred the Taylor Law (see “Get Ready to Strike to Make NYC Schools Safe to Reopen,” *The Internationalist*, 30 August). But the deal between the unions and the city is not the final word. Educators can still use their power to make schools safe.

Class Struggle Education Workers calls on union chapters of teachers and staff at each school and every building, working together with parents and students, to insist that they – and not some educrats at D.O.E.

headquarters in Tweed Courthouse – must approve the reopening in detail, after union-led inspection together with outside experts. If the necessary repairs have not been made, if ventilation is still inadequate, if additional staff has not been hired to ensure small class sizes, with limits specified in a formal agreement to be adhered to in the future, then strike action by the unions, with mass pickets joined by students and parents, should block any attempt at an unsafe reopening. And when the schools are ready to open, then point-of-care rapid testing for COVID-19 should be required for all. UFT members are the union, not Mulgrew and some bureaucrats at 52 Broadway. If the education workers who make the public schools run hang tough, we can win. Teachers unions right now have power like never before – we have to use it. ■

Internationalist photo

A Class-Struggle Program to Reopen New York City Schools Safely

By Class Struggle Education Workers/UFT

We in Class Struggle Education Workers seek to mobilize the unions’ power at this crucial moment not to keep New York City schools closed but to *make them safe to reopen*, and in the process fight for fundamental gains. We can do so now because this is a crucial juncture when parents and masses of working people are acutely aware that their children’s future depends on it. A class-struggle program must be enforced by union power, including strike action, and based on the principle that those directly involved in the schools – the educators, students, parents and workers – make the decisions about what is safe and how teaching should be carried out, not some educrats in distant offices, highly paid consultants, charter-school profiteers or capitalist politicians. *Who needs the suits?*

At the August 3 NYC demonstration

by the Movement of Rank-and-file Educators (M.O.R.E.), where our presence was palpably unwelcome, Class Struggle Education Workers, together with the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth, brought out a contingent with signs including:

Where Pandemic Is Raging Keep Schools Closed – For Teacher-Student-Parent-Worker Control

Where Infection Rate Is Low Schools Should Reopen Safely With Billions for:

- Sanitation & Ventilation
- Triple Classrooms Now
- No Hiring Freeze, Hire Thousands

**114,000 Homeless Students – No Laptops, No Wi-Fi – They Need Real Schools
Police Out of the Schools and the Unions**

“Remote Learning” Widens Racist Gap in Education

**Remote Learning: An Oxymoron
Vygotsky: “Education Is Social”**

**UFT: Stand Up for Teachers & Kids Not the Mayor & Chancellor
For Teacher-Student-Parent-Worker Control of Schools**

**Make Schools Safe, At Every School
Teacher-Student-Parent-Worker Committees Must Approve Reopening**

Make Schools Safe

- Class Size: 10-15 Tops
- HEPA Air Filters
- Rebuild Bathrooms
- Hire Thousands of Teachers, Staff, Custodial

Capitalists Using Pandemic To Gut Public Education – Expropriate Private Schools, Turn Charters Into Public Schools

Hybrid is Chaos, Students Can’t Learn, Parents Can’t Work, Teachers Overworked

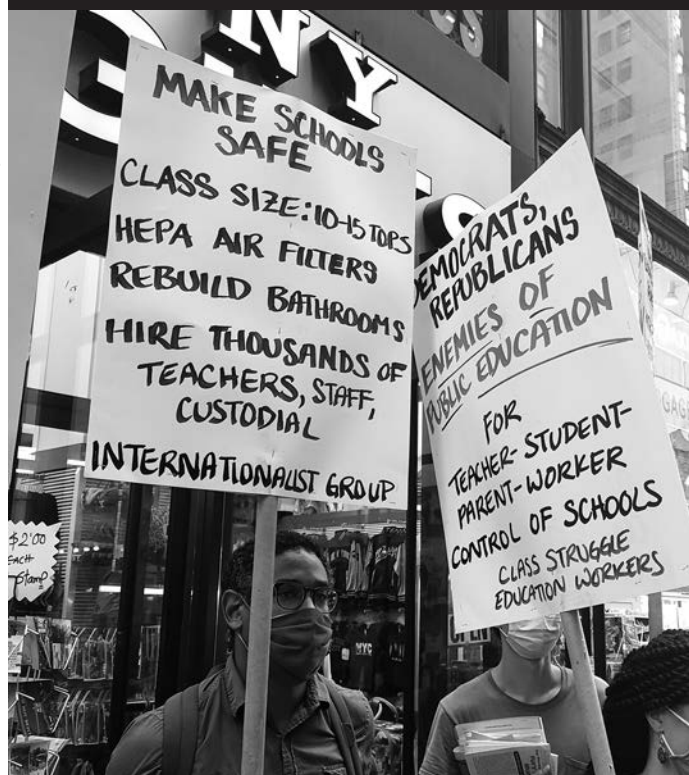
Democrats, Republicans – Enemies of Public Education: For Teacher-Student-Parent-Worker Control of Schools

**Profit-Driven Capitalists: Hands Off Our Schools! No to Mayoral Dictatorship!
Teacher-Student-Parent-Worker Control of Schools**

In the wake of the September 1 agreement between union leaders and the mayor, the United Federation of Teachers Delegate Assembly dutifully voted by 82% to approve the agreement, sight unseen. M.O.R.E. issued a statement rejecting the “backroom deal” by the mayor and Mulgrew (actually, in the latter’s account it was a cellphone deal while he was driving) and reiterating its call for “no full reopening of in-person schools until 14 days of no new cases.” While we reject such reactionary calls to just keep NYC schools shuttered, the demands of the UFT bureaucracy are far from what’s needed, and

Break with the Democrats, Build a Class-Struggle Workers Party

Internationalist photo



the deal with de Blasio is even more insufficient. Specifically:

Testing: Despite Mulgrew's demand in his August 19 press conference that everyone entering a New York City school must have evidence that they don't have COVID-19, when it came to specifics, he called for everyone to get a COVID test within *ten days* before a school opening, which is much too long a time frame, or for adults to get antibody tests, which are notoriously inaccurate. Now the agreement with the city has *no* requirement that *anyone* be tested before starting school. Instead there will only be random testing of 10-20% of people in school buildings on a monthly basis. That is hardly ensuring the safety of the schools.

In fact, there are existing "point-of-care" tests that produce results in as little as 15 minutes. They're used to test NBA basketball players, well-heeled party-goers in the Hamptons or anyone who comes into contact with President Trump. Questions have been raised about the accuracy of some tests, like the one used in the White House, but two other companies are producing point-of-care antigen tests, and more are in the works. One of the rapid-result test companies is already turning out over millions of tests a month for clinics.¹ So why can't those be used to screen the 800,000 students, teachers and staff expected to be in NYC schools? It's certainly a national priority. The answer is money, and neither Democrats nor Republicans will come up with it.

Nevertheless, **teacher-student-parent-worker committees at every site should insist that everyone get tested on the spot for COVID-19 before opening a school.**

Ventilation: There are 1,800 public schools in New York City housed in 1,400 buildings, many of them over a century old. Less than half have integrated HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems. The D.O.E. claims teams inspected every classroom in 1,600 schools in a week. But as one could see in a viral video, this consisted of clipping a piece of toilet paper to a yardstick and holding it next to a ceiling vent to see if enough air was coming out to make it wave. In the video, if only one vent of several was working, the room was okayed. In quite a few older schools, the only way to get airflow is

¹ "A New Generation of Fast Coronavirus Tests Is Coming," *New York Times*, 7 August.

to keep windows open even in winter. But many of the windows are nailed shut, or open only a crack. And then there are the inside classrooms, sometimes in a basement, and entire schools (MLK in Manhattan) with no outside windows.

Coronavirus infections occur overwhelmingly indoors, in closed spaces, so good ventilation is key to preventing contagion. Standard recommended airflow levels for school classrooms are that the air in a classroom should change at least every 20 minutes, but in many New York schools the air change rate is at best once an hour. The HVAC systems are inspected annually, and the NY

Daily News (9 August) analyzed 1,500 of these reports, finding that 630 schools had deficiencies. Even the elite Stuyvesant High School had 25 defective exhaust fans. To defend against COVID-19 infection, a Harvard School of Public Health report² calls for bringing in plenty of fresh air, upgrading HVAC filters to MERV13 levels or above, and using portable air cleaners with HEPA (MERV17) filters, which block particles as small as 0.3 micrometers.

The D.O.E. claims it is installing MERV13 filters in all schools, checking CO₂ levels and bringing in 10,000 portable air purification units. The union says it is doing its own inspection: good, but not enough. **Teacher-student-parent-worker committees should bring in independent ventilation experts to inspect and certify adequate airflow and air quality in every classroom.**

Bathrooms and handwashing stations: To the extent that the coronavirus is transmitted by touching surfaces, bathrooms are a prime area where infection could take place – and many New York City school bathrooms are in miserable shape. Toilets that don't flush, faucets that don't work, and a general lack of cleanliness. Many older buildings have inadequate numbers of bathrooms or stalls. As in just about everything else, there are state regulations about bathrooms, which are regularly ignored. **Teacher-student-parent-worker committees at each school should inspect the bathrooms, and if they are not in good condition, insist that they must be rebuilt before school opens. Handwashing stations in the halls, schedules for hourly cleaning and resupplying soap, and workers hired to carry it out.**

Class sizes: For years, those fighting against the privatizing education "reformers" have emphasized that far smaller classes are needed to provide effective instruction. Elite private schools have always had small classes of 10-15 students, with student-teacher ratios of between 5 and 6,³ whereas the ratio in NYC public schools is more than double that, with class sizes of around 30 students in middle

² Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, *Schools for Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools* (June 2020).

³ "A Guide to Reopening NYC's \$50,000-a-Year Elite Private Schools," *Bloomberg*, 16 August.

and high schools. Now, due to the coronavirus crisis, with "social distancing" guidelines of 6 feet between student desks, typical NYC classrooms can only hold a third of the previous capacity. **Union militants should demand that the UFT and DOE contractually specify that classes should be limited to no more than 10-15 students**, or teachers don't go back. At this moment they would win massive support from parents and students.

Massive hiring: That would require hiring tens of thousands of teachers and staff for New York City schools, at a time when the Democratic Party political leaders have imposed a hiring freeze and are threatening tens of thousands of layoffs. A massive hiring drive would be bitterly opposed by Cuomo and de Blasio, both of whom are closely tied to real estate interests, and by billionaire ex-Republican mayor Michael Bloomberg, now once again a Democrat, and his Wall Street cronies. They plead poverty, saying city and state coffers are empty, and blame it all on Trump and the Republicans in Congress who refuse to pass the "HEROES Act" for a second, \$3 trillion "stimulus" package. But they, as well as Trump, need to get the economy back in gear, and for that they need the schools to be open and functioning so parents can go back to work.

"Hybrid" is chaos: The school schedules are impossible. De Blasio finally agreed that no teacher should have to do both remote and in-person instruction, but principals said they don't have the staff. The vast majority of students will fall further behind with remote classes, and the schedules will be impossible for working parents, varying from day to day and week to week. And if their children's days in or out of school don't coincide, what's a single mom to do? De Blasio responded on TV that New York City parents are resourceful! We say: **All students should be able to return to school full-time if they wish. A massive expansion of university teacher-education courses at the City University in conjunction with existing UFT educational programs**, enabling new teachers to start immediately, would find many eager takers among the tens of thousands of unemployed college graduates in NYC.

There are many other concrete issues posed by the reopening of New York City schools. De Blasio has promised 400 more nurses, so that there would be one in every building. Yet already there are reportedly 300 unfilled positions for **school nurses**, and some large schools certainly need more than one. There has been much talk of **holding classes outdoors**, in schoolyards, parks and adjacent streets. Half the schools have reportedly filed plans for such classes. But where is the financing? De Blasio suggested maybe the richer PTAs could chip in! All such classes must be centrally funded. The city promised **daycare** for children of parents who had to work, but it is only planning for 100,000 slots, and even those are being prioritized for D.O.E. personnel and "essential workers." So long as schools are on the crazy hybrid model, daycare must be provided for hundreds of thousands of children.

A class-struggle offensive would also demand the **expropriation of private schools** and to **turn charters into public schools**. In NYC it would call to **expand eligibility for accommodation for risk factors**, particularly for **paraprofessionals**, who had a disproportionate number of deaths from COVID-19, and for **school aides and food service workers** represented by AFSCME Local 372, who are generally older (one-third are over 55,

compared to 11% of teachers who are age 57 and older) and 85% of whom are African American or Latino), and thus at greater risk. It would demand **air conditioning, greatly improved ventilation and rearranging school kitchens**, where 9,000 workers toiled through the spring and summer in crowded conditions and often brutal heat (temperatures up to 135°) preparing over 1 million "grab-and-go" meals for children and others.

Class-struggle militants would demand to **get cops out of the schools**, as we and many others called for in this summer's millions-strong marches against racist police terror. In NYC, the mayor and City Council went through a charade of switching school cops from the NYPD budget line to the D.O.E.'s (in 2021!), but police are still in the schools and in uniform. In a school system where 60% of all students are either immigrants or children of immigrants, in which 125,000 students are foreign-born and 40,000 undocumented, another key demand is to **keep immigration police away from the schools**. CSEW supporters in 2017 initiated committees to defend our immigrant students (and fellow workers), vowing to block any attempt to grab them and calling to mobilize labor against raids and deportations.

The challenge and problems posed in reopening schools are a key moment to **fight against mayoral dictatorship**, and for **educator-led control of the schools by councils of teachers, students, parents and workers**. This was a vital component of the educational policies of the early Soviet republic following the 1917 October Revolution. In his 2002 campaign for mayoral control, Bloomberg said of government by councils, "the Bolsheviks tried that, and it didn't work." On the contrary, it spurred active participation of all those involved in education. Today, we fight for **teacher-parent-student-worker control of school reopening**, independent of the D.O.E., to ensure safe conditions, and to counter attacks by those who would set parents and the community against the teachers.

Where's the money to come from? That's their problem, of the bosses and their political hacks. Don't tell us that in the center of international finance capital they can't find the dollars.

The reality is that *teachers are today in the strongest position we have been in for at least half a century, and possibly ever, to force the capitalist rulers to pay up and fund public education*, to make the schools safe to reopen. The *Wall Street Journal* (3 August) has figured that out, accusing teachers unions in an editorial of "School-Opening Extortion." Of course, if American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten said "safety strikes" could happen, and UFT leader Mulgrew threatened to call one, these mainstream Obama/Clinton Democrats are only talking tough because of pressure from the ranks, and as a bargaining tactic. But the liberal Sanders Democrats of M.O.R.E. likewise only wanted a "credible strike threat," and their talk of "taxing the rich and Wall Street" is so much hot air.

As we have always said, **labor's gotta play hardball to win**. The bosses certainly do, with decades of union-busting. But right now, teachers unions have the bosses over a barrel. Instead of just demanding to keep the schools closed, in those places where they can be opened – like New York City – unions should demand safety changes like the above be implemented now, or else no school. Where in-person instruction is precluded by high COVID-19 transmission rates, unions should demand that the needed measures

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Capitalism Is Killing Us

Homelessness and Coronavirus in New York City

Much of New York City ground to a standstill amid the coronavirus pandemic as Governor Andrew Cuomo's March 20 "New York State on PAUSE" executive order mandated the shutdown of all but "essential" businesses. State and city governments appealed to the population to "Stay Home, Stay Safe." This posed a problem in lower-income neighborhoods where most "essential workers" live: they had little choice but to go to their jobs, at great risk every day. At the same time, it was impossible for 4,000 homeless people living on the street, as well as for another 79,000 in city shelters, who have no place where they can safely "stay home."¹ Their plight was thrown into sharp relief as city and state authorities ordered a late-night shutdown of the NYC subways, where many homeless sought refuge.²

Early figures show 961 confirmed COVID-19 cases in homeless shelters (two-thirds of them in large single-adult facilities with dozens of beds in cramped spaces), of whom 76 have died from the disease (*Daily News*, 18 May). Even the numbers of the officially homeless greatly understate the scope of the problem. An annual survey of New York City schools showed that more than 114,000 students were homeless at some point in the year, one in ten of the total enrollment, a horrifying number. Significantly, while 34,000 had been in shelters, twice that number (74,000) had been "doubled up" in temporary arrangements with relatives, friends or others.³ Such "hidden homelessness," not shown in official statistics, is particularly dangerous in this pandemic as the virus spread like wildfire in packed apartments and overcrowded buildings.

In motivating the late-night subway shutdown, in addition to calling subway cars filled with homeless people "disgusting," Cuomo claimed that this was "an opportunity to engage homeless men and women who have been sleeping on trains, some of them for years." In response to complaints about city shelters, NYPD officials said that 1,000 new Safe Haven beds (overnight beds in churches and community centers with less extensive regulations and requirements) would be offered. Yet those were only available to those contacted by street outreach teams. And having ample experience with the NYPD, the homeless are all too familiar with what "engagement" really means. Eyewitness accounts of the first week of the sweeps from the Safety Net Project of the Urban Justice Center told the real story:

"Tonight at Atlantic Terminal, at least 15-20 homeless people were kicked out

¹ The figure of 60,000 or so in NYC homeless shelters is often cited, but that is only for facilities administered by the Department of Homeless Services.

² See "Shutting Down 24/7 Service Is No Answer to NYC Subway Crisis," *The Internationalist*, May 2020.

³ Advocates for Children of New York, "New Data Show Number of NYC Students who are Homeless Topped 100,000 for Fourth Consecutive Year" (28 October 2019)



Police remove woman from New York City subway on May 7 during late-night shutdown aimed at forcing the homeless off the trains and out of the stations.

into the freezing rain. It was cold out. There are no outreach, no buses, and no supplies, certainly no access to the thousands of empty hotel rooms right down the street in downtown Brooklyn. What there was were police officers, telling people they had to leave because the station was closed. Some ppl were asking police questions – Where am I supposed to go? Are there buses? Is there help? Do you have a mask? The answer was always 'no.' There is no help at all at the 95% of subway stations that are not 'end of line' stations. Even at end of line, we know that what is being offered is grossly insufficient – the offer of dangerous crowded shelter w/no social distancing in the middle of a pandemic."

In Manhattan, Citicare minibuses, yellow school buses and Access-a-Ride minivans littered the streets, dropping off the homeless at packed shelters. The main destination was the cavernous 850-bed 30th Street men's shelter, infamous for rampant violent incidents (and lately asbestos contamination), where staff and residents struggle to maintain social distancing. Many of those dropped off there did not go in. Also, city hospitals stopped allowing homeless people to seek refuge in waiting rooms during cold weather. They have also been transferring patients without a known address who tested positive for coronavirus but did not require acute medical care to the shelters. There they had to confront the labyrinthian COVID-19 intake protocol.

So what about housing the homeless in the tens of thousands of hotel rooms now standing empty? Very belatedly, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) contracted for 11,000 hotel rooms for healthcare workers, those discharged from hospitals and those with symptoms living in cramped quarters where "social distancing" is impossible. Thousands of those rooms are still empty as hospitals continue to send symptomatic people and recovering patients home.⁴ In any case, those

⁴ See "A Tale of Two Cities: Wuhan – New York," *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020.

rooms are *not* for the homeless, who have to contact another agency, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Yet according to a March 26 letter from the Legal Aid Society, "In response to the crisis, the City has effectively denied access to shelter to COVID-19-positive or likely positive homeless single adults who have not had recent prior contact with DHS."

Conditions in the shelters are terrible. According to one account, "In a small dorm, there were 100 people squashed together. There was no soap, no sanitizer; the toilets were flooded all the time" (*The Intercept*, 1 May). Currently, an emergency bill is before the NYC City Council which would require the city to place all homeless persons in hotel rooms, which the mayor's office is vociferously opposing. A spokesman for the Department of Social Services denounced the bill as a "one-size fits all" approach that is "ham-fisted and reckless, self-defeatingly unilateral and ill-informed, and legally questionable and amateurish" (*New York Post*, 15 May). What's actually at issue is none of the above, but who would pay for the estimated \$500 million cost, the city or the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

FEMA is the federal agency that after Hurricane Katrina inundated New Orleans in 2005, systematically *blocked* efforts to aid the victims, issuing a bulletin ordering first responders *not* to respond. FEMA turned back trailer trucks with water; prevented emergency medical teams and a 113-bed mobile hospital from reaching the city; stopped a fire-fighting team from Texas at gunpoint and diverted 1,400 firefighters from across the country on their way to the stricken city; kept the *USS Bataan* with a 600-bed hospital and capacity to produce 100,000 gallons of fresh water a day offshore; cut off a flotilla of 500 boats from rescuing people in the flooded city, and more.⁵ Rather than helping black residents return to their homes, FEMA bought

⁵ See our article, "New Orleans Police State: 'Ethnic Cleansing' American-Style," *The Internationalist* No. 22, September-October 2005.

tens of thousands of trailers to house them, which then had to be abandoned because of toxic levels of formaldehyde.

After Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico in 2017, knocking out the island's entire electrical system, FEMA's local warehouse was nearly empty. It left medical clinics without generators, left thousands of trailers loaded with food, water and medicine parked on the San Juan docks and provided far less support than for hurricane-stricken areas of Florida and Texas. This is the same agency that Ronald Reagan tasked in 1984 (in "Operation Rex-84") with planning for the detention of 400,000 undocumented immigrants at military bases in a "state of domestic national emergency"⁶ (as Trump has now declared over the coronavirus pandemic). And this is the outfit NYC mayor de Blasio is looking to for funding hotel rooms for the homeless?!

De Blasio and the Homeless: Endless Plans, No Action

In 2013, Democrat Bill de Blasio ran for New York City mayor with a campaign centered on combatting inequality and poverty. Front and center was the fight against homelessness, which had ballooned under Republican plutocrat mayor Michael Bloomberg, under whose administration the number of homeless in the shelter system increased by 64% while the number of homeless families was up 80%.⁷ De Blasio talked of easing DHS restrictions on qualifying for shelter, creating new rent subsidy programs and building 100,000 new low-income housing units. At the same time, the liberal Democrat was closely tied to real estate speculators responsible for the skyrocketing rents, and received campaign contributions from slum landlords who run lousy for-profit shelters ("Hidden City," *New Yorker*, 28 October 2013).

Blasio quickly fell into what has become his M.O.: making big promises, failing miserably with one janky program after another and then ignominiously pack-pedaling. This was the case with his initial opposition to charter schools, where he folded under attack by the well-connected charter lobby. The same pattern was shown more recently over integrating New York City schools, the most segregated in the country, as de Blasio backtracked on eliminating gifted-and-talented programs and screened admissions. On the homeless, in 2014, de Blasio produced a 117-page plan, *Housing New York: A Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan*, to "build or preserve nearly 200,000 affordable units" and institute "a pilot rental subsidy program for homeless families." However, only 15,000 of the projected units were for "supportive housing" with services for the homeless.

In 2015, after a scandal-mongering campaign in right-wing media over a rise

⁶ See, "American Gestapo," *The Internationalist* No. 19, Summer 2004.

⁷ Coalition for the Homeless, *Rising Family Homelessness in NYC: What the Next Mayor Can Do* (November 2013).

in street homelessness, de Blasio's focus switched to police action. A \$22 million program was launched called NYC-SAFE, to support "New Yorkers with untreated serious mental illness who pose a concern for violent behavior." This was combined with Home-STAT (Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement Street Actions Teams) to track the homeless daily in Manhattan. The NYPD was to act as "service request professionals" to "engage" the homeless. Meanwhile, the mayor and then city police commissioner, William J. Bratton, the racist enforcer of "broken windows" and "stop-and-frisk," bragged to the media about recently breaking up 50 "service resistant" homeless encampments.

In 2017, in another switch, the de Blasio administration churned out a 128-page document, *Turning the Tide on Homelessness in New York City*, announcing plans to build 90 shelters across the city. Predictably, this set off a racist NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) blowback against at least 15 proposed shelter sites, including from the liberal Upper West Side and from people vowing good intentions to house the homeless, but only so long as it didn't affect property values. In Ozone Park, hundreds of residents packed town-hall meetings fiercely opposing a proposed men's shelter, recycling the dangerous trope portraying homeless men – mostly African American and Latino – as violent. (Homeless men are often actually the victims of brutal and senseless crime.) As of January 2020, only 30 new shelters have opened.

In July 2019, a Subway Diversion Project went into effect, in which the police, working together with Home-STAT, would daily canvass "every block from Canal Street to 145th Street" in Manhattan, "offering alternative pathways off the streets into transitional and permanent housing." But there's always a caveat. These services are offered "in lieu of civil summonses." Those who refuse to be taken to intake centers are handcuffed, fined and given a summons for court proceedings. Today, the Street Homelessness Joint Command Center (JCC), operated by the NYPD and DHS, surveils the street homeless in real time, 24/7, through 20,000 police street cameras. Rather than assisting those in need, providing safe and stable homes, Democrat de Blasio, like his Republican predecessors, is criminalizing homelessness.

In December 2019, de Blasio announced yet another plan, *The Journey Home*, "enhancing Police Officers' approach to engaging and offering services to unsheltered New Yorkers." Seeking to soft-soap the message, de Blasio said, "I do not want people lost in the past thinking of what the NYPD was. Today's NYPD are trained officers engaged with the homeless, working with medical professionals." But anyone who has witnessed the racist cop brutality against black people, the mistreatment and persecution of immigrants, or police officers banging their batons on subway car bars to boot the homeless from the trains, knows that this is not a matter of who the police were, but of what the police are. What they are is the repressive armed apparatus of the racist capitalist state.

Former mayor Rudolph Giuliani summed up his policy on the homeless as "you chase 'em, you chase 'em, you chase 'em," and if that doesn't work, "you chase 'em out of the city." Continuing this tradition, in 2014 de Blasio's administration expelled 1,412 homeless people across



New York City mayor Bill de Blasio presents his latest plan to end street homelessness, 17 December 2019.

state lines (and to Puerto Rico!) under the guise of compassionate reunion with their families. In 2017, a "Special One-Time Assistance Program" was launched, under which over 5,000 homeless families (12,482 people) have been sent packing to 373 cities across the country, supposedly with a year's rent.⁸ Hundreds of families have returned, and some are suing for being dumped in unlivable conditions. City rulers would rather export the problem than house the homeless. For NYC mayors, the watchword is: Not in my city, not my problem.

De Blasio has issued plan after program after initiative, claiming there will be quantifiable advances in five, ten or perhaps 12 years' time. Yet the numbers in DHS homeless shelters keep increasing, from 24,000 under Giuliani, to 31,000 under Bloomberg, to 57,000 today, plus another 26,000 when you add the other city shelters and street homeless. In the words of James Baldwin, as depicted in the film *I Am Not Your Negro*, talking about gradualism and black oppression in the United States: "You always told me, 'It takes time.' It's taken my father's time, my mother's time, my uncle's time, my brothers' and my sisters' time. How much time do you want for your progress?"

Empty Condos, Full Shelters and Run-Down Public Housing

At a press conference on the planned late-night subway shutdown, Governor Cuomo said, "You've always had a certain number of people who were homeless for one reason or another going back decades." It's certainly true that there have been large numbers of homeless people in New York for a long, long time. But it's not because of some random "one reason or another." There was the closure of state psychiatric hospitals in the late 1970s that threw thousands of patients onto the streets. There was the curtailment of Section 8 rent subsidy vouchers. There is the decline of public housing. There are unaffordable rents. The root cause is *capitalism*, which necessarily generates a housing shortage, driving up rents and (as there is no way that housing for the poor can be profitable) therefore producing mass homelessness going back centuries.

In the Big Apple, the real estate lobby – along with Wall Street – calls the shots. For decades, real estate barons like Fred Trump "redlined" neighborhoods to

⁸ "NYC Secretly Exports Homeless to Hawaii and Other States Without Telling Receiving Pols," *New York Post*, 26 October 2019.

concentrate African American and Latino populations there, depriving them of subsidized loans and mortgages, while excluding racial minorities from whites-only areas or mega-projects (such as Starrett City in Brooklyn). All this began even before the post-WWII federal subsidies that promoted home ownership in lily-white suburbs.⁹ Now the banks are flooding some of the same inner-city neighborhoods with investments bringing in wealthier residents, "gentrifying" and effectively driving out poorer black tenants in places like Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

After the 2008 stock market crash, as inequality skyrocketed, investors out for surefire cash switched from toxic subprime mortgages to high-end residential projects catering to affluent international buyers with money to blow during the recession. Thus the 2010s saw increased construction of glitzy luxury full-floor residences, penthouses, and massive condo towers with exclusive amenities, like Midtown's Billionaire's Row – eight skyscrapers with Central Park South views and a median \$9.8 million sale price. During 2009-2019, 54,849 condo units were built in NYC. Meanwhile, in gentrified Williamsburg, Brooklyn, residents have seen a 54% increase in rent since 2010, as many have been displaced or ushered into homelessness.

But now most of these units sit empty because the wealthy aren't buying, and investors are scared to sell at decreased prices, awaiting a turn in the fluctuating market. "In Manhattan, the homeless shelters are full, and the luxury skyscrapers are vacant," begins a perceptive article in *The Atlantic* (16 January). Festering poverty and the ever-heightening apex of the NYC skyline highlight the dramatic contradiction marking life for millions of New Yorkers. Along with the homeless, 400,000 people live in notoriously neglected NYCHA (New York City Housing Authority) public housing, which has been the target of austerity measures for decades. Repairs take months, elevators in 23-story towers are out for days, buildings are filled with rodents and other pests and fail lead paint and mold inspections, heat and hot water are inconsistent.

In 2015, de Blasio announced a \$3 billion FEMA grant to "rebuild and upgrade city public housing developments slammed by Superstorm Sandy in 2012," mainly NYCHA complexes. Some 80,000

⁹ See Charles Brover, "American Apartheid by Design," *Class Struggle Education Workers* website, November 2018.

NYCHA residents were left "without electricity, heat and elevators for weeks – making some residents virtual prisoners in their homes." Today, out of 200 NYCHA buildings requiring extensive repairs after Sandy, in only two have the repairs been completed (*The City*, 29 October 2019). The "temporary" boiler trailers outside Red Hook Houses are still there. Yet de Blasio seems more interested in privatizing NYCHA housing than fixing them. From 2013 to 2015, NYCHA sold "54 plots with 441,000 square feet of public land to developers," including "parking lots, green space and playgrounds," to ease city budget woes (*Daily News*, 29 March 2015).

This February, NYCHA struck a deal with five developers to privatize 5,908 units in East New York, Williamsburg, Washington Heights and Harlem. The plan is moving forward, with an expected 62,000 units to be brought under private management through the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program enacted by the Democratic Obama administration. RAD doesn't mean more repairs or better living conditions, mind you, nor is it meant to salvage public housing. In fact, the intended result is the exact opposite – *more evictions* – which will mean increased homelessness. Residents are worried, and rightly so. With \$13 billion worth of pending repairs, the de Blasio administration would rather let private developers deal with NYCHA buildings, or demolish them, as city officials propose to do with Fulton Houses in Chelsea.

Housing the Homeless – It Will Take a Revolution

According to the 2017 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey, there were then 75,000 *pieds-à-terre* in New York City. This is the traditional bourgeois name for second, third, fourth or even fifth residences used as vacation homes or investment properties, with billionaire buyers from all over: Britain, Monaco, Nigeria, Russia, China . . . or Texas. Towering skyscrapers sit mostly desolate, as owners use these condos on occasion for a few months or only a few days' stay out of the year. With rampant real estate speculation, prices soared into the tens of millions of dollars. But in recent years the ultra-luxury market has gone bust, so that "Nearly half of new condo units in Manhattan that came to market after 2015 . . . remain unsold" (*New York Times*, 12 January). Now that the coronavirus has hit, a ruinous real estate meltdown looms in the global center of finance capital.

In 2011, Picture the Homeless, a grassroots advocacy organization, in partnership with the Hunter College Center for Community Planning and Development and the NYS Department of Health trained volunteers from high schools and colleges to canvass New York City's five boroughs by foot looking for vacant properties – a creative venture. They found quite a few: 3,551 vacant buildings that could potentially house 71,707 people ("Banking on Vacancy: Homelessness and Real Estate Speculation," *Picture the Homeless* [2011]). And then there is the hotel industry, where occupancy rates in the city's 120,000 hotel rooms have fallen from 70% to 30% during the pandemic, and over 60 hotels have shut down.

Meanwhile, both business and residential tenants are unable to pay rents. Major realty trusts have reported that from 50% to 80% of their commercial clients have not paid their leases since the onset of the crisis, while the association of landlords

of rent-stabilized apartment buildings says that 25% of tenants did not pay rent in May. The group's executive director warned that unless the government provides relief, "we are going to see a housing disaster the likes of which we have never seen" (*New York Times*, 22 May). Across the country there have been embryonic rent strikes, with the hashtag #CancelRent and demands for "No Work, No Rent." The demand has been endorsed by Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and organizers want to turn it into a mass movement like the Occupy Wall Street protests after the 2008 crash.

From destitute longtime homeless individuals and families to suddenly unemployed millennial roommates paying sky-high market-rate rents, millions of people across the country are staring a housing disaster in the face. New York City, with the largest numbers of renters (2.2 million) and homeless people in the country, will be the epicenter, as it has been for the COVID-19 pandemic. As soon as temporary bans on evictions expire, this time bomb will explode. Various "progressive" Democrats like "AOC" and opportunist pseudo-socialists who tail after them have called for moratoriums, "tax the rich" and the like. De Blasio and/or the NYC City Council will produce another plan. In places like Portland, Oregon there are movements for rent control. But NYC has had rent control since the 1940s, and it hasn't prevented this crisis.

So long as the economy is laid low, governments at every level – city, state and federal – won't, and in fact can't, resolve this impending catastrophe. The Federal Reserve would have to issue endless trillions in IOUs (Treasury bonds) in order to shovel money to the parasitic real estate moguls in order to keep the banks that hold their mortgages from collapsing. Not to mention "bailing out" every other industry facing bankruptcy. The \$16 trillion the feds doled out to rescue Wall Street following the 2008 stock market crash would look like chicken feed. The coronavirus depression will shake capitalism to its core. Democrats, Republicans and the entire bourgeois class vehemently defend that system, with the police and their guns, the courts and the jails – in short, the capitalist state – at the ready to enforce the dictates of capital.

So it is we who will pay the terrible crisis, which is why the working class must rise up at the head of all the oppressed, leading to a revolutionary struggle for power. Though triggered by a virus, it comes on top of the post-2008 depression from which world capitalism never fully recovered. (In fact, many indicators were pointing to a new major downturn even before the pandemic began.) Mass unemployment will persist, and with it the food lines and growing numbers of homeless. A couple of generations of young people face a future with dismal job prospects as the "gig economy" dries up. The toll it is already exacting on the youngest is incalculable, as public education has effectively been canceled for the poor, immigrants and others who lack the necessary resources and skills.

In a call for action in the pandemic, issued on March 18, our comrades of Class Struggle Workers – Portland wrote:

"The fact that everyone must have a home is even more obvious and urgent during a pandemic. A militant workers movement would work with tenants and homeless organizations to stop evic-

tions, take over unoccupied apartments, investment properties and second homes of the wealthy and occupy hotel space to provide housing for the homeless instead of the huge profits of speculators and price-gougers."

–"CSWP Calls for Workers Action in Coronavirus Crisis," *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020

House the homeless? Absolutely. There are plenty of rooms to be had in empty hotels and vacant luxury apartments. They should be occupied now! But that raises the question: for how long? And what then? As the CSWP statement underlined:

"Ultimately, it will take a planned economy capable of redirecting production and distribution of medical equipment, safety equipment and basic necessities for a large-scale outbreak, with workplaces organized with the safety of workers as a central priority, in order to effectively fight a pandemic. That means a fight to end this capitalist system of profit-driven chaos, incompetence, racism and exploitation, and establish a workers government."

If the bankruptcy of capitalism wasn't painfully clear before the pandemic crisis, it surely is now. Whether to resolve mass homelessness or produce desperately needed ventilators, what's required is to smash the moribund system in which production is for profit, not to fill human needs. To lift the impoverished out of the destitution to which they are condemned in this barbaric society that lets 100,000 lives be snuffed out in two months, it will take nothing less than international socialist revolution. To lead that fight, we must undertake the difficult task of forging a revolutionary workers party. ■

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be agreed to in advance of reopening. Thus in Los Angeles, where the contract with the LAUSD allows for absurdly large class sizes of 45 students, teachers should demand that this be cut by two-thirds, or more.

Liberals can publish Diane Ravitch columns and statistics-rich studies laying out the disastrous effects of corporatization, privatization and charterization of the schools and calling on the Cuomos and de Blasios to "do the right thing," but that won't stop the *bipartisan capitalist war on education*. As we have pointed out,⁴ this assault on the public schools is the result of decaying imperialism, whose results are now being vividly played out before our eyes in the devastation wrought by the deadly coronavirus pandemic, the mass unemployment resulting from it, and the onslaught of police violence seeking to quash opposition to racist U.S. capitalism.

The fight to defeat the forces that would destroy public schools, as well as the struggle of educators to provide an enriching education that can actually aid the students from working-class, immigrant, poor and doubly oppressed communities who make up the vast majority of those in the NYC public schools, must be a *political struggle against the capitalist system* which breeds poverty, racism and war. It requires a *break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties*, and the *forging of a class-struggle workers party* to fight for socialist revolution, here and internationally. ■

⁴ See "Defeat the Capitalist Onslaught Against Public Education!" (2001) in *The Internationalist* special supplement, *Marxism and the Battle Over Education* (2008)

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waged, from the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the napalming of Vietnam to Barack Obama's kill list of drone strikes in the Middle East, are just as much the enemies of the poor, oppressed and working people, and all the more dangerous because many have illusions in them.

As revolutionary Marxists – supporters of the politics of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the leaders of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution – we speak the truth to the masses. And the truth is that neither Republicans nor Democrats will or can do away with the terrible scourges brought upon us by the decaying capitalist system of war, poverty and racism which they represent. The workers and oppressed should not give one vote for Democrats, Republicans or any capitalist party or politician. We need a party to defend those victimized by the bourgeois rulers, including women, gay, lesbian and transgender people, survivors of the racist injustice system. We need a workers party to fight all the bosses' parties on a revolutionary program to sweep away the entire capitalist system that is the source of our misery.

At the same time, while giving no political support to bourgeois parties, class-conscious workers fight against all attacks on democratic rights such as we face today.

Election Campaign: A Festival of Reaction

The election campaign has been a festival of reaction, with both the main parties of U.S. imperialism wrapping themselves in the flag, Democrats and Republicans alike calling to "get tough on China," and competing with each other in hailing the repressive forces of the capitalist state. Yet dreading four more years of Trump and his gang of all-round reactionaries, millions of young people, African Americans, Latinos, women and many union workers have been waiting hours in line at early voting sites to cast a ballot for Biden-Harris, while hardcore Trumpers are focusing on November 3. Now we're down to the wire, and everyone is focusing on Election Day ... and the days and weeks of turmoil likely to come after.

Trump has more than once proclaimed that as president he has "total" authority, that he "calls the shots," that states "can't do anything" without his approval, that "I have the power to do whatever I want as president."¹ In June Trump tried to invoke the 1807 Insurrection Act against anti-racist protesters in Washington, D.C.; in July he dispatched federal snatch squads to Portland in an attempt to impose martial law; in August he put Kenosha, Wisconsin under National Guard occupation; in September he sent a hit squad to Washington state to gun down an antifa activist from Portland.

Trump figures he can count on the I.C.E. immigration cops and other Department of Homeland Security forces (Border Patrol, Federal Protective Services, U.S. Marshals) who act as his private police invading other jurisdictions. Plus his attorney general William Barr is busily lining up local police around the country. Scenarios are not hard to foresee: "security" forces signed up by Republican PACs, along with right-wing militias and fascists provoke clashes during the voting or in the next days; local cops crack down on pro-

¹ *Washington Post*, 24 July 2019; CNN, 17 April 2020.

Friedrich Engels on the Housing Question

A century and a half ago Friedrich Engels, who together with Karl Marx authored *The Communist Manifesto*, wrote a study of *The Housing Question* (1872). In Part II on "How the Bourgeoisie Solves the Housing Question," Engels connected the miserable housing conditions of the workers with epidemics:

"Modern natural science has proved that the so-called 'poor districts' in which the workers are crowded together are the breeding places of all those epidemics which from time to time afflict our towns. Cholera, typhus, typhoid fever, small-pox and other ravaging diseases spread their germs in the pestilential air and the poisoned water of these working-class quarters. In these districts, the germs hardly ever die out completely, and as soon as circumstances permit it they develop into epidemics and then spread beyond their breeding places also into the more airy and healthy parts of the town inhabited by the capitalists. Capitalist rule cannot allow itself the pleasure of creating epidemic diseases among the working class with impunity; the consequences fall back on it and the angel of death rages in its ranks as ruthlessly as in the ranks of the workers."

In the present pandemic, it is striking

how COVID-19, which did not start out as a disease of the poor, quickly became that as it ravaged the poor and immigrant neighborhoods where working people live jammed together in narrow spaces. Engels stresses that this is inherent in capitalism:

"In such a society the housing shortage is no accident; it is a necessary institution and it can be abolished together with all its effects on health, etc., only if the whole social order from which it springs is fundamentally refashioned."

And he sums up the bourgeois "solution" to the housing question:

"The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night, are not abolished; they are merely shifted elsewhere! The same economic necessity which produced them in the first place, produces them in the next place also. As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labor by the working class itself."

testers; the administration declares a civil disorder under 18 U.S. Code, Section 231 and deploys the U.S. military to lock down “Democrat-run cities,” as he threatened to do in June. Or Plan B, or C, or D.

Yet the response of the Democratic Party is to look to the same repressive apparatus which Friedrich Engels (and Lenin after him) defined as the special bodies of armed men (police, military) and their auxiliaries (courts, prisons) who are the heart of the capitalist state. Never forget that while police forces from New York to Minneapolis to Portland, Seattle and elsewhere may chafe at the bit, as we have stressed, in cities from coast to coast, “Democrats are the bosses of the racist killer cops.” Meanwhile, Biden has said that if Trump refuses to leave, he expects the Pentagon chiefs and the Secret Service to “escort him from the White House with dispatch.” So we are hearing coup talk on both sides. But so far it is just talk, we’ll see what comes next.

Trump is an outlier, seeking to install an authoritarian regime, while Biden with all his talk of “decency” and civility is counting on the core of U.S. imperialist power to ensure his victory. Proud Boy thugs must be stopped with workers power, but the vastly larger strategic threat posed by the Democrats is exemplified by the arsenal that has laid waste to Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, before that Vietnam and Korea under their command (as well the Republicans’).

As we approach the deadline, many leftists and “progressive” trade-unionists have vowed to hit the streets to “defeat the Trump coup.” For the most part these will likely be pro-Biden demonstrations. Revolutionary Marxists, in contrast, will fight not for the victory of one of the bourgeois contenders but to defend democratic rights with sharp class struggle pointing toward establishing organizing centers of workers power.

The Face of Barbarism

Over a century ago, the Polish-German communist Rosa Luxemburg wrote that the choice is “socialism or barbarism.” Today we are staring barbarism in the face.

The coronavirus pandemic has already led to the deaths of more than 225,000 people in the U.S., and over 1 million across the globe. Nearly 9 million people in the United States have fallen ill with COVID-19, with new cases averaging 75,000 a day and climbing. Globally there have been 45 million reported cases. While the U.S. is rightly regarded as the having the worst record in handling the deadly dis-



John Dufloka / AP

On June 1, Trump tried to impose martial law in Washington, D.C., trying to invoke the 1807 Insurrection Act.

ease, Western Europe has had 5.9 million cases and close to 200,000 deaths. And while the Democrats just pin the virus’ spread on Trump with his anti-scientific bombast and talk of COVID-19 miraculously “disappearing,” half the deaths in the U.S. (110,000) have been in states with Democratic governors, although now the deadly toll is rising rapidly in Republican-governed states like Florida and Texas.

Yet in China, where the disease first appeared, there have been only 95,000 cases and less than 5,000 deaths. Why this striking difference? Trump and the Democrats absurdly accuse China of some underhanded plot or mishandling the coronavirus. In fact, China did far, far better than the West in containing it and treating the victims. The reason is simple: China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state with a planned economy, quickly directed resources to where they were needed to save human lives. Every symptomatic case was housed in isolation centers while two new hospitals were built from scratch in ten days in Wuhan. In the capitalist world, the pandemic threatened to overwhelm a public health system gutted by decades of cutbacks, and all but the most serious cases were sent home, to infect family members and others.²

Now the economic consequences of this *capitalist disaster* are hitting home. The initial impact was mitigated by the one-time \$1,200 “stimulus” checks and the \$600/week pandemic unemployment assis-

² See our article “A Tale of Two Cities: Wuhan – New York,” *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020.

tance, which included many workers normally unable to get unemployment benefits (but not millions of hard-hit immigrants). Since the beginning of March, over 66 million workers filed unemployment claims, far more than at any time in U.S. history. Now many so-called “furloughs” are becoming permanent job losses. Not only start-ups and restaurants but long-established retail chains, hotels and other capitalist giants have closed their doors. The airlines are teetering, even with over \$50 billion in free cash from the federal government, and mass layoffs are being announced. In mid-town Manhattan, 90% of office space is empty, a disaster for the commercial real estate speculators, which will then shake Wall Street banks.

On top of mass unemployment that will take years to overcome, a “Tidal Wave of Evictions” is looming, as the *Wall Street Journal* (28 October) headlined on its front page, as various federal and state moratoriums expire. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, triggered by usurious “sub-prime mortgages,” 10 million home “owners” lost their homes as banks foreclosed. Now the number of residential renters unable to keep up with rent is estimated at between 30 and 50 million households. Should those evictions go

through, it would produce an explosion in homelessness. But such a calamity could also produce a tidal wave of class struggle – the key question is leadership, and specifically one prepared to wage a revolutionary fight to bring down capitalism.

In this period of putrefying capitalism, with social services pared to the bone, public schools under bipartisan attack, tens of millions unemployed, major industries on the edge of bankruptcy, the whole house of cards could collapse. Under these conditions, no lasting reforms to soften the devastation are possible. Talk from Bernie Sanders liberals and reformist pseudo-socialists of a “Green New Deal,” “Medicare for all” and other measures of “welfare state” capitalism are pipe dreams. Not only are the “corporate Democrats” who run the party dead-set against them, Wall Street won’t finance them. The Federal Reserve pumped trillions of dollars into the economy by running the printing presses and buying up corporate bonds. But soon the music of this frenzied “dance of the trillions” will stop.

Early on in the pandemic, after the initial shock that sent share prices tumbling, many decried the obscene spectacle of Wall Street indexes reaching record heights while the economy was largely shut down, with profits falling and tens of thousands dying. But there was a (grotesque) logic to it: who needs profits when Uncle Sam, or in this case Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell, is pouring billions into your coffers? Time to party on. The winners – IT monopolists Apple, Google, Microsoft, Amazon – raked in the dough. Apple soared to \$2 trillion market evaluation in August, five months after passing the \$1 trillion mark. Megafirms drove up their market value with stock buybacks; others have been cashing out of this “casino capitalism.” Now with rising infection rates in Europe and the uncertain U.S. election, the selloff may have begun.


It all spells trouble for those exploited and oppressed by capitalism, whose toil produces the profits the bosses are gambling with. Those workers who were hoodwinked by Trump into believing his lies about reviving U.S. industry have nothing to show for it. But the Democrats are no better. The



World Is One News (India)

China’s planned economy made it possible to mobilize resources to contain the coronavirus. On September 1, all schools were reopened, safely.

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“free trade” policies of the Clinton-Obama-Biden administrations hollowed out domestic production, leaving many blue-collar workers jobless. As for the super-rich, the U.S. ruling class is not enamored of the erratic Donald Trump, but they do enjoy the billions from his tax “reform,” which the Democrats voted for. Biden reassured New York billionaires at a ritzy fundraiser in the swanky Carlyle Hotel in June 2019, that “nothing would fundamentally change” if he is elected, that he would not “demonize anybody who has made money.”

Nothing would change for those on top, but for those at the bottom of capitalist society, the “good old days” pre-Trump were not good at all. The average weekly real wages of production workers are less than they were 50 years ago (\$318 in 2019, \$328 in 1969, in 1982-84 dollars). Today millions of working people are fighting for survival, looking into the abyss. In New York City you only have to recall the flashing red lights of the ambulances carrying off COVID patients at all hours, the refrigerated trailers with cadavers to be transported to mass graves on Ward Island where they were buried in boxes stacked three high and two across. In much of the rest of the country this terrifying scene is playing out today as hospitals are filled to capacity. And on top of that, mass joblessness and homelessness, evictions and endless racist cop violence (1,574 civilians killed by police in the U.S. in 2020, up to October 10).

Trump’s Schemes, and the Democrats’

Donald Trump has not been reticent about voicing his intentions. He has tweeted that mail ballots, which in recent years have been heavily Democratic, will lead to “the Greatest Rigged Election in history,” that people “grab them from mailboxes” and “print thousands of forgeries” (May 24). He has insisted that “the only way we’re going to lose this election is if the election is rigged” (August 17). He has several times refused to commit to a “peaceful transition” of office, saying in one interview: “There won’t be a transfer, frankly. There will be a continuation” (September 23). He has tweeted “Must know Election results on the night of the Election” (July 30), before most mail ballots would have been counted.

A lengthy article on “The Election That Could Break America” by Barton Gellman in the November 2020 issue of *The Atlantic*, released late last month, detailed the many possible ways in which Trump could use his power to prevent a decisive, legally unambiguous outcome against him. Notably there are numerous ambiguities in the 1887 Electoral Count Act, which resulted from the contested 1876 Hayes vs. Tilden presidential election that led to the “Compromise” that removed federal troops from the South, ending Reconstruction and laying the basis for Jim Crow segregation. There are also deadlines which require that electors in the highly undemocratic Electoral College cast their ballots by this December 14.

Gellman reported plans by Republicans in key “battleground states,” several of which have Democratic governors and Republican-controlled legislatures due to gerrymandering. The chairman of the Pennsylvania Republican Party confirmed that he had discussed with Trump’s national campaign the possibility of the legislature appointing a slate of pro-Trump electors even if the vote count goes to Biden. This would be “legal” under the Supreme



Trump and his cabinet attend June 1 photo-op in Washington D.C. after feds brutalize protesters. Democrats are relying on General Milley (on right).

Court’s ruling in the 2000 election which handed the presidency to Republican George W. Bush even though Democrat Al Gore won the popular vote. And now conservatives have a solid lock on the high court with the rushed confirmation of rightist Amy Coney Barrett after liberal justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died last month.

But it’s not just legal maneuvering. This month, Attorney General Barr and acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf have been going around the country talking with local police chiefs (but not mayors) in “Democrat-run cities,” including New York City and Portland, Oregon, about plans for the next few months. Barr’s Department of Justice offered \$3 million to Minneapolis police to provide “training” following the racist cop murder of George Floyd last May. The *Wall Street Journal* (5 October) reported that the New York Police Department is putting all 35,000 uniformed cops through two-day retraining on dealing with large-scale protests, and police commissioner Dermot Shea canceled all leaves and vacations through the end of the year citing the possibility of “violence.” Coming from the NYPD chief, that’s a threat.

What that retraining could consist of might be a repeat of the kind of massive repression that Republican mayor Michael Bloomberg carried out during the 2004 Republican convention in New York when the police arrested entire demonstrations of 1,500 protesters and locked up almost 2,000 of them without food and water in Pier 57. Meanwhile, in preparation for the October 3 Portland rally by the fascist Proud Boys, the DOJ federalized the riot police squads of the Portland Police Bureau, the Multnomah County Sheriff’s Department and the Oregon State Police. This means that anyone who so much as sneezes near one of these robocops could face federal charges of years in jail rather than disorderly conduct misdemeanors. It also means that the feds could de facto seize operational control of local police in a hot situation.

So there is a full-scale operation underway to ramp up heavy-duty repression on Election Day and after, combined with a huge legal offensive seeking to ensure a Trump “victory.” What, then, are the Democrats planning? They have their own phalanx of lawyers, of course. Democratic governors could counter electors appointed by Republican legislatures by naming their own slates, so that two different sets could show up at the Electoral College. Liberal activist groups such as Hold the Line (which has put out a 55-page “how-to” guide) have

been making plans for mass pro-Biden “election protection” demonstrations from November 3 onward. Various reformist left groups have joined in calling for mass mobilization to “defend the vote,” meaning to put Democrat Biden in the White House.

Top-level Democrats and anti-Trump Republicans have also been meeting to prepare plans to counter a Trump power grab. The Transition Integrity Project (TIP) held war games this June with “a bipartisan group of over 100 current and former senior government and campaign leaders and other experts” to look at various scenarios in a contested election. The TIP’s August 3 report, “Preventing a Disrupted Presidential Election and Transition,” concludes that “The administrative transition process itself may be highly disrupted” and “The potential for violent conflict is high, particularly since Trump encourages his supporters to take up arms.” It also noted that “Trump might himself initiate a foreign crisis” to divert media attention. An attack on Chinese forces would put the Democrats in a bind, as they have put themselves forward as the bigger anti-Communist war hawks.

But what happens when the Trump regime, with control of the White House, the Senate, the Supreme Court and the massive federal government apparatus, digs in? All the TIP scenarios except for a clear Biden win ended up with two competing claimants to the White House, in which case, “It was unclear what the military would do.” The TIP’s imagined positive outcome hinges on the Pentagon brass leaking that “the Joint Chiefs’ commitment was to the Constitution rather than to the President,” while the Secret Service demonstrated its “culture of professionalism” by “indicating that it would be ‘loyal to the office, not to the person’ and therefore it would escort Trump out of the White House on January 20.” In other words, it would take a military assist for Democrat Biden to take office.

Likewise, the Gellman *Atlantic* article admonishes, “If you have a place in the military chain of command, remember your duty to turn aside unlawful orders.” And it’s not just war gamers and pundits. There was Biden’s comment on Trevor Noah’s *Daily Show* (June 11) that he was “so damn proud” of military leaders who had recently criticized Trump, and “I’m absolutely convinced, they will escort him from the White House with dispatch.” And in August, two well-known retired military officers wrote an open letter to General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, rais-

ing the danger of authoritarian rule and saying that “If Donald Trump refuses to leave office at the expiration of his constitutional term, the United States military must remove him by force, and you must give that order” (DefenseOne, 8 August).

Revolutionary Leadership Is Key

Then we have the left in the United States, such as it is. And that is overwhelmingly reformist and in the Democrats’ camp. In our earlier article on the elections (“Democrats’ Pro-Cop Ticket Vies with Trump Over ‘Law and Order’,” bottom of page 1 of this issue), we noted that several groups are this time around openly calling to vote for Biden, including the former Moscow Stalinist Communist Party USA (CPUSA), “which has regularly backed Democrats since Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936,” and the Maoists of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), with its various front groups (Refuse Fascism, World Can’t Wait), with its guru Bob Avakian calling for “actually voting for the Democratic Party candidate, Biden, in order to effectively vote *against Trump*.”

Now they have been joined by the main leaders of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which since its birth in the 1980s has been tied to the Democratic Party by an umbilical cord.³ The DSA has expanded tenfold since pre-Trump days, becoming the voice of millennial social democracy. In particular, it was the backbone of Senator Bernie Sanders’ bid for the Democratic presidential election up until that campaign collapsed as the party leadership rolled out its heavyweights to ensure Biden’s nomination in the Super Tuesday primaries last April.⁴ DSA superstar Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez quickly announced that she would be voting for Biden. But last year the DSA passed a “Bernie or Bust” resolution and after bust came in April, it tweeted “We are not endorsing Joe Biden.”

But with the moment of truth fast approaching – big surprise! –the Socialist Majority Caucus and a host of other prominent DSAers announced that they were “Organizing Against Trump” and appealed to others to join in “phonebanking, text-banking, doorknocking, and other organizing to defeat Trump,” i.e., to get out the vote for you-know-who. There’s not much to be said to or about these foot soldiers for the Democrats, many of whom may aspire to move up the ranks to run for office, or to become staffers in a Biden administration or in unions led by “progressive” Democrats. In various places, DSA candidates will be elected, particularly in big cities like New York and Chicago or in college towns, meaning that they will act as ward heelers and sheep dogs for the Democratic machine to keep the millennials in line.

Then there are those self-proclaimed socialist groups, several of which make some claim of affinity with Lenin and Trotsky, which are formally not calling to vote for Biden, but are in practice lining up with the Democrats in the post-election turmoil to come. Socialist Alternative (SAIt) is now calling for votes to the Green Party candidate, Howie Hawkins.

³ See “The Real Heritage of Harrington’s DSA” and “Democratic Socialism” in the Service of U.S. Imperialism,” in the Internationalist Group pamphlet, *DSA: Fronting for the Democrats* (2018).

⁴ See “Like We Said, Bernie Sanders’ ‘Political Revolution’ Was a Scam,” *Revolution* No. 17, August 2020.

Brendan Smialowski / AFP



Then-vice-president Joe Biden meeting with police chiefs. Democrat Biden has always maintained close ties with the police, but now they back Trump.

The Greens are a minor capitalist party whose role is to act as a pressure group on the Democrats. SALT now says it “warned at every stage in both Bernie’s 2016 and 2020 campaigns that the Democratic Party leadership simply would not accept him as their nominee,” while leaving out how it stumped for Democratic candidate Sanders, including with its #Movement4Bernie. Now it is putting forward the same Green New Deal/Medicare/tax the rich program of the Sanders/AOC Democrats.

With the election heating up, SALT has even come out with a CYA article on “Why the Left Shouldn’t Support Joe Biden.” At the same time, two SALT-aligned union presidents issued an appeal that “Unions Need to Get Organized Now to Defend the Vote” (*Socialist Alternative*, 20 October), saying that “if Trump, the Republicans, and their lawyers try to steal the election through voter disenfranchisement,” then “we should organize mass demonstrations demanding every vote counts.” It cites a widely circulated resolution of the Rochester, New York Labor Council calling on the national AFL-CIO to “prepare for and enact a general strike of all working people, if necessary, to ensure a Constitutionally mandated peaceful transition of power.” This is a call to mobilize labor to put Democrat Biden, the quintessential capitalist establishment pol and master of mass incarceration, in office.

A second group, Freedom Socialist Party (FSP), issued a call for a “United Front Against Reaction” which has since morphed into a “United Front Against Repression” to protest Trump’s “Constitution-shredding bid to steal the election.” While

vowing to defend democratic rights “while still maintaining our own independent political identities,” this is a classic popular-front call to “fight the right” with contingents in the demonstrations and marches to come, which will overwhelmingly be demonstrations of political support to Biden. In the election itself, the FSP is calling to vote for Jeff Mackler, the write-in presidential candidate of Socialist Action (S.A.).

S.A.’s Mackler is running on a platform not that different from that of other social-democratic groups like the FSP and SALT. It repeats the calls pushed by the DSA and the entire reformist milieu to cut funding to the police, throwing in disarm and disband, without saying that this is impossible short of a socialist revolution. Plus tax the rich, shut down the war machine, community control, nationalize big oil. When it comes to how this is to be done, Socialist Action talks only of “a fundamental reorganization of society – for socialism.” Similar calls could be found from left elements in social-democratic parties in Sweden or Britain, who seek to introduce “socialism” within the framework of the capitalist state.

But as Election Day draws near, S.A. has taken up the call to hit the streets to “counter a potential Trump coup.” It adds: “Yes, we will say – assuming this is clear – that Biden won the election and should be president,” while then piously adding that it would expose “the totally corrupt nature of billionaire capitalist-orchestrated elections and Democrat Biden.” No matter how much S.A. says it would act “without in any manner indicating political support to Biden and the Democrats,” this is saying it would mobilize to ensure that he takes

office, which is political support. Genuine revolutionaries would mobilize against violation of democratic rights and police repression, but on a program of opposing the Democrats and all capitalist parties and fighting for socialist revolution.

Today, authentic Trotskyists must be prepared to mobilize on a class basis, politically independent and against all bourgeois parties,

in fighting to defend democratic rights and to oppose repression by the capitalist state, represented by both Democrats and Republicans. In the concrete, leftists mobilizing in the streets against an attempt by the Trump regime to annul the popular vote will face repression by police forces under the command of Democratic mayors and governors, and which are effusively supported by both Biden and Trump. *Revolutionary Marxists must make it crystal clear that we would oppose the attempt to install an authoritarian government by extra-legal means but do not call for Biden to take office, from which he will repress the working people, telling his pals the cops to shoot us in the leg while Harris moves to lock us up.*

Any kind of actual mass strike action in this context must be directly connected to a fight to form a workers party on a program of militant class struggle to fight for a workers government. Of course the Democrat-loyal labor lieutenants of capital did not call for a strike (let alone a general one) in Rochester against the racist murder of Daniel Prude by the police – which the law-and-order duo of Biden-Harris want to beef up even further. In contrast, revolutionary Marxists fight for mass workers action, including strikes, against racist cop terror, as part of the urgent struggle against repression. What pro-Democratic Party union leaders mean when they (almost never) dare to utter the words “general strike” is basically a big demonstration combined with a work stoppage, not the prelude to a struggle for state power, as Lenin and Trotsky insisted. When unions in Wisconsin were on the verge of a general strike in February-March 2011, a measure which the Internationalist Group called for from the beginning of the struggle against Republican governor Scott Walker’s union-busting law, with tens of thousands protesting at the state capitol every day, the frightened labor bureaucrats called it off on behalf of the Democratic Party.

A “general strike,” or mass mobilization of any sort, which has as its aim to put Biden/Harris in office, could also be called off by them. Popular-front mobilizations together with sections of the bourgeoisie – which is what social democrats like S.A., SALT and the FSP mean when they talk of a “united front,” like in the antiwar movements they built in the past – are a lifesaver for the ruling class when it is in trouble, as the U.S. bourgeoisie is right now. The danger is not only the authoritarian Trump, but Biden-Harris who boast of their support from a raft of intelligence and retired military (“deep state”) brass.

Struggles in the next period will likely be of a defensive nature, facing ramped-up repression against immigrant, African American, Latino, poor and working-class communities generally. If Trump wins, the police

will be emboldened. If Biden wins, the cops will want to test his professions of support for them. If the situation is confused, the forces of state repression will seek to squelch mass unrest by cracking down hard, going after “antifa,” arresting demonstration leaders as they have done in Denver, New York and now Philadelphia, and/or carrying out mass arrests, as they have been doing for months. Only now the gloves will be off. After the mass protests last summer, the cops are itching for revenge.

Already the I.C.E. police are gearing up for a crackdown on undocumented immigrants following the elections. Black neighborhoods could be terrorized by police working in tandem with fascists and right-wing militias. The Internationalist Group has repeatedly called for bringing out the power of mass workers action against deportations, raids and racist attacks and will continue to insist that mobilizing union power in mass action, and organized defense of the rights of us all, rather than individual actions or unfocused outbursts, is key to defeating the reactionaries allied with the state. The repressive forces of the exploiters and oppressors can only be defeated by a greater power, that of the workers with a leadership that seeks to really *shut it down*, meaning not only a street, a bridge, a tunnel or highway but bringing the capitalist system to a grinding halt.

The key to all of this is the arduous struggle to forge the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party on the program of the Bolsheviks who led the workers revolution of 1917. The Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, has taken on that task. As the repression elections of 2020 highlight, to fight capitalist barbarism and the multiple dangers it poses to the workers and oppressed, we must wage – and win – the fight for socialist revolution. ■

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Millones de inmigrantes indocumentados y sus familias ante el abismo

Nueva York: ¡Exigimos trato igual y apoyo de emergencia para los trabajadores excluidos!

Declaración de Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas

11 de AGOSTO – Ya estamos en el sexto mes de la crisis sanitaria desatada por la pandemia de COVID-19. Un preocupante auge de contagios sacude gran parte del país. La crisis económica se agudiza: el número de desempleados alcanzó los 55 millones a principios de julio, y sigue creciendo. Entretanto, las marchas del movimiento Black Lives Matter (“las vidas negras importan”) contra la racista brutalidad policiaca continúan. Fuerzas federales asedian a Portland, Oregon, con el propósito de suprimir las protestas, y otras ciudades están en la mira. Ante este trasfondo, nuevas tormentas de crisis se avecinan para la clase obrera en general y para los inmigrantes en particular. Muy pronto comenzarán las ordenes de desalojo de familias que no logren pagar la renta. Entre los primeros afectados estarán los inmigrantes indocumentados.

A nivel nacional el impacto de la crisis del coronavirus se vio parcialmente menguado por las medidas de emergencia de la Ley CARES, que otorgó un cheque de \$1,200 por adulto (con ingresos anuales de menos de \$75,000) y \$500 para cada niño, además de un pago adicional de desempleo de \$600 a la semana y la inclusión de millones de trabajadores que antes fueron excluidos del sistema de seguro de desempleo. Todo con una condición: los beneficiarios requieren contar con un número válido del Seguro Social. De esta manera excluyeron a millones de trabajadores inmigrantes indocumentados, muchos de los cuales pagan impuestos con un número de identificación de contribuyente (ITIN). Es más, si se paga impuestos en pareja con una persona indocumentada, o si hay siquiera un indocumentado en la familia, todos tienen prohibido recibir ayuda. En total han sido excluidos *al menos 15 millones de personas*, entre ellas 3.7 millones de niños.

En marzo Nueva York se convirtió en el principal foco de contagio del coronavirus en todo EE.UU. La crisis sanitaria es resultado de la ineficacia e ineptitud de las autoridades burguesas, de la incapacidad del sistema médico capitalista de atender las necesidades de la población, y de su política criminal de enviar a los enfermos “leves” a casa, donde infectan a otros miembros de la familia o a sus compañeros de vivienda. La situación pronto se convirtió en una terrible crisis de supervivencia para los más vulnerables. Miles de personas a diario se volcaban a las largas filas para conseguir ayuda alimenticia en iglesias y centros comunitarios. Éstos no han podido dar abasto a la gran demanda, y con frecuencia muchos de los que hacían cola desde la madrugada, a veces bajo la llu-



Cientos de residentes de Corona, Queens, hacen fila para recibir comida gratis de una iglesia el 27 de abril. Más de 200,000 trabajadores indocumentados en la ciudad de Nueva York han perdido sus trabajos o no pueden encontrar trabajo en medio de la pandemia.

via, regresaban a casa con las manos vacías.

Por un lado, con las políticas de confinamiento, muchos de los inmigrantes indocumentados se han quedado sin empleo. Al no percibir ningún salario ni ayuda, muchos trabajadores inmigrantes, con los pocos ahorros que les quedan, tienen que elegir entre pagar la renta de sus viviendas o comprar víveres. Se calcula que en la ciudad de Nueva York unos 200,000 trabajadores indocumentados han perdido sus empleos o no encuentran trabajo debido a la pandemia. Por otro lado, hay más de un millón de trabajadores considerados “esenciales” para que siga funcionando el sistema de transporte, el suministro de alimentos (supermercados, bodegas), servicios sociales y de salud. La mayoría son inmigrantes, casi las dos terceras partes son negros o latinos, y la gran mayoría reciben salarios de pobreza. A la vez, son ellas y ellos quienes corren mayor riesgo de contagiarse con el coronavirus.

Ya a mediados de abril el gobernador Andrew Cuomo se negó rotundamente a brindar ayuda financiera a las familias inmigrantes indocumentadas, alegando que no había suficiente dinero a causa de los problemas fiscales en el gobierno estatal en Albany (*New York Post*, 16 de abril). *¡Burda mentira!* En la misma época, el estado de California decidió proveer \$75 millones de ayuda monetaria directa de \$500 c/u para un número limitado de 150,000 inmigrantes indocumentados. La ayuda que se dio a los beneficiados mediante una especie de lotería (que se repartió a los primeros en llamar) fue realmente mínima, ya que en California hay dos millones de indocumentados. Sin embargo, en el estado y la ciudad de Nueva York no se ha brindado *nada* de apoyo financiero oficial a los trabajadores

inmigrantes. Esto es intolerable.

Según la Oficina de Asuntos de los Inmigrantes municipal de Nueva York, el 37% de los residentes de la ciudad son inmigrantes y representan el 44% de la fuerza laboral, esto es 3.2 millones de inmigrantes. De éstos, 1.2 millones son indocumentados. La gran mayoría de trabajadores indocumentados pagan impuestos por sus salarios, además de que todos pagan impuestos por las compras que realizan. Aun así, no van a percibir ni un centavo de los beneficios que han financiado con sus aportes al erario público. Se estima que los fondos pagados por los inmigrantes indocumentados al gobierno federal que no son reclamados ascienden *cada año* a aproximadamente *12 mil millones de dólares al Seguro Social* y *\$3 mil millones a Medicare*. Sin este dinero, el sistema de pensiones públicas de EE.UU. padecería de un gran déficit.

Nosotros de Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas exigimos, primero, *que el estado de Nueva York incluya a todos los trabajadores*, particularmente a los indocumentados y a los de la “economía gig” (falsamente clasificados como “trabajadores por cuenta propia”), *entre los beneficiarios del seguro de desempleo*. No estamos mendigando: ya hemos pagado los impuestos. Se ha calculado que, en los últimos diez años, los trabajadores indocumentados en el estado han pagado \$1.4 mil millones en impuestos de seguro de desempleo (Fiscal Policy Institute, 14 de mayo). Segundo, *exigimos del gobierno del estado y de la ciudad que compensen la injusta exclusión de los inmigrantes en los pagos federales de “estímulo” y del fondo de desempleo por la pandemia*. Y tercero, exigimos que *se cancele la renta* (incluyendo la atrasada) de los desempleados y que *se prohíba todo desa-*

lojo residencial en medio de la pandemia.

Varias ONGs (organizaciones no gubernamentales) y defensores de los inmigrantes están apoyando un proyecto de ley (NY S. 8277), auspiciado por la senadora estatal Jessica Ramos y la asambleísta Carmen de la Rosa, que liga un “fondo de rescate de los trabajadores” a un impuesto sobre el patrimonio de los multimillonarios (“billionaire’s tax”). No incumbe a los trabajadores dar consejos al gobierno capitalista sobre dónde y cómo deben encontrar el dinero para pagar lo que los patrones y su estado ya han sacado de la fuerza laboral de los duramente explotados inmigrantes indocumentados, y eso en una crisis por la que los trabajadores “esenciales” están arriesgando sus vidas. Es absurdo fingir que no tienen dinero cuando la ciudad de Nueva York es la capital mundial de las altas finanzas en Wall Street. *Exigimos lo nuestro, lo que precisamos para una vida digna, y punto.*

Estas medidas urgentes están muy lejos de resolver todos los males que están padeciendo los inmigrantes en esta crisis. Hay los cientos de miles de trabajadores agrícolas (800,000 tan solo en los campos de California, 60% de ellos indocumentados) cuyo trabajo es imprescindible para alimentar al país, pero que laboran con casi inexistentes medidas de seguridad por salarios de miseria. Hay ataques racistas, particularmente en contra de los asiáticos, quienes han sido blanco de discriminación por lo que el presidente Trump llama cínica y abusivamente “el virus chino.” Además, está la actividad nefasta del I.C.E. (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), la odiada *migra*, que acecha a nuestras comunidades, que encarcela a decenas de miles de detenidos en condiciones insalubres en sus campos de concentración, y que con sus deportaciones masivas ha exportado el virus a países de América Latina.

Insistimos: Ninguna familia de la clase obrera debería de decidir entre pagar la renta o comprar comida. Nadie debe quedarse en la calle a causa de desempleo y de rentas impagables. *No somos ilegales, somos trabajadores internacionales* y exigimos *plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes*. En vez de rogar a los partidos y políticos capitalistas, demócratas y republicanos, debemos *movilizar la fuerza de la clase obrera*, de los millones de trabajadores inmigrantes junto con todos los oprimidos, *contra la mortífera brutalidad policiaca y los ataques racistas*, para *impedir los desalojos* y para *bloquear las redadas y deportaciones*. Luchamos por *forjar un partido obrero revolucionario* para encabezar esta lucha para *derribar este sistema capitalista que nos está matando*, echándolo al basurero de la historia mediante la *revolución socialista internacional*. ■