

Against Police-State Repression: *Fight for Workers Revolution!*

Trumpland USA: Lurching Toward Authoritarian Rule



Donald Trump at his border wall in Otay Mesa, California, 18 September 2019.

APRIL 29 – Ever since last November’s elections in the United States, the entire world, it seemed, was waiting with baited breath to see what the first day of Donald J. Trump’s second presidency would bring. And now, since January 20, it’s been all Trump, all the time, every day. It started with a tsunami of executive orders, 26 churned out on Inauguration Day (January 20) alone. As of today, he’s up to 141 decrees in his first 100 days in office, an all-time record. This wannabe autocrat revels in issuing “laws” that nobody gets to vote on. We had headlined, “Trump 2: Gearing Up to Rule by Decree” (*The Internationalist* No. 74, September-December 2024). That is exactly what he has done, with a vengeance. *We are all under attack!*

Trump declared undocumented immigrants “enemy aliens” in a supposed invasion of the U.S. by a foreign power (Venezuela?!), using an 18th-century law in order to kick off his vicious program of mass deportations. He repealed 78 executive orders and actions by his predecessor, Democrat Joseph Biden, on everything from climate change to racial “equity.” He declared “America First” to be official U.S. policy in all things international. He ordered the elimination of all programs of “diversity, equity and inclusion.” He ordered the end of “weaponizing” of the legal system “against perceived political opponents,” in order, precisely, to weaponize the Department of “Justice” to go after his political enemies. And much more, all on Day One.

continued on page 6



Demonstrators from the Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants at the NYC May Day 2025 march chanted “I.C.E. Out of New York!”

For Workers Action to Stop Mass Deportations

It’s dark. Your family is sleeping. Then, pounding on the door. Heavily armed, masked men are outside.

“I.C.E. agents. Open the door!”

In neighborhoods across the country this scene is playing out daily as the new administration ramps up its operations to fulfill Republican president Donald Trump’s campaign threat to carry out the biggest mass deportations in U.S. history. It is a war on the working people of this country, tearing apart the social fabric of innumerable communities.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement police and other federal “law en-

forcement” agencies including the Federal Protective Service and Border Patrol under the Department of Homeland Security, as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Agency, are being enlisted in this monstrous crime.

These agencies, often in with the aid of local cops and sheriffs, are using police-state measures that are blatantly illegal, denying people any kind of due process although that is a constitutional right of every person in the United States. These operations are an assault on the rights of all. And they are being carried out with little

opposition from the Democratic Party.

Both of the two capitalist parties that alternate at the helm of U.S. imperialism are partners in the crime of exploiting, oppressing and deporting hard-working, poorly paid immigrants who make up a huge portion of the workforce. Undocumented immigrants and their families number up to 15 million people. And now the government is deporting immigrants with legally protected status.

The Internationalist Group has called for workers action to stop the deportations, and together with Class Struggle Education Workers, Class Struggle Workers – Portland and the

Revolutionary Internationalist Youth, we have launched efforts to enlist unions in the fight for immigrants’ rights and to form committees to defend immigrants in schools and workplaces.

Scenes from the Mass Deportation Horror Show

There is rampant fear in immigrant communities across the U.S., where those without documents toil and raise families, paying almost \$100 billion in taxes yearly while under threat of deportation. Parents afraid to take their kids to school. Sick people afraid

continued on page 15

South Africa: Drop the Charges Against Xolani Khoza!

The government of South Africa is attempting to railroad a unionist who dared to speak out against the current critical state of affairs in the country, including the acute housing crisis and lack of clean water supplies for the poor, as well as “load-shedding” by the electricity system leading to widespread blackouts. Xolani Khoza, a member of the South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a populist bourgeois political party, was arrested on 24 June 2024.

Khoza is being charged for posting a TikTok video criticizing the social realities of South Africa, calling for a shut-down to protest the so-called “Government of National Unity” (GNU) headed by the African National Congress (ANC), and for the ouster of Cyril Ramaphosa as president of South Africa. For this he has been charged with “incitement to commit terrorism, public violence, and intimidation” under the apartheid-era (1956) Riotous Assemblies Act. He was further charged under a 2020 Cybercrimes Act for “inciting violence” via social media.

What Khoza said in his Tik Tok video was that “the country must be shut down and the President must be removed.” This is pretty tame, and hardly an incitement to terrorism or violence! But in the precarious conditions of neo-apartheid South African capitalism, even such political statements are not tolerated. And it speaks volumes that a government headed by the African National Congress is resorting to the same 1956 law that was used in the Treason Trial against ANC leaders, including Nelson Mandela.

Though Khoza was released on bail – having been banned from social media as part of the condition for his release – he is set to go on trial on May 9. The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International call for the immediate dropping of charges against Xolani Khoza and to mobilize workers power to defend democratic rights in South Africa. A work stoppage by SACCAWU (and other unions) for their union brother’s freedom would go a long way to countering this attack on the basic democratic right of freedom of speech in South Africa.



Internationalist Group at May 9 NYC protest called by the Partisan Defense Committee against repression of South African trade-unionist Xolani Khoza.

Whither South Africa?

The case against Xolani Khoza comes amidst a substantial shift in South African politics. The ANC-led “Government of National Unity,” formed the same month of Khoza’s arrest, includes: the Democratic Alliance (a right-liberal party with significant backing in the Cape Coloured¹ and white communities), the Patriotic Alliance (a right-wing populist and anti-immigrant party), Freedom Front Plus (FFP, an ultra-reactionary and racist Afrikaner² party), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP, a virulently anti-communist, anti-worker Zulu-nationalist party), amongst some other smaller ones.

Since first coming to office in 1994 – both during and after the earlier Government of National Unity with FW de Klerk’s National Party broke apart in 1999 – the ANC governed at the head of the Tripartite Alliance, a class-collaborationist “popular front” together with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Throughout this period of “majority rule,” although the political system was bourgeois “democracy,” South African capitalism has remained intact and continues to be based on the brutal super-

¹ Cape Coloureds are an interracial population, predominant in the Western Cape region.

² Afrikaners are the white South African ethnic group descended from the mostly Dutch settlers who first arrived in the region in 1652. They were the base of the National Party, the predominant political force under the white-supremacist apartheid regime.

exploitation of black labor in the mines, the economic basis of apartheid rule.

Since 2017, the ANC has been headed by mining boss Ramaphosa, who has been president since 2018. The stark contradictions of neo-apartheid South Africa were laid bare in the 2012 Marikana massacre, when 34 striking miners were gunned down by the police.³ Ramaphosa, the founding leader of the National Union of Mineworkers, had by then become a member of the board of directors of the struck mine, and called for the police to be used against the strikers. That he has now broken with the Tripartite ANC-SACP-COSATU Alliance follows the logic of his personal evolution, and of the popular front, which invariably spells defeat for the workers.

As the social and economic crises in the country have been exacerbated over the past few decades, the ANC has lost popular support gained during the struggle against apartheid, and has now pivoted to align with those same political forces (the FFP and IFP) which fought to keep the system of white minority rule chugging along. And recently the South African Police carried out Operation Vala Umgodi, surrounding hundreds of informal miners trapped in a Stilfontein gold mine, preventing aid and delaying rescue operations for months, from August 2024. When they were finally let out in January 2025, only 284 survived, while 87 had died in this *mass murder*.⁴

The ANC has presided over the maintenance of capitalism in a country where the majority of the politically conscious working class considers themselves communist or socialist. It serves to maintain the wealth of the white business magnates, the black *nouveau riche*, the Randlords⁵ and imperialists. It resorted to the current “national unity” government as the only way to maintain political control, having garnered only 40% of the vote in the last

³ See “Bloody South Africa Mine Massacre Unmasks ANC Neo-Apartheid Regime,” *The Internationalist*, November-December 2012.

⁴ See “Death of Miners in South Africa a Government Failure,” Human Rights Watch, 22 January 2025. “We are not sending help to criminals. We are going to smoke them out.... Criminals are not to be helped; criminals are to be prosecuted,” said a government minister (Deutsche Welle, 14 November 2024).

⁵ Owners of the mines on the Witwatersrand.

election, while the EFF won 10% and disgraced former ANC leader and president Jacob Zuma’s uMkhonto we Sizwe (not to be confused with the armed-wing of the ANC during Apartheid) party got 15%.

Forward to Socialist Revolution

The fracturing of the Tripartite Alliance and its utter failure to bring a decent life to those who toil in the mines and lack essential services in the impoverished, segregated townships, has pushed the rulers further to the right, but it also offers openings for revolutionaries, as well as for opportunists. The League for the Fourth International calls to fight for a black-centered workers government and socialist revolution throughout Africa. The International Communist League (ICL) and Spartacist South Africa, however, while rightly campaigning to defend Xolani Khoza against repression, cross the class line by giving “critical support” to the bourgeois populist EFF.⁶

The EFF is headed by demagogue Julius Malema who cut his teeth in the ANC Youth League, forming the EFF after his expulsion from the ANC. He seeks to get a piece of the pie by exclusively promoting the black bourgeoisie. The EFF calls for expropriation of land without compensation, but says that land leases may be “applied for by private corporations and individuals.”⁷ He also says he would uphold South Africa’s constitution, which protects private property (Section 25). As for immigrants, who have been the targets of murderous pogroms, partly incited by the Ramaphosa government, EFF leader Malema says, “They must come with their documents” (*African Times*, 28 May 2024).

The ICL also sharply criticized the EFF up until 2020, saying, “While the EFF uses left-sounding populist rhetoric, both [it and the ANC] are bourgeois-nationalist parties that represent the class enemy” (*Workers Vanguard*, 3 May 2019). This is true! So why the pivot? The ICL, under new nationalist-oriented management, now endorses a “two-stage” revolution in South Africa and elsewhere, completely abandoning the Trotskyist program of *permanent revolution*. In justifying its political support for the bourgeois EFF, the ex-Trotskyist ICL calls for “national liberation” is at bottom the same as the “National Democratic Revolution” espoused by Stalinists, pseudo-Trotskyists and “socialists” of all stripes under apartheid.

South Africa has recently been in the crosshairs of U.S. imperialism under President Donald Trump, who has denounced the 2022 law providing for expropriation of unused land, saying that it “blatantly discriminates against ethnic minority Afrikaners.” This is no outlier, as his hatchet man Elon Musk, who grew up in South Africa, has accused South Africa of having “racist ownership laws”

⁶ See SSA leaflet of 27 April 2024, reprinted in *AmaBolshevik! Amnyama* No. 2, 24 November 2024.

⁷ From the Founding Manifesto of the Economic Freedom Fighters. See “On Land Expropriation Without Compensation: Frequently Asked Questions” (2020). The call for nationalization of land is a supportable democratic – rather than socialist – demand, essentially to break up monopolies of land ownership, which South Africa certainly suffers from.

Visit the League for the Fourth International/
Internationalist Group on the Internet
<https://www.internationalist.org>

The Internationalist

A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism
for the Reforging of the Fourth International

Publication of the Internationalist Group,
section of the League for the Fourth International

EDITORIAL BOARD: Jan Norden (editor), Fred Bergen, Mark Lazarus, Tristán Mirabal (pamphlets), Abram Negrete, Jay Wood, Ines Young

The Internationalist (ISSN 1091-2843) is published 5 times a year by Mundial Publications, P.O. Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.
Telephone: (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711 E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com
Subscriptions: US\$10 for five issues.

No. 75



January-May 2025

Mobilize Workers Power to Defend Democratic Rights! For a Black-Centered Workers Government! Trump Embraces Afrikaner Racist Trope

On January 20, among the more than three dozen executive orders and actions by President Donald Trump on Inauguration Day was one banning all refugee admissions (or even processing of requests for asylum) to the United States for 90 days. But before that deadline was up, even as immigration police abduct immigrants across the country, on May 12 a plane landed at Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C., bringing 59 so-called refugees from Africa to the United States. This was no act of benevolence by the imperialists toward people desperately fleeing armed conflicts in, say, Sudan or Congo. Rather, it was a sinister and racist PR stunt headlined by the white-supremacist in chief. The “refugees” were Afrikaners, mostly farmers, ditching South Africa for greener, or should we say whiter, pastures in the United States.

On the day these “refugees” arrived, Trump held a press conference where he stated there was a “genocide taking place.” He, of course, was not referring to the ongoing U.S./Israel genocidal war against Gaza, but to the completely fictitious and overtly racist claim that there is an ongoing genocide against white people in South Africa. That much was nothing new for Trump, who had touted this fiction during his first term. But then it came up again, when Trump met with South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa and other South African government leaders at the White House on May 21. This time the U.S. president

and slammed the government for supposedly doing little to stop what he called “genocide” against white farmers. For a reality check, 72% of land in South Africa is owned by whites (Government of South Africa, *Land Audit Report* [2018]).

Citing South Africa’s very limited land expropriation law, Trump offered to bring white South African “refugees” to the U.S. and issued an executive order cutting off all U.S. aid to South Africa, including funding for programs for HIV/AIDS treatment. But whether under Biden or Trump, Democrats or Republicans, U.S. imperialism is an enemy of the working and oppressed peoples of Africa, supporting formal apartheid up to the end, and today deploying its Africa Command in the Sahel region of West Africa. Revolutionary internationalists call to *drive out the U.S. and all imperialists*, and for a *socialist federation of Africa*.

Support to the EFF or any bourgeois faction spells more misery for South Africa’s working class. Only class independence of the working class can lead to genuine liberation, which in South African means fighting for a *black-centered workers government*, not a pseudo-“progressive” black bourgeoisie! And only a genuine communist party forged in class struggle, on the proletarian internationalist program of Lenin and Trotsky, can lead this fight to victory. ■



South African president Cyril Ramaphosa at Oval Office meeting with U.S. president Donald Trump attempting to counter the racist myth of “white genocide” being pushed by the White House in admitting Afrikaner “refugees.” Rather than apologizing for South Africa’s tepid land “expropriation” law, Trotskyists call to fight for expropriation of all the capitalists through socialist revolution.

subjected the black South African leader to a tongue-lashing and a staged media event with photographs and video of supposed murders of Afrikaner farmers and other white people, in a blatant attempt at humiliation.

This all occurred in the aftermath of a February 7 Presidential Order to suspend aid to the country to protest South Africa’s Expropriation Act 13 of 2024,¹ allowing for the seizure of idle lands, and the expulsion of South Africa’s U.S. ambassador, Ebrahim Rasool, the following month. Secretary of State Marco Rubio officially declared Rasool *persona non grata* on March 14, over the latter’s criticism of the U.S./Israeli genocidal war against Palestinians, stating Rasool was “a race-baiting politician who hates America and hates @POTUS [the President of the United States].” The Trump regime has been particularly incensed over South Africa’s bringing a case to the International Court of Justice charging Israel with genocide for its massive slaughter of the Palestinian people of Gaza.

The Billionaire Tango

In the May 21 White House meeting, which lasted around an hour, about 20 minutes in, a South African journalist asked Trump “what will it take for you to be convinced there is no ‘white genocide’ in South Africa.” That sprung the trap, although it was hardly unexpected, since Ramaphosa had gone to Washington precisely to refute those claims. The U.S. president told staffers to dim the lights and put on a queued-up video, and then started flipping through pages of articles and photos purportedly about murders of Afrikaner farm-

¹ The Act, drafted by the ANC in 2020, provides for market-rate compensation for expropriation save for cases in which the land is not in use (usually in order to cash in on rising land prices), and in instances wherein the market value of the land is equal to or less than existing state investment on that land.

ers saying “death, death, death, death.” Yet one of the main images was later confirmed by Reuters as a photo their journalist captured in Congo. Not too many white farmers there!

The video showed a clip of Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader Julius Malema speaking at a rally agitating for land occupations and singing *Dubul’ Ibhunú* (roughly translated as Shoot the Boer), a popular anti-apartheid struggle song. “Boer” means peasant or farmer in Afrikaans, the Dutch-derived language of the initial white settlers in South Africa. In fact, Afrikaners were at the hard core of support for the apartheid system of rigid racial segregation and restrictions on the non-white population, designed to institutionalize the superexploitation of black labor. Thousands of black South Africans were killed in the decades-long struggle against that cruel system, while some took up arms to combat the brutal South African Defense Forces and the fascist Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) that were its front-line defenders.

To refute Trump’s claims, a white South African billionaire, Johann Rupert, cited statistics showing that white people were not the primary murder victims, while John Steenhuisen, the white leader of the Democratic Alliance (DA), said that his party had joined with Ramaphosa’s ANC in a “Government of National Unity” (GNU) precisely in order to keep the likes of Malema’s EFF and former ANC president Jacob Zuma’s uMkhonto weSizwe (MK party),² out of power. He argued that most Afrikaner farmers want to stay and what’s needed is more policing. After this disgusting display of imperialist arrogance and white supremacist garbage from Trump and bourgeois obsequiousness from leaders of South Africa’s GNU, Ramaphosa

² Zuma demagogically took the name of the ANC’s armed wing in the anti-apartheid struggle.

invited the U.S. president to an official state visit to South Africa.

For Socialist Revolution, Not EFF and MK Black Capitalism

While Ramaphosa boasted to South African media that his White House visit was a success, everyone knows that it was anything but. Yet even Ramaphosa’s ANC, greatly weakened by endless corruption scandals in years at the helm, has far more support (40% in the May 2024 elections) than Zuma’s MK (14.5%) or Malema’s EFF (9.5%). To the extent that the EFF has gained some popularity, it is in largely due to its call for expropriation of land without compensation, also raised by the MK. The land question is fundamental in South Africa, where 80% of the population is black and 7% is white, yet over 70% of the land is owned by whites and less than 5% by black South Africans. The ANC’s 2024 land law, which Trump vituperated against and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio called “racist,” would do little to change this.

Yet the calls by the EFF and MK for expropriation maintain the capitalist framework and the neo-apartheid system that condemns the masses to abject poverty.³ Nationalization of the land and abolishing private landownership is not in and of itself a socialist demand. Karl Marx raised it in the *Communist Manifesto* and an 1872 address on “The Nationalization of the Land” as a transitional demand leading toward the overthrow of capitalism. However, if corporations can lease the land, as the EFF foresees, it would lead not to socialist revolution but to a black capitalism where billionaires of Ramaphosa’s type continue to exist. Don’t forget that Zuma and Malema were tight with Ramaphosa until they got cut off the gravy train. Jacob Zuma is sitting on US\$20 million of net worth, while Julius Malema at US\$2-3 million is a bit lower on the wealth totem, but a millionaire nonetheless, and the owner of two mansion estates!

The calls for expropriation by the EFF and MK are at bottom no more radical than the ANC’s land law with its tepid talk for expropriation in certain circumstances. No amount of calling members “comrade” at party functions will change the base reality. South African working people need revolutionary expropriation of the Randlords who own the mines, of the large farmers who have become agribusinesses, and of capitalism overall. The League for the Fourth International calls to build a revolutionary workers party to fight for a black-centered workers government and socialist revolution throughout the continent and the world to consign the arrogant imperialists like the white supremacists in the White House to the dustbin of history. ■

³ See “South Africa: Drop the Charges Against Xolani Khoza!” on page 2.

Smash Imperialism with International Socialist Revolution! Defend and Extend the Vietnamese Revolution!

North Vietnamese tank 390 smashed through the gates of the presidential palace in Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. More Soviet and Chinese-built tanks and armored vehicles from Brigade 203 followed. Commandos of the Second Corps stormed the palace. Their commander, Pham Duy Do, described the events to the Vietnam News Agency. "I ran into the main hall and pulled back a curtain and found the entire Saigon regime seated. I shouted 'You're surrounded. Drop your weapons and surrender. Do not move. If you do, we will open fire.'" Pham ran to the second floor and waved the insurgents' flag from the balcony to signal that the palace had been captured. North Vietnamese troops arrested the vice president – U.S. puppet president Nguyen Van Thieu had fled the country two days earlier – and escorted him to a radio station where he announced his government's unconditional surrender. It was noon on 30 April 1975. That afternoon helicopters evacuated the last U.S. personnel from a rooftop near the embassy.

This past 30 April 2025, hundreds of thousands of citizens from across the country and well-wishers from abroad lined the streets of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) to witness the official celebration of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of South Vietnam and national reunification. Videos of the crowd show a sea of the national flag, red with a yellow star, also adorning teenage faces and T-shirts. The flag of the wartime National Liberation Front (NLF), referred to derisively by the U.S. military as "Viet Cong" (for Vietnamese communists), was also prominent. Thousands of troops from all branches of Vietnam's military marched in the lavish official parade, along with Communist Party cadres. Laotian, Cambodian and, for the first time, Chinese, troops marched behind Vietnamese formations. CP general secretary To Lam hailed the celebration of Vietnam's 30-year struggle which put "an end to the more-than-a-century domination of old and new colonialism and bring-



North Vietnamese tank with the flag of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam crashes through the gate of the presidential palace in Saigon (today Ho Chi Minh City) on 30 June 1975. Trotskyists hailed the victory and cheered the defeat of U.S. imperialism's puppet regime.

ing the country into a new era – the era of national independence and socialism."

The decades-long struggle of the Vietnamese workers and peasants did indeed put an end to colonial and capitalist rule in Vietnam, and 1975 marked the ignominious end of the U.S. imperialist war that killed more than 3 million Vietnamese. That defeat was exactly the problem for Donald Trump. The Big Stick imperialist president instructed senior U.S. diplomats to boycott the events celebrating the Vietnamese victory. Veterans' groups traveling to Vietnam to promote reconciliation were told they were on their own. The diplomatic snub was on top of the 46% tariffs on Vietnamese exports to the U.S. levied earlier in April. Trump imposed them on nearly every country on earth but those on Vietnam were the second highest on any nation except China, whose products were subject to a 145% levy (later reduced, temporarily, to "only" 30%).

Since taking office in January, the U.S. president has been on a tear, not only rul-

ing by decree as a would-be strongman, but seeking to regiment the whole of society in Trumpland USA.¹ Internationally, he wants to lord it over Trumpworld, vowing to "take back" the Panama Canal, grab Greenland, make Canada the 51st state, tell European leaders where to get off and force the entire world to come begging for lower tariffs. Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky got an Oval Office dressing down when he dared to talk back and failed to act like a proper puppet. As Trump channels President William McKinley's drive for imperial conquest and hails the 1890 McKinley Tariff, Vietnam would seem to be slated to be another U.S. neocolony. But the imperialists have a problem: thanks to the victory of the revolution, Vietnam is a workers state, albeit bureaucratically deformed.

Trump's moves against China go beyond trade war – it's full-on economic war. His biggest stick has been tariffs, but on May 1, he threatened that anyone who buys Iranian oil "will not be allowed to do business" with the U.S. "in any way, shape or form." Beijing buys 90% of Iranian petrochemical exports, so this was a threat to cut off trade with China altogether. On April 9, as the punitive tariffs on the rest of the world were to go into effect and with the spectre of a global stock market crash looming and the bond market in turmoil, Trump blinked and declared a "pause." Chinese leader Xi Jinping, unlike Zelensky (who gave in to Trump's demand to control Ukrainian strategic minerals), refused to be bullied. So on April 12, after weeks of wheedling to get Xi to call, Trump blinked again and agreed to scale back tariffs on China for three months. He just didn't have the cards.

On Vietnam, Trump has a different posture than his predecessor Joe Biden.

¹ See "Trumpland USA: Lurching Toward Authoritarian Rule," on page 1 of this issue of *The Internationalist*.

The Democrats' alliance-based strategy encouraged investment in Vietnam, seeking to use it as a proxy against China and stoking tensions in the South China Sea. But Trump's "America First" policies have the effect of pushing Vietnam into China's embrace, as the two deformed workers states face a common threat. Hence the Chinese troops in Ho Chi Minh City on the 50th anniversary of the Vietnamese victory. Revolutionary Marxists – Trotskyists – defend China and Vietnam, along with North Korea and Cuba, against imperialist aggression and the threat of counterrevolution. While their Stalinist rulers, imbued with a nationalist outlook, still yearn for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, the League for the Fourth International says that it is necessary to deepen and extend the revolution internationally throughout the region, and the world.

Different Strategies, Same Goal

Less than a year ago, in July 2024, Democratic president Biden dispatched Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to Hanoi following the death of Vietnam's Communist Party general secretary Nguyen Phu Truong. Blinken attended a reception at the presidential palace in Hanoi and conveyed condolences to Truong's successor To Lam, posing in front of a bust of Ho Chi Minh, the founder of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). The vibe was certainly different than Trump's hostility, but not the basic aim of U.S. policy. A U.S. statement (22 July 2024) declared the purpose of Blinken's trip (accompanied by Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin), which also included Laos, Japan, Mongolia, Philippines and Singapore: "Secretary Blinken will reaffirm the importance of the work the United States does with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific to advancing security and prosperity and facilitating a shared vision for a free and open region." In other words, its aim was to contain China.

Blinken was even more explicit in a visit to Vietnam in April 2023.

"As part of our growing bilateral security partnership, we're finalizing the transfer of a third U.S. Coast Guard cutter to Vietnam, complementing a fleet of 24 patrol boats and other equipment, training, and operational facilities we've provided since 2016. All of these efforts bolster Vietnam's capacity to contribute to maritime peace and stability in the South China Sea."

So the U.S., both under Biden and Trump, has been supplying the military wherewithal to spark clashes that threaten China's crucial trade corridor.

For the Democrats, the economic interests of U.S. imperialism are best secured with "free trade," reflecting the interest of corporations like Nike (half its sneakers are produced in 162 Vietnamese factories employing half a million workers) and Apple (200,000 workers at 35 locations in Viet-

continued on page 31



On the 50th anniversary of the victory of the Vietnamese Revolution, thousands of troops in numerous military units marched along with Communist Party cadre in a parade as hundreds of thousands watched.

Italy Heading Toward a Bonapartist Police State

Italy: For a Real General Strike to Stop the “Security” Decree and Arms Build-Up!

Build a Leninist-Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party!

APRIL 15 – On April 4, the right-wing Italian government of premier Giorgia Meloni approved a decree putting into effect almost all the repressive measures of the draconian draft “security” law DDL 1660 that the Council of Ministers had introduced last September. Six days later, on April 10, the government majority pushed a motion through parliament in effect approving the ReArm Europe plan announced by European Union (EU) president Ursula von der Leyen in mid-March providing for 800 billion euros (€), or US\$900 billion, in loans in order to build up EU military forces. And on April 17, Meloni will travel to Washington to plead for lower tariffs on goods made in Italy in the trade war unleashed by U.S. president Donald Trump.

Repression, war and militarization are the order of the day. Today, under the regime of Meloni and her fascist Fratelli d’Italia (Fd’I), Italy continues supplying arms to the Zionist butchers in the genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza. Meanwhile, it has shipped billions of euros’ worth of weaponry to the NATO puppet government of Ukraine in the imperialist proxy war against Russia, even as it wages class war against working people in Italy. It will take a full mobilization of the power of labor and all defenders of democratic rights to block the hard-right government. The Nucleo Internazionalista d’Italia urges class-conscious workers to fight for a **united, unlimited general strike to STOP the security decree and arms build-up!**

“Security” Crackdown on the Right to Protest

The omnibus “security” decree is designed to facilitate mass arrests and longer jail time in order to suppress protests, workers strikes and other “disorder,” and to intimidate the civilian population by establishing “functional immunity” for the police. Notably, the ex-DDL 1660 makes blocking streets, highways and rail lines – a frequent tactic of strike pickets and climate or antiwar protesters – a crime rather than an administrative violation, now punishable with up to six years in prison. For months there have been thousands-strong demonstrations against the legislation, which the jurist Patrizio Gonnella, head of the association Antigone, called “the biggest and most dangerous attack on the freedom to protest in the history of the Republic.”

Along with criminalizing protest and social struggle, the decree would also make it a crime to occupy vacant build-

ings, punishable by up to seven years in jail, in an attempt to crack down on the significant number of squats in Italian cities due to the unavailability of affordable housing. To deal with prison protests against conditions in Italy’s seriously overcrowded jails, it would make “resistance, even passive, to carrying out orders” a crime of “revolt” (up to eight years additional incarceration). And the penalty for the crime of “resisting a public official,” for example, confronting a police charge against a demonstration, is increased by half (up from a third in the draft law).

Some provisions are overtly vindictive, such as the call for jailing pregnant women or those with children under one year of age declared guilty of some crime, like squatting. This is a racist provision directed against Roma women. The ban on sale of sim cards (for mobile phones) to those who have a residence permit is targeted at immigrants and asylum seekers. It also provides for cancelling “acquired citizenship” of people convicted of these “crimes” at any time for up to ten years after conviction. This is directed at youths from immigrant families, because in Italy, children of non-citizen parents are not automatically citizens, but can only apply for it after the age of 18.



Police charge demonstrators during a protest against the “Security” Decree in Rome’s Piazza della Rotonda, 4 April 2025.



SI Cobas demonstration in Rome on Saturday, 19 October 2024, following the day of action and strike against the DDL 1660 draft “security” law the day before.

Singled out for particularly harsh punishment is “defacing means of transport” for the “purpose of harming the honor, prestige or decorum of the institution” – such as spray painting “fascisti” on a water cannon being used against demonstrators. And police officers would now be authorized to carry their service arm and another unlicensed “revolver or pistol of any size” when off duty. This provision is explicitly an extension of public security laws from 1931 and 1940, i.e., under the Mussolini fascist dictatorship, when police higher-ups were enabled to carry official and private arms both on and off-duty.

Meanwhile, the state will pay for the costs of legal representation for any police officer accused of committing abuses while on duty. Also, using a law designed for policing riots at sports events, police are now empowered to arrest people “in flagrante” (without a judicial order) in political demonstrations and also “in deferred flagrante” if they are only identified later. To facilitate this, police will be equipped with bodycams to record the faces of demonstrators so they can later be charged with resisting or injuring a police officer who was beating them with a riot baton (in other countries bodycams are used supposedly to cut down on police abuse).

The decreeing of the “security” law comes amid numerous criminal prosecutions of anti-fascist protesters against Fd’I and Lega events. But while the hard-right Meloni government is ordering police-state repression, it must not be forgotten that previous center-right, center-left and “national unity” governments have also increased police powers. The Miniti decrees (2017) under Democratic Party premier Paolo Gentiloni imposed “urban Daspo”¹ bans on protests in certain areas, while the Salvini decrees (2018) under the first government of Five Stars leader Giuseppe Conte also made blocking of streets and highways a crime.

continued on page 28

¹ Urban Daspo (“Ban on Access for Sports Demonstrations”) were introduced in 2017 to declare “red zones” areas of cities that were off-limits for soccer riots, making presence in those areas a grounds for arrest. Now this is being used to ban protest demonstrations in central areas of cities.

For Workers Action to Stop Arms to Israel and Ukraine!

Trumpland...

continued from page 1

As the barrage of decrees targeting one group or institution after another has kept up, with a new abomination every day, fear has spread among vulnerable populations across the United States. Immigrants subject to mass deportations retreat into their homes, federal employees subject to mass firings sit at their desks waiting for the email saying they are out of a job, educators worry about funds being cut if schools refuse to stop teaching about racism. Then, with Trump's April 2 announcement of astronomical tariffs on imports, stock markets gyrated, investors stopped investing, central bankers started selling their U.S. Treasury bonds. Everyone, even Trump supporters, talks of the chaos, but *the avalanche of actions shows a well-prepared plan.*

Internationally, the U.S. president declared that he was going to take back the Panama Canal, "get" Greenland "one way or another" and make Canada the 51st state. At the dawn of U.S. imperialism, as U.S. Marines invaded Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Nicaragua and Mexico, a U.S. admiral termed the Caribbean "an American lake." Now Trump rebaptized the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America." By this, both meant the United States alone, the colossus of the north, arrogantly dismissing the other countries of America, North and South. In the face of would-be strongman Trump's muscle-flexing, capitalist rulers from Latin America to Europe went into shock.

We also noted that the elections were a turning point in recent history, marking the end of the "era of U.S. global hegemony since World War II." This, too, has been confirmed, as imperialist alliances have been turned topsy-turvy, Yesterday's allies have become competitors in a global trade war, and the new administration seeks to normalize relations with the U.S.' declared military adversary for the last 80 years, the Soviet Union and now Russia. As Democrats and establishment Republicans in Washington wring their hands at the turn of events, and their fellow imperialist rulers of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance are at their wits' end, the result will be massive militarization.

Back in 1990, as Republican president George H.W. Bush launched the Persian Gulf War, he proclaimed a "new world order" of peace and harmony, "under American leadership," revving up the imperialist-led counter-revolution that destroyed the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state and its allied East European deformed workers states. A few years later, Democratic secretary of state Madeleine Albright declared the United States "the indispensable nation," which Democratic president Joe Biden repeated, saying he was "running the world" only days before dropping his reelection bid. But the U.S.-dominated world *disorder* was marked from the start by nationalist and imperialist "wars without end" and it breathed its last in the failed U.S./NATO imperialist proxy war against Russia over Ukraine.

Democrats Paved the Way for Trump – Twice!

The waning of U.S. military strength went together with the hollowing out of its industrial base. The "globalization" of capitalist production, through overlapping free trade pacts and the World Trade Organization, led to massive closure of factories in the industrial Midwest. Better-paying blue collar union jobs in the U.S. were eliminated as employers hired

workers at poverty pay in low-wage countries. According to official statistics, 950,000 U.S. factory jobs were lost due to the North American Free Trade Agreement alone. Having helped turn vast industrial areas into a "rust belt," the Democrats ostentatiously pandered to Wall Street while pushing militarism abroad and presiding over unending racist police repression at home. Not once but twice now, the Democrats paved the way for Trump.

Real wages (adjusted for inflation) today have only slightly advanced since the 1970s, and for the 62% of the U.S. population that does not have a college degree, they actually fell from 1979 to 2019, and have hardly risen since. This is also the part of the electorate (portrayed in the press as synonymous with the working class) that voted most heavily (56%) for Trump in 2024. This has been the single most defining feature of recent U.S. elections, leading to the demise of the Democrats who once pretended to be "friends of labor." But now, with whole industries gone, in the short run even Trump's top tariffs can't bring them back. The result will likely be rampant inflation and stagnation, the "stagflation" of the late 1970s.

The reality is that decaying imperialism can't even provide for basic needs of the population, with living standards falling, social services slashed and millions of lives lost in the COVID-19 pandemic due to abysmal public health measures. Yet as hospitals loaded corpses into reefer trucks in the capitalist countries, the Chinese deformed worker state held deaths to barely 5,000 for three years by mobilizing its resources in what is still, despite dangerous capitalist inroads, a centrally planned economy. Trump's economic plans won't bring prosperity for working people, instead he's gearing up for war. While Biden and his left-over Cold Warriors were careening toward World War III, Trump is systematically preparing for war with China.

U.S. and European imperialists have portrayed themselves as defending a "liberal democratic rules-based order," although it was hardly liberal or democratic and the rules were those dictated by Washington. Talk of "human rights" only served to justify military aggression, from Iraq and Afghanistan to Ukraine. (They can't even use that lying rhetoric to cover U.S./Israel genocide against the Palestinian people of Gaza.) Today, economic decline and rising militarization are accompanied by stepped-up repression, and a *drive toward conservative authoritarian rule.* And it is the liberal/conservative warmongers, in the U.S. Democrats and establishment Republicans, who have prepared the ground for sinister figures like Donald Trump.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have consistently called and fought for international class-struggle action against the wars and depredation by all the imperialist rulers. Against Bush II in Iraq and Afghanistan, against Obama and Trump in Afghanistan and Syria, against Biden over Ukraine and Gaza, the IG/LFI has fought for mobilizing workers action in the struggle to defeat the imperialist assault. On Ukraine we are for defense of Russia against the U.S./NATO proxy war and for the defeat of the fascist-infested puppet regime in Kiev. Over Gaza, we take the side of those fighting against the U.S./Israel genocidal war, and defend Iran, Lebanon and Yemen as well, while calling for an Arab/Hebrew Palestinian workers state in a socialist federation of the Middle East.

In the United States, where there has no real action to stop Trump's onslaught, just a couple of well-attended but impotent marches led by Democratic "progressives," the IG

Freed Columbia Student Mohsen Mahdawi to Donald Trump: "I Am Not Afraid of You"



Amanda Swinhart/Associated Press

Mohsen Mahdawi, an organizer of last year's pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University and a legal permanent resident of the U.S., arrived at an appointment with immigration officials in Vermont on April 14, thinking it was a routine appointment for becoming a U.S. citizen. Instead he was detained by I.C.E., which intended to deport him. On April 30, Mahdawi was released from custody by Judge Geoffrey Crawford of the federal district court, who slammed the government's actions as akin to McCarthyism. As he walked free, Mohsen defiantly told the U.S. president and his cabinet that he did not fear their threats.

and its fraternal allies in Class Struggle Workers – Portland and Class Struggle Education Workers have taken the initiative to *form labor committees to defend immigrants*, city-wide and in various workplaces, and to fight for *workers action in the struggle to stop deportations*. And while pro-capitalist bureaucrats chain workers to the bosses' politicians, we call to break with the Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist parties and to *build a revolutionary workers party.*

With the Democrats catatonic, the U.S. left is still mostly tailing the liberals and burying itself in low-level union reform struggles. Yet as the economy putrefies, post-World War II "welfare state" capitalism is dead and gone. *There is no reformist alternative to the drive for a "strong state" based on a militarized police apparatus.* All factions of the imperialist rulers, in the U.S. and worldwide, seek to beef up the forces of repression, in order to put down the resistance that their program of intensifying war, racism and impoverishment will provoke. Against this rancid reaction, it is urgent to raise *transitional demands* pointing the way to *international socialist revolution*, not in the sweet bye-and-bye but in the here-and-now.

First on Trump's Hit List: Immigrants

On the domestic front, arrests by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) police have been staged with TV reporters and cameras in tow to maximize the fear factor. Their boss, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) chief Kristi Noem, glammed up in a bulletproof I.C.E. vest to tag along for a photo op as federal agents staged pre-dawn raids in the Bronx. Hours after Trump signed his "enemy aliens" decree, a DHS memo gave a green light to barge into schools, hospitals, courthouses and religious sites. In addition to undocumented immigrants, many in Temporary Protected Status or applying for refugee asylum are on the pick-up lists. Trump's vile "border czar" Tom Homan wants to cause panic so that immigrants "self-deport."

As of mid-March, the Trump administration had "removed" some 3,887 immigrants

per week. To keep things in perspective, Democrat Obama removed 5.3 million people in eight years, which works out to 12,740 a week. And Democrat Biden removed 4.6 million immigrants in four years.¹ The difference is that the overwhelming majority of the "removals" by Obama and Biden were from the border area, while Trump wants to deport millions who have lived in the U.S. for a decade or more. The reality is that both major capitalist parties are enemies of immigrants. That's not to say that the Trump administration isn't an enormous threat – it is – but that it is just getting started with its racist program of "ethnic cleansing, American style." And as we have insisted, and has been shown yet again throughout recent weeks and months, you can't fight Trump with the Democrats. Breaking with them is key to unchaining workers power in order to wage a real and effective fight against the assaults on the rights of us all.

The whole Trump deportation operation is a horror show of governmental arbitrariness, wanton cruelty and chaos, mainly to prevent immigrants from exercising their constitutional right to due process. On January 23, the acting DHS director issued a memo expanding the use of "expedited removal" from border areas to the whole of the United States. Under this procedure, immigrants can be summarily deported unless they can show they have been in the U.S. for two years or more. On January 29, Congress passed the Laken Riley Act, with a lot of Democratic votes, requiring deportation of undocumented immigrants charged with certain crimes, including theft. In New York, entering the subway without paying is classified as "theft of services."

On February 4, a first group of a dozen Venezuelan immigrants was sent to the U.S. base at Guantánamo (on land stolen from Cuba), where the administration planned to hold 30,000 detainees, in order to get them off U.S. territory where they could challenge

¹ Those figures include people picked up near the border and sent back, but so do the current Trump figures. See "Trump Migrant Deportation Numbers Compared to Obama, Biden," *Newsweek*, 5 February.

their detention. But when a federal judge in Boston ruled that detainees could still appeal, by mid-March the government emptied the camp and sent over 200 deportees to the maximum security CECOT “anti-terrorism” prison in El Salvador, notorious for torture and mistreatment, where the U.S. is paying up to \$15 million to hold the deportees. It was claimed they were members of a Venezuelan gang, Tren de Aragua, but no proof was given and families have challenged that.

As weeks passed, new scandals about deportations surfaced almost daily. On April 7, Border Patrol agents tried to enter two Los Angeles elementary schools, supposedly for a “wellness check” of unaccompanied immigrant children. School authorities denied them entry because they did not have a judicial warrant. This week news media reported that three young children who are U.S. citizens were deported along with their mothers to Guatemala, including a four-year-old with cancer who was sent without medications. In another case, the DHS removed a two-year-old child from her parents’ care, supposedly for her own “safety and welfare,” while the father was sent to El Salvador and the mother deported back to Venezuela.

On Day 98 of Trump 2, April 27, the feds really got going, with a drug raid on an underground nightclub in Colorado Springs where they detained 114 undocumented immigrants, plus 14 on-duty military personnel who were acting as security. In Florida, I.C.E. – the hated *migra* – abducted 780 immigrants in a week-long raid in cooperation with local and state police. And on Day 99, Trump issued another emergency order, declaring that local and state officials who refuse to cooperate with the federal immigration police are engaged in “lawless insurrection,” calling on the Attorney General to “stop the enforcement of State and local laws” of “sanctuary jurisdictions,” and to cancel in-state college tuition for undocumented students.

In particular, Trump is going after the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. That is where it is established that all “persons” in the United States (i.e., not just citizens) have the right to “due process” and to “equal protection of the laws” – rights that the new regime is denying not just to immigrants lacking some official papers but to all non-citizens, including legal permanent residents. The 14th Amendment also declares that “all persons born or naturalized in the United States” are U.S. citizens. On January 20 Donald J. Trump decreed the end to “birthright citizenship.” Both of these attacks on basic rights are blatantly unconstitutional. It took the Civil War and the

abolition of slavery to win the 14th Amendment, and Trump asserts he can abolish it with a stroke of his Sharpie pen.

Meanwhile, his administration is defying a judge’s order to stop sending immigrants to the CECOT prison in El Salvador without affording them due process, and ignoring a Supreme Court order to “facilitate the return” of Kilmar Abrego García, a Maryland trade-unionist who had a court order blocking his deportation. We’re getting ever closer to the situation of Argentina under the 1970s military junta when unmarked Ford Falcons prowled the streets “disappearing” leftists. Certainly, the ghoulish White House deportation chief Homan would be up for it, and suspicious unmarked vehicles have already been spotted in various places.

On May Day, in New York the Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants will march with banners calling to “Bring Back Kilmar Abrego García, Free Them All!” and “For Workers Action to Stop Mass Deportations.” The Internationalist contingent will be carrying a banner calling to “Smash I.C.E. Gestapo with Workers Revolution.” On the West Coast, International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 in the San Francisco Bay Area will hold a stop-work meeting and march with a banner calling “For Workers Actions to Stop Mass Deportations & Mass Firings! No Military Cargo for Israel’s Genocidal War Against Palestinians! Defend the Rights of ALL of us!”

Academia in the Trump Regime’s Crosshairs

The new regime in Washington is aiming to turn the USA into “Trumpland,” pushing reactionary policies to “roll back” U.S. society to what he remembers as the “good old days” of Jim Crow segregation and Cold War conformity. In line with Christian nationalist ideology, the White House has launched sadistic attacks on the rights of gay, lesbian and transgender people. Trump decreed in an executive order that there are only two genders – as if he can change reality by fiat. The administration is institutionalizing racism in the guise of being “colorblind.” Textbooks are being examined for any reference to racial justice, in order to ban them. Another decree, on “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling,” calls for enforcing “patriotic education.”

And it is stepping up domestic repression. In March, the focus turned to academia as Secretary of State Marco Rubio ordered the deportation of Columbia University graduate Mahmoud Khalil, arrested as he was entering his apartment building along with his wife, who was eight months pregnant. A

couple of weeks later, Tufts University doctoral student Rümeyza Öztürk was abducted in the street by federal agents in balaclava face masks with no ID. These brazen arrests set off a wave of fear among international students, as intended. And so far, even their energetic defense lawyers have not been able to free them from the feds’ clutches.

Simultaneously, Trump went after universities that he deemed insufficiently tough on the Gaza solidarity encampments last year, or which had pro-Palestinian professors. He started with Columbia, demanding control of its Middle East studies program and threatening to cut \$51 million in federal funds. Columbia capitulated, although its new president told a faculty meeting she had only done the minimum required. The White House declared it not enough, forced her to resign as well and stopped \$400 million in research grants. Then it went after Harvard, threatening to cut \$2.2 billion in federal funds over DEI (“diversity, equity and inclusion” policies). Harvard with great fanfare vowed to resist, sending a wave of hope through academia. But today it ceded, renaming and curtailing its diversity program.

Also in March, I.C.E. without notice canceled almost 5,000 visa registrations of foreign students by simply dropping their information from its SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) listing. This was based on a quick search of a federal database, tagging anyone who had had minor brushes with the law, even if charges were dropped. Many schools blocked the students from taking classes, sometimes only a few weeks before graduation. This arbitrary action sparked hundreds of lawsuits, and after several weeks, the Department of Justice informed courts that the action had been reversed, though future action against the students may be pending. The status of students whose visas were revoked for participating in pro-Palestinian demos was left unclear.

This assault on universities marks a new wave of McCarthyism. In the early 1950s, at the height of the anti-Soviet Cold War, Wisconsin senator Joe McCarthy and his allies, such as the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), sought to drive “reds” out of academia, as liberal Democrats had done in the late 1940s red purges in the labor movement. But today the Trump gang has raised the stakes, taking aim at the universities themselves. They are out to transform academia, and particularly elite universities, from bastions of liberalism into bulwarks of conservative reaction. In a 2021 speech to the National Conservatism Congress titled “The Universities Are the Enemy,” JD Vance – today Trump’s veep – declared, “Professors are the enemy.”

There is a broader program behind this, beyond visceral hatred. In a July 2024 interview with *The Federalist*, Vance called to remake U.S. society from the top. He said conservatives have “lost big business, we’ve lost finance, we’ve lost the culture, we’ve lost the academy. And if we’re going to actually really effect real change in the country it will require us to completely replace the existing ruling class with another ruling class.” We have characterized Vance as a fascist ideologue, and his call to form a new ruling class recalls the Nazis’ *Gleichschaltung*, or regimentation of German universities in the 1930s. As Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler said in 1937, their aim was to forge “a ruling class destined to last for centuries ... a new aristocracy.”

21st-Century McCarthyism

The administration sought to justify the arrest of Mahmoud Khalil – who was the negotiator and one of the most prominent spokesmen for the Gaza solidarity encampment at Columbia a year ago – citing a proviso of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Nationality Act that any noncitizen whose “presence or activities” would have a “serious adverse foreign policy consequences” could be deported. This Cold War law was passed at the height of the McCarthyite witch hunts in order to deport communists for their ideas. The government grotesquely accuses Khalil of participating in “antisemitic” protests – the smear it uses against any pro-Palestinian protesters – and absurdly labeled him “pro-Hamas.”²

Here again the Democratic Party helped pave the way for Trump with the bipartisan slander equating opposition to Israel’s Gaza genocide with antisemitism. And, of course, Trump’s “MAGA movement” is rife with blatant antisemites and white supremacists. The idea that Trump’s rampages are aimed at “defending Jews” is a transparent falsehood.

While earlier Supreme Courts have ruled provisions of the McCarran-Walter Act as an unconstitutional violation of the First Amendment’s “bedrock principle” of freedom of speech, with the current Court majority of rightist reactionaries in black robes, who knows? And now we have McCarthyism on steroids – or, more precisely, on AI. Shortly after the seizure of Khalil, it was revealed that an Iranian scholar at Yale, Dr. Helyeh Doutaghi, was fired after being doxed by a Zionist publication that used artificial intelligence to comb through thousands of websites for Gaza solidarity statements by academics. Khalil’s arrest, too, was sparked by a hardline Zionist doxing him for protesting disciplinary measures against pro-Palestinian demonstrators.

This close connection of private witch-hunting and government repression is a distinguishing feature of the Trump 2 regime. The Israeli government has long budgeted tens of millions of dollars annually (through its Ministry of Strategic Affairs and other channels) to spy on, defame, disrupt and combat anti-Zionist groups on U.S. campuses. After the stunning 7 October 2023 attack led by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) on the Israeli military forces imprisoning the Palestinian population of Gaza, and the Islamists’ indiscriminate terror attack on Israelis in nearby communities, the Zionists combined their U.S.-financed and -armed genocidal war on Gaza with stepped-up operations against pro-Palestinian individuals and groups in the U.S.

As always, the Anti-Defamation League is at work defaming anti-Zionists, spreading the lie that U.S. campuses are hotbeds of antisemitism. In addition, the surge of sinister actions to smear and set up defenders of Palestinian rights for repression or violent attack over the last year and a half has been led by the ultra-rightist Accuracy in Media outfit that sponsored doxing trucks at Harvard, Columbia and the City University of New York, and has for decades gone after leftist professors.³ And there is the shadowy Canary Mission⁴ (closely linked to Israeli

² Khalil once worked for the British embassy in Lebanon.

³ See “Doxing campaign against pro-Palestinian college students ramps up,” ABC News, 20 October 2023.

⁴ See “Who Is Funding Canary Mission? Inside the Doxing Operation Targeting Anti-Zionist Students and Professors,” *The Nation*, 22 December 2023; and “REVEALED: Canary Mission Blacklist Is Secretly Bankrolled by Major Jewish Federation,” *Forward*, 3 October 2018.



Mahmoud Khalil speaking to the press for Gaza solidarity protesters at Columbia University, April 2024.

intelligence) and the fascistic Betar US, who “have amassed dossiers about pro-Palestinian student activists” (*Forward*, 25 March), imitating the anticommunist blacklists of the 1950s.

This is 21st-century McCarthyism, but with an important distinction. The Cold War regimentation of U.S. society associated with McCarthyite witch hunts was ultimately overcome by the black struggle for civil rights, beginning with the drive to integrate public schools following the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and the 1955 Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott. But McCarthy was brought down in 1953 when he attacked the U.S. Army. That was when the president (and former general) Dwight Eisenhower, who had earlier facilitated McCarthy’s inquisitions, decided to put a stop to the bloodletting. Today, the witch-hunters operate out of the White House.

The Method in Trump’s Trade War “Madness”

Imitating President William McKinley’s “Manifest Destiny” brand of swash-buckling U.S. imperialism from the turn of the 20th century, on April 2 Donald Trump launched a tariff war against almost every country on the planet. Instead of the low-to-no tariffs of various “free trade” pacts, and the rules of the World Trade Organization in which imports are supposed to be treated the same as domestically produced goods, the U.S. president announced a minimum 10% tariff on the value of goods imported into the United States, and a series of “reciprocal tariffs” on a whole list of countries ranging up to 49%. He earlier imposed a 25% tariff on steel and aluminum imports, and later applied that to automobiles and auto parts.

Trump had long complained that the enormous U.S. trade deficit with the rest of the world (almost \$1 trillion a year) was due to other countries ripping the U.S. off with a variety of non-tariff barriers, export subsidies and other devices. Actually, the huge deficit is mainly because the U.S. no longer produces many of the finished goods it imports in large quantities, which in part reflects that U.S. capitalists have shifted production to lower-wage countries. As a result, much of U.S. exports (about a third) consist of basic commodities, including agricultural products, fuels and raw materials. In any case, it was well-known that Trump would introduce substantial tariffs, but few if any on Wall Street, in central banks or economic forecasting agencies expected anything on this scale.

The response around the world was explosive. Wall Street panicked. The S&P 500 stock index of the largest publicly traded companies fell by over 10% in two days, the worst drop since the selloff at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Governments from Canada and Mexico to the European Union and China threatened to retaliate, and by April 8, the day before the tariffs were to go into effect, the S&P 500 was down by 18.9% since its peak in February when the markets expected to boom under the new administration that promised less regulations and lower taxes on capital. Some \$9.6 trillion in market evaluation (fictitious wealth) was wiped out in the plunge. (The entire gross domestic product of the U.S. in 2024 was \$29 trillion.)

But at the last minute, Trump pulled back and declared a 90-day “pause” on the punitive (“reciprocal”) tariffs. These were calculated on a bizarre formula of the country’s trade surplus with the U.S. divided by its

exports to the U.S., and then reduced by half, because, Trump said, he was being “kind.” This pseudo-economic rationale had the effect that poor countries that have relatively large exports to the U.S. and few imports – like Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam – were hit with astronomical tariffs. But there is no way they could eliminate their trade surplus, as they can’t afford to buy U.S. products. So for these countries, Trump’s threatened tariffs represented total disaster. But even for advanced industrial economies like Europe they spelled *trade war*.

In the space of three months, the average U.S. tariff rate rose from 2% to 23%, the highest it has been in a century. And while European Union leaders talked of retaliation, China matched Trump’s number and imposed a 34% tariff on imports from the United States. Trump went ballistic and raised the rate on China again, so that including levies imposed on them by Trump in his first term (and maintained by Biden) the total tariffs on Chinese imports were now 145%. To which China responded by raising tariffs on U.S. imports to 125%. Numbers at those levels go beyond a trade war. Rather than raising prices, they are stopping trade altogether. Shipments from China are being redirected to other countries while at sea. China returned three Boeing 737 MAX aircraft to the U.S. Total shipments from China to the U.S. have plummeted by 60%.

Preparing for War on China

With China it has gone beyond trade war, with tit-for-tat tariff increases, to *economic war*. Trump demanded that management of the ports on either end of the Panama Canal be taken over from the Hong Kong-based Hutchison Holdings. (BlackRock formed a consortium for the takeover.) China has 115 overseas port projects as part of its Belt-and-Road trade program, from the Indian Ocean to Europe, including 17 with majority Chinese ownership, among them the port in Sri Lanka, the port in Piraeus, Greece, as well as ports in Jamaica and Brazil. The U.S. is taking aim at these as well. China and the U.S. are in competition in Congo over mines that produce cobalt for electric vehicles and cotton for your cellphones.

Meanwhile, China has half of the world’s refining capacity of lithium and a 100% monopoly of refining for the “rare earths” that Trump has been desperate to get his hands on in Ukraine (which has almost none). On April 4, two days after Trump’s tariff blow, China announced that export licenses would be required for seven key rare earths, essentially stopping exports until those are issued. These are used to make heavy magnets, which are key to auto manufacturing and military production. All this is not about trade deficits and price levels but control. And here China holds the cards, to use Trump’s terminology when dressing down the Ukrainian puppet president for not acting like a true puppet and obsequiously fawning like the rest.

If all, or most, trade with the U.S. were stopped tomorrow, it would create difficulties for China, but no disaster. China can easily get soybeans and pork from Brazil, electrical machinery from Europe and mineral fuels from Russia. Household products produced for export could be sold by increasing consumption in China. This could be easily done by sharply increasing the utterly inadequate old-age pensions and other measures to increase demand. With a centrally planned economy such shifts are easily accomplished. Nikita Khrushchev did it

in the Soviet Union after 1956, quickly increasing housing with pre-fabricated apartment building construction, increasing protein in the diet.

The United States, on the other hand, will be hard-put to replace imports from China. Some 76% of all toys sold in the U.S. are made in China, 78% of computer monitors, 82% of blankets, 90% of microwave ovens, 93% of children’s books, 97% of baby strollers.⁵ The U.S. simply has no production capacity to make these and a host of other consumer products. If companies wanted to set up new plants to make them, they would have to get machine tools from China (30% of world production), or Europe (40%). To be efficient, these new manufacturing facilities would need robots, 85% of which are built in China. Meanwhile, thousands of small businesses dependent on importing relatively cheap Chinese products would go bankrupt.

Only a couple of days before the tariff blow, the *Washington Post* (29 March) published an article about a leaked document by the U.S. secretary of defense Pete Hegseth with considerable detail about U.S. war plans, including: “China is the department’s sole pacing threat and denial of a Chinese fait accompli seizure of Taiwan, while simultaneously defending the U.S. homeland, is the department’s sole pacing scenario.” In other words, the Trump administration is singularly focused on preparing for war with China. And a couple of days before that, excerpts from the Signal chat with Hegseth and other top administration figures about plans to strike Yemen were published in which they bellyache about “bailing out Europe again,” since most of the commerce that passes through the Red Sea is for and from Europe.

Only Socialist Revolution Can Stop World War III

So while telling Chinese leaders that the trade skirmishing is leading up to a shooting war with the U.S., the Trump team informed the European “allies” that they are considered rivals. This and the drastic tariffs have led to a sharp escalation of inter-imperialist rivalries, which never disappeared, although they were dampened in the united U.S./NATO imperialist proxy war against Russia over Ukraine. But while EU members have been talking about developing a “European defense capacity” there is little they can do about it. The Europeans do not have their own 5th-generation (stealth) jet fighters, and their missiles cannot function without connection to the U.S. satellite system, just as is the case with those delivered to Ukraine.

In the U.S., Trump’s tariffs were greeted by a number of union leaders, notably of the United Auto Workers, who have been calling for protectionist tariffs for years. But those tariffs could only bring a small amount of auto production to the U.S. from Mexico, at least in the short run, because the Big Three manufacturers only have limited spare production capacity. Plus the wage differential is so great (U.S. auto workers make ten times as much as their Mexican counterparts) that even with 25% tariffs, it will

⁵ See “Your Home Without China,” *New York Times*, 27 April.



Estun robotic arm at World Intelligent Manufacturing Conference in Nanjing, December 2023. China manufactures 85% of the world’s industrial robots.

still be cheaper to produce in Mexico. This underlines the shortsightedness and treachery of the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy, which sides with the rampaging imperialist Trump against U.S. workers’ Mexican class sisters and brothers.

While protective tariffs in a semi-colonial late-developing capitalist country like Mexico can be justified to counter imperialist domination, in an advanced industrial country they reflect national chauvinism. In general, it is the dominant economic powers that favor “free trade” – Britain in the 19th century, the United States in the 20th. The fact that Trump is abandoning this in favor of “reciprocal” tariffs reflects the decline of U.S. economic dominance and imperialist hegemony. The actual result of the tariff war will be sharply increased inflation, shortages (no toys for Christmas) and unemployment. Trump may soon come to regret his comment that he “couldn’t care less” if the price of new cars in the U.S. increases.

In different ways both the Biden and Trump presidencies have reacted to the decay of U.S. imperialism, and in the end they both (along with their European imperialist allies and rivals) see the only way out as pushing for counterrevolution in the Chinese deformed workers state in order to completely open up the second-largest (and soon to be largest) economy in the world for capitalist exploitation. The bureaucracy that governs the Chinese People’s Republic is wedded to the Stalinist policy of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism, but the imperialists are not interested in peacefully coexisting. The logic of this standoff, and the policies of the imperialist leaders, point straight to a thermonuclear World War III. Unless they are stopped.

Over a century ago, amid the carnage of World War I, Russian Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote his 1916 treatise on *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, which served as preparation for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Today, the only way out of the spiraling conflicts leading inexorably to world war is for the working class to overthrow the decrepit imperialist system and oust the bureaucratic misleaders who vainly seek to make peace with it. As we fight against Trump’s mass deportations and mass layoffs, against the bipartisan war drive against China and the continuation of Biden’s wars in Ukraine and Gaza, the stark reality is that only by forging a revolutionary workers party here and around the world, based on the program of Lenin and Trotsky, can the working class defend its rights and the very existence of human civilization. ■

Not Democratic “Faux Friends” But a Revolutionary Workers Party! Against Trump’s Blitzkrieg of Bigotry, Labor Must Defend Trans Rights

Starting on the first day of his second presidential term, Donald Trump unleashed a series of attacks on one of the most vulnerable social groups in the United States: transgender people. In his inaugural address on January 20, he proclaimed: “As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders, male and female.” As part of his blitzkrieg of executive orders,¹ he followed up this reactionary diktat with an order titled, “Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government.”

This measure ordered that a person’s gender cannot diverge from their sex at birth, which – in line with anti-abortion dogma – it decreed to be determined “at conception” as male or female, defined by who produces the smaller or larger reproductive cells.² Far from upholding “biological truth,” the broadside was a manifesto of antiscientific bigotry. (For example, it cannot be determined “at conception” which reproductive cells will develop.) With a stroke of the pen, Trump & Co. seek to erase transgender people. In a vile festival of anti-trans measures, the administration wants to purge trans people from public life as it sadistically displays its all-sided effort to make their daily life not just unbearable but impossible. As far as the bigots in power are concerned, transgender people should not exist at all.

Trump’s executive order had many

¹ See “*Trumpland USA: Lurching Toward Authoritarian Rule*” on page 1 of this issue, and “*Trump 2: Gearing Up to Rule by Decree*,” *The Internationalist* No. 74, September-December 2024.

² An article titled “How Trump promotes a radical, unscientific theory about sex and gender in the name of opposing ‘gender ideology extremism’” (*The Conversation*, 29 April) states: “Experts in many disciplines have shown how gender is different from sex. Sex refers to bodily attributes such as genitals, hormones and chromosomes; gender is made up of the norms, roles, behaviors and expectations people are supposed to comply with based on the culture and society they live in.”



(Above) Donald Trump speaking in June 2023 at summit of Moms for Liberty, an ultra-rightist “parental rights” group that promotes hatred of transgender people. (Right) Trump’s January 20 diktat against trans rights.

immediate effects, among them assaulting transgender health services, including blocking a swath of federally funded scientific research; requiring that passports and other federal identity documents use individuals’ “birth sex” (forcing trans people to “out” themselves when traveling or otherwise using such ID); eliminating anti-bullying programs in schools, and purging transgender people from the military. It also requires housing trans prisoners according to their birth sex, which as one study after another has shown leads to dramatically higher rates of brutalization and sexual assault on them. In addition, the executive order calls for across-the-board censorship, stipulating that the federal government purge from its publications any texts that “promote gender ideology.”

A subsequent order mandated that transgender medical care for those under age 19 be ended in medical facilities which receive federal funding, which is just about

particularly when her opponent, Trump, was whipping up anti-trans fervor.⁴ When attacked by the Republicans over her approval, in a 2019 questionnaire, of medically necessary gender care for prisoners, she only responded that she would “follow the law.” Yet as California attorney general, self-proclaimed “top cop” Harris put trans women in male prisons and was confronted on the campaign trail for having sent a brief seeking to deny trans health services to transgender women prisoners. The message from the Democrats is clear: we’ll use trans issues as political bargaining chips when convenient, and throw you under the bus when politically “necessary.” Looking to these faux friends is a recipe for defeat.

The “full-throated explicit dehumanization” being aimed against trans people⁵ will surely escalate the already horrific levels of anti-trans violence and harassment. Since 2013, there have been 372 documented cases of transgender people murdered in the U.S. Highlighting the racist roots of so much of the anti-trans offensive (discussed further below), *over half* of them were black trans women.⁶

It is important to note that the anti-trans campaign comes not only from the official bourgeois political apparatus and conservative ideologues but also from out-right fascist and fascistic groups like the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, etc. In New York and other areas over recent years they have targeted “Drag Queen Story Hours” and helped whip up a moral panic branding gays and lesbians as well as trans people as “groomers.” (The Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth have on numerous occasions sent teams to join in defending the story hours.) Since gay and trans people’s existence is seen as transgressing the sexual and familial relations prescribed by capitalism, bourgeois ideology has traditionally framed them as dangerous and predatory. Now this has been whipped up to anti-trans hysteria, stoked by a right-wing campaign about producing more (white) babies in order to “save Western civilization.”

Fascist and white-supremacist groups have seized on the anti-trans bigotry campaign, seeking to mount dangerous provocations that are a threat to the working people and everyone’s rights. Workers action to stop fascist attacks will be vital in the coming period. And as with the defense of

all of them. This will have devastating consequences for large numbers of young people, and professionals in the field warn of the danger of this leading to a sharp increase in the number of suicides. On February 5, Trump issued an executive order banning transgender athletes from participating in women’s sports. And when the governor of Maine refused to carry out the ban, a couple of weeks later Trump threatened to withhold all federal funding to the state. On March 5, the federal government suspended \$175 million in funds to the University of Pennsylvania because in 2022 it had a transgender swimmer. And at the state level, so many anti-trans laws and measures are being proposed, and in many cases passed, that it is hard to keep track.³

What about the Democrats, whose war-mongering and pandering to Wall Street at the expense of the working class (among other things) paved the way for Trump? The liberal media have been full of agonized analyses of their prostration and/or collaboration with him since the election. While 17 attorneys general in Democratic-governed states signed an *amicus* brief against Trump’s anti-trans executive orders, many Democrats consider defense of trans rights to be an albatross for the party. Some – from California governor Gavin Newsom (who has had schmoozefests with far-right fanatic Charlie Kirk and fascistic ideologue Steve Bannon on his podcast) to congressmen such as Tom Suozzi (D-NY) and Seth Moulton (D-Mass.) – have wasted no time in hopping on the bandwagon to echo anti-trans talking points.

During Kamala Harris’ 2024 presidential campaign, her overwhelming silence on questions of trans health care and rights was widely remarked on, par-

³ A “2025 anti-trans bills tracker” at translegislation.org cites 905 in 49 states, with 100 passed, 740 active and 65 failed as of late May.

⁴ Even the liberal *Nation* (15 October 2024) headlined: “The Harris Campaign Has Offered Trans People Almost Nothing.”

⁵ See “Full-Throated Explicit Dehumanization” (nplusemag.com, 10 February) and other works by City University of New York political scientist Paisley Currah, who has written widely on trans issues.

⁶ “The Epidemic of Violence Against the Transgender & Gender-Expansive Community in the U.S.,” Human Rights Campaign Foundation, November 2024. Also see “Protests Denounce Murders of Transgender People in Racist, Capitalist U.S.A.,” *Revolution* No. 17, August 2020.



Moms for Liberty campaign against New York’s Proposition 1, which included defense of the right to abortion and transgender rights to the state constitution. It passed overwhelmingly. The IG called to vote yes, as did many others.

trans people's rights and lives in general, this urgent task cannot be entrusted to or carried out by any party, politician or institution of a decaying capitalist system based on exploitation, oppression and massive, escalating inequality. To bring to bear the enormous potential power of the multiracial working class in this crisis, we must fight to unchain that power from its historic subjugation by the Democratic Party and labor bureaucracy – a struggle that can be effectively waged only by those programmatically committed to forging a revolutionary workers party on the program of international socialist revolution.

Weaponizing Hysteria for Votes and Profit

Trump's "obsessive fixation with purging trans identity from society," as *Rolling Stone* (12 March) described it, can appear quite odd, as he rants that today "everything is transgender." "They" are "hurting women very badly," he vituperates, bizarrely claiming trans people are causing millions of federal dollars to be spent for "transgender surgery on mice," and, in the first major speech of his second administration, spending almost twice as long inveighing against them as he did talking about his supposed priorities of job creation and bringing down prices. While less than 1% of the U.S. population identify as transgender, they – along with immigrants – are a main target of the same forces that go after abortion, women's rights and gay rights. It's all about the bourgeois family, as always the focal point of the most virulent reactionaries.

A barrage of anti-transgender political advertising figured prominently in the 2024 presidential and congressional campaigns. Many commentators noted that the most effective of these was the Republicans' TV ad, "Kamala is for they/them, President Trump is for you," which cynically combined anti-elite "populism" with mockery of "wokeness" over pronouns. As Chase Strangio of the ACLU, a leading transgender rights specialist, noted in an article titled "Trump's Anti-Trans Attacks Won't Stop with Us" (*Time*, 21 January):

"According to the data that we have, approximately 1.6 million people ages 13 and over identify as transgender in the United States. That is 0.6% of the population. This tiny minority of people was the subject of nearly \$215 million in negative ad spending during the 2024 election cycle. If someone unfamiliar with American politics tried to assess life in the U.S. in 2024 only by reviewing campaign ads, the likely takeaway would be that the greatest threats facing the country include trans kids playing sports and receiving 'brutal operations' while at school."

Certainly, spending "bigly" to beat the drum of anti-trans bigotry was – like the racist smear that Haitian immigrants were eating pets in Springfield – aimed largely at re-energizing the MAGA base. Warming up for his reelection run, Trump noted at a June 2023 rally that "it's astonishing how passionately people react" when he fulminated against transgender athletes: "When you talk about tax cuts, they remain calm. But when you mention transgender issues, everyone goes wild." The more lurid the claim, the better, no matter how patently absurd.

So last August Trump wowed the far-right Moms for Liberty group's conven-

tion, ranting: "The transgender thing is incredible. Think of it. Your kid goes to school and comes home a few days later with an operation. The school decides what's going to happen with your child." After more test runs, he hyped this ridiculous fabrication on the Joe Rogan show: "You know, they take your kid – there are some places, your boy leaves for school, comes back a girl. Okay? Without parental consent." After tweeting a "Plan to Protect Children from Left-Wing Gender Insanity," upon returning to the White House he issued an executive order that began with the concocted claim: "Across the country, medical professionals are maiming and sterilizing a growing number of impressionable children...."

It's hardly surprising that for many parents, fears and unease about their kids in their teenage years, when they are going through puberty, forming identities, etc., are standard, and were exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. For Trump's stratagem, it's advantageous that most parents know little about the topic. As for the fear crusade about "sex-change surgery," a large-scale public health study published last July "found little to no utilization of gender-affirming surgeries by transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) minors in the U.S."⁷ In other words, the scare campaign on this subject is – like so many others – based on made-up "alternative facts."

As for treatments such as hormone therapy and puberty blockers, these are provided by medical professionals under

⁷ Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health press release, 8 July 2024. As defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in March 2022, the term "gender-affirming" refers to "an array of services that may include medical, surgical, mental health, and non-medical services for transgender and nonbinary people." The handout also defined terms such as "cisgender" (referring to those whose gender identity aligns with their birth sex), but was officially disavowed by the incoming Trump administration. A summary of the Harvard study in *JAMA Network Open* (July 2024) notes "stringent clinical standards for gender-affirming care" and states: "In this cross-sectional study of a national insured population in 2019, there were no gender-affirming procedures conducted on TGD [transgender and gender-diverse] minors aged 12 years and younger, and procedures on TGD minors older than 12 were rare and almost entirely chest-related procedures. Additionally, when considering breast reductions among cisgender males and TGD people – a surgery that can be considered gender-affirming among both populations – most were performed on cisgender males."



Internationalists at February 3 demonstration outside NYU Langone hospital in New York City protesting its cancellation of care for transgender teenagers. Signs called to defeat Trump's ban on trans youth medical care and warned that Democrats won't fight for transgender rights.



June 2022 protesters in Washington, D.C. whip up hysteria over transgender women in women's sports .

well-established standards of care, notably of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. They are not doled out by teachers (a standard target for rightist agitation) or social workers, and they are supported by the American Medical Association and many other medical associations. Nor is it an easy process to receive such treatments, as they involve extensive consultation and examination, both physical and psychological. The American Association of Medical Colleges declared (April 2021):

"In medical decision making, the doctor-patient relationship must be paramount, and the needs of the patient must be given precedence. Efforts to restrict the provision of gender-affirming health care for transgender individuals will reduce health care access for transgender Americans, promote discrimination, and widen already significant health inequities. In addition to harming some of the most vulnerable patients, efforts to restrict care undermine the doctor-patient relationship and the principle that doctors are best equipped to work with patients and their families to arrive at shared decision-making."

For us as revolutionary Marxists – whose outlook is based on science and reason, not obscurantist prejudice – decisions on such intimate and consequential questions, and on medical issues in general, are a matter for the person and their doctor. And like all health care, this should be freed not only from bigoted intrusions but from the grip of the profit system and arbitrary government fiat. *For free, high-quality socialized medicine! Hands off trans kids!*

The current onslaught builds on years of reactionary legislation, like Florida's 2022-23 "Don't Say Gay" laws gagging "classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity," banning books, censoring health curricula, etc. Seeking to outdo itself, in January 2024 the Florida state government issued a memo declaring that "misrepresenting one's gender, understood as sex, on a driver license constitutes fraud ... and subjects an offender to criminal and civil penalties." Then there's the scatological fear-mongering of anti-trans "bathroom bills" that started in North Carolina in 2016 and were passed in 13 states.

Now the Denver Public Schools district is targeted for a "directed investigation" – by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (!) – of its all-gender bathrooms. Not satisfied with censoring and witch-hunting teachers, and having the government intrude into everything from bedrooms to doctors' consulting rooms, the self-styled defenders of "freedom" want to extend the bourgeois state's purview to the toilets. As we have long said, opposing state regulation of consensual sexual relations, *Government out of the bedroom!* And now, given decades of reactionary backlash, we must also insist *Government out of the bathroom! Let trans people use the toilets of their choice!*

Then there's the hyped-up hysteria about transgender athletes, exemplified by the bill to ban them from women's and girls' sports in schools receiving federal funds (passed by the House in January), followed in February by yet another Trump executive order ("Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports"). Here too the obsessive claims are deliberately divorced from reality. Testifying before a Senate panel in December, NCAA president Charlie Baker (a Republican former governor of Massachusetts) stated that out of 510,000 NCAA athletes, there were less than 10 transgender athletes competing in collegiate sports. That amount to ... 0.002%. In March, when Maine declared that it wouldn't break state law to go along with Trump's diktat against trans athletes, six federal agencies hit the state with an investigation – and found only two transgender girls competing in the 2024-25 school year (*Bangor Daily News*, 11 March).

What's It All About, Really?

Reality is not the point in the war on "everything trans," something else is clearly at play. At one level it's about money. Trump-stoked hysteria against trans health services helps sharpen the blade and provide a pretext for cuts to a gamut of health and social services from Medicaid to Head

Start preschool programs to innumerable others. Pushing revolting anti-trans bigotry under the guise of “protecting children,” this is the gang whose 2017-18 drive to separate immigrant children from their parents sought to outdo even the record of Democratic president Barack Obama. Today, as detailed by advocacy groups, the administration is waging a veritable “war on children” including through wide-ranging cuts.⁸ The Children’s Hospital Association of the U.S. warns (2 May) that these “would jeopardize programs vital to children’s health” and “unravel programs that families rely on to protect children and support their healthy development into adulthood.”

The playbook draws on long-standing precedents. Embedding measures against funding for trans health services in federal law follows the model of the infamous Hyde Amendment, which prohibits federal money from being spent on abortions. Since it was first passed in the 1970s (with Democrats Jimmy Carter and Joe Biden backing it), it has been routinely reenacted by Congress every year, including when Congress has been fully controlled by the Democrats.⁹

But this is only one aspect of the parallels. Pretending to uphold “freedom” for moms and children, censors and witch-hunters fan fear, gag educators, ban abortions, books and classroom discussions, and snoop into sports teams, bedrooms and bathrooms, while cutting vital health services and child welfare programs. Virulent opponents of women’s emancipation lie that “protecting women” is the goal of their crusade to make America “safe” again from anything other than traditional gender norms, as they seek to impose the role of “trad wife” on women, like it or not.

In a similar vein, antisemitic Christian rightists lie that “fighting antisemitism” is their goal in smearing, censoring and brutally repressing students and faculty (among whom many are themselves Jewish) who protest the genocidal war on Gaza. Meanwhile, the demonization and persecution of a small minority – trans people – as scapegoats for a society in crisis chillingly recalls the Nazis’ targeting

of Jews in interwar Europe. Gleeful and ostentatious sadism against trans people goes together with that displayed by the anti-immigrant onslaught, in which crowds call for mass deportations and Homeland Security secretary Kristi Noem poses, bedecked in a \$59,000 gold Rolex, in front of a cage stacked high with gaunt, head-shaven prisoners.

So “the cruelty is the point” does capture part of what’s behind the anti-trans offensive. But only part. The crusade against trans rights recapitulates and revives many themes from campaigns in the 1970s and ’80s against gay rights, as well as the fear-mongering, marginalization and murderous neglect of AIDS patients by reactionary icon Ronald Reagan. The present-day power of the religious right goes back to the increasing prominence of evangelical Christian political operators under Reagan and his predecessor, Democrat Jimmy Carter. Long-time campaigners against gay marriage, like the Heritage Foundation and the Family Policy Alliance, are now key players in the anti-trans panic-peddling. And, of course, “Save the Children” was the slogan for the bigoted rhetoric vomited up by “Florida orange juice queen” Anita Bryant in her 1977 campaign in response to Miami-Dade County enacting an ordinance against discrimination based on sexual orientation. This has served as a template for “family values” crusades on hot-button social issues fueling the growth of the religious right. As we have noted:

“Whipping up this campaign for bigotry, Bryant ranted that children had to be ‘saved’ from the supposed threat of gays and lesbians teaching in the schools. Like similar movements, it drew on the model of how the politicized Christian right cohered in the 1960s on the basis of racism against black people, to ‘save’ white families from school integration and ‘save’ society from secular education and the separation of church and state.”¹⁰

In 1983, our article noted, the backlash offensive “led to such horrific phenomena as the hysterical targeting of day-care workers at the McMartin Preschool in Los Angeles County,” a crazed witch hunt involving “bizarre claims that the school’s teachers and staff were Satan-worshippers who had engaged in ritual sexual abuse of hundreds of children.”

Much like the anti-abortion movement – and intertwined with it in innum-

¹⁰ “Sinister Symbiosis: Homophobic Bigotry and the Anti-Abortion Crusade,” *Revolution* No. 19, September 2022.

able ways – the anti-gay and anti-trans campaigns are rooted in the history and present-day reality of racism in capitalist America. As discussed at length in “Workers Solidarity Against the Anti-Trans Onslaught” (*Revolution* No. 20, September 2023), the themes, techniques, playbooks and much of the personnel go back to the white backlash against school desegregation in the 1950s and ’60s. A vivid example is Loudoun County, Virginia, which was ground zero for the racist “Massive Resistance” campaign launched in 1956 against school integration.

Fast forward to 2021, when KKK leaflets seeking to capitalize on school-board issues appeared in Loudoun County as numerous anti-trans bills were coming up in the state legislature. After right-wing Republican Glenn Youngkin used anti-trans demagoguery in his successful campaign for governor that year, he enacted a series of measures against the rights of transgender students – and 1,400 students in 12 Loudoun County public schools walked out in protest.

Racist fears of white “disappearance” and “replacement” fuel MAGA’s “natalist” wing, personified by Vice President JD Vance. Gay, lesbian and trans people – together with “childless cat ladies” – are branded an obstacle by those obsessed with fomenting and enforcing the production of more white babies (see “White Supremacists Push State-Enforced Pregnancy” on page 12 of this issue). There is, moreover, a long history of far-right religious and anti-communist zealots organizing in defense of “Tradition, Family and Property” (the name of a long-standing Brazilian ultra-rightist group founded in 1960 “in the service of Christian civilization”). Italy’s current prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, has adopted the “God, Fatherland, Family” slogan used by anti-abortion campaigners and inherited from Benito Mussolini’s fascist dictatorship (see “Giorgia Meloni and Her Fascist Fratelli d’Italia” on page 19 of this issue). Nationalist promoters of traditional values in many countries, including Vladimir Putin’s Russia, Viktor Orban’s Hungary, etc., also carry out reactionary anti-gay, anti-lesbian and anti-trans measures.

Marxism and Trans Rights

The *institution of the nuclear family* is, in fact, what’s most fundamental to the discrimination and oppression aimed against trans people and others seen as transgressing allegedly “normal” definitions, boundaries and restrictions on gender and sexual-

ity. The anti-trans campaign seeks to deny and blot out the very existence of trans people not to “defend women” but to defend and enforce the *oppression of women* (and youth) within the family. This building block of bourgeois society is key to passing on the wealth and property of the ruling class as well as the reproduction and regimentation of the labor force in capitalist society, as Friedrich Engels analyzed in his work, *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884).

It is essential to grasp this basic Marxist insight regarding the *material* basis underlying the ostracism and targeting of transgender people. Of course, Trump, echoing right-wing culture warriors, seeks to witch-hunt what he calls “gender ideology” as some kind of Marxist/left-wing conspiracy. And defense of trans rights is an urgent duty of *all* defenders of democratic rights. Yet the truth is that only Marxist historical materialism makes it possible to understand the oppression of gay, lesbian and trans people and orient struggle in defense of their rights – which is especially vital when, facing all the provocations and assaults against basic rights, there is a lot of confusion and misdirection.

Liberal ideologues, in contrast, think the task can be accomplished by pressuring capitalist politicians and institutions to “do the right thing,” together with a focus on changing language – a classic error of idealist thinking, which ignores the material roots of oppression and zeroes in on how it is represented or understood. Sometimes, this liberal identity project takes the form of frankly bizarre and dehumanizing linguistic constructions, such as terms like “birthing-person,” “womb-haver” or “menstruator” to refer to women and issues related to their oppression. Such strange and demeaning phrases do not help trans people but do bring grist to the mill of rightists who seek to portray trans people, leftists or anyone questioning gender norms as a bunch of wacked-out weirdos living in a world of their own.

It is true that transgender men and other trans people “assigned female” at birth have to contend with onslaughts against abortion rights and other aspects of reproductive health. However, the vast majority of people who access abortions, or have their ability to do so restricted, are women. The Bible-thumping, racist agenda against abortion *exists* because of the special oppression of women. To paper this over with bizarre turns of phrase benefits the enemies of trans rights and women’s rights, while obscuring the fact that effectively fighting oppression



At the June 2016 Pride march in Portland, Oregon, members of the Painters, IATSE (stagehands) and several other unions marched with banner declaring “Hard Hats for Gay Rights!”



Painters Local 10 banner at Portland Pride march, 16 July 2023. Class Struggle Workers – Portland called for cops out of the unions, in 2020 as well as today, when it is a major issue locally and nationally.

is a *social*, not individual or linguistic act.

While Democratic liberals started posturing as trans people's "allies" in the recent past (only to abandon this when they decided it was electorally expedient), revolutionary Marxists' support for gay and trans people's democratic rights goes back well over a century. In 1895, the German Social Democratic Party – founded by Karl Marx's associates Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel – defended Oscar Wilde when the playwright was sentenced to hard labor for homosexuality. Three years later in the Reichstag (Germany's parliament), Bebel denounced the inclusion of "sodomy" and similar "crimes" in the penal code. In part this reflected the influence of the gay and trans rights pioneer Magnus Hirschfeld, who collaborated with key figures in the Marxist movement. In 1919, Hirschfeld founded the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin, which in 1923 was visited by the Soviet Minister of Health, who spoke about the Bolshevik regime's decriminalization of homosexuality.¹¹

Bourgeois conservatives insist that biology *is* destiny and that both sex and gender cleave strictly to a rigid binary— at the same time as they misrepresent basic aspects of biological science and cite as holy writ the outlandish dogmas of religious obscurantism (e.g., that women are subjugated because a snake got Eve to eat an apple). Bourgeois liberals turn reality on its head by claiming ideas and language are the root cause of the status quo, while working unceasingly to keep the workers and oppressed chained to the capitalist order through U.S. imperialism's Democratic Party.

For communists going back to Marx and Engels it has been no secret that humanity, like all of nature, cannot be understood through rigid and eternal categories, binaries or boundaries. As is the case with so many other things, gender as well as sexuality is on a gamut and varies enormously by time, place and the effects of social and historical changes. In societies across the world, extending far back in history, there

¹¹ This, as well as the effect of the Soviet workers state's bureaucratic degeneration under Stalin, is discussed in our 2007 article "Gay Rights and Socialist Revolution" (reprinted in the Internationalist pamphlet *Marxism and Women's Liberation* [2017]), and in "Magnus Hirschfeld: A Pioneer in the Struggle for Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Rights," *Revolution* No. 16, May 2019.



Süddeutsche Zeitung Photo/Alamy

For Trump, Musk and Vance, Women Are Baby Factories

White Supremacists Push State-Enforced Pregnancy

Meanwhile, there is a push from the White House for state-enforced pregnancy. This is directly related to the attacks on immigrants. The fertility rate of the native U.S. population is 1.7 children per woman, well below the "replacement rate" of 2.1 children per woman. The only reason that the U.S. population hasn't been declining is because of large-scale immigration, including of undocumented immigrants who settle here and have children. This fact is used by ultra-rightists to fuel their racist "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory, of a supposed plot (by Democrats and Jews!) to replace the white population. Their solution is to force white women to have more white babies, first of all by cutting off access to abortion and birth control.

Donald Trump has declared that he wants to be the "fertilization president." His buddy Elon Musk is a fanatical propagandist for traditional families (of a man and a woman) with large numbers of children. (He himself has at least 14,

¹ Thus the August 2017 fascist and white-supremacist marchers in Charlottesville, Virginia chanted "Jews will not replace us."

with four different women.) The women, of course, should be "trad wives," i.e., stay-at-home moms, none of this career business for them. Vice President JD Vance is another, with his sneering denunciation of "childless cat ladies." Both Musk and Vance are involved with the right-wing "natalist" (pro-birth) movement. And the Christian-nationalist Project 2025 document that is a blueprint for many Trump administration measures opened with a call to "restore the family as the centerpiece of American life."²

The administration is floating a \$5,000 "baby bonus" to women after giving birth, as a way of increasing the birth rate. This is a joke, as the average out-of-pocket cost of raising a child to age 18 in the United States is estimated at \$414,000, and \$200,000 to \$300,000 for low-income families. Many working people just can't afford to have kids. In Western Europe, the cost is less

² See Caroline Kitchener, "White House Assesses Ways to Persuade Women to Have More Children," and Michelle Goldberg, "MAGA Natalism Is Doomed to Fail," both in *New York Times*, 22 April, for a dissection of the Trump administration's drive to force up the (white) birth rate.

are numerous examples of people "changing their gender," from the Muxe among the Zapotecs in Mexico to the Hijra in South Asia to "Two-Spirit" people among various Native American peoples, the Burmesha in Albania and many others. Try as they may, the crusaders for ignorance and bigotry cannot eradicate the multiplicity, variability and range of human existence, including when it comes to sex and gender.

But while knowing these things is necessary, it's not sufficient when it comes to the fight to *defeat* the attacks on the rights of trans people. While "identity politics" defines people according to competing categories, some of its adherents, in an attempt to address resulting conflicts, talk about "intersectionality" and say that various sectors can be "al-

lies." In contrast, Marxist politics recognizes that the different types of special oppression have common roots in the history and workings of class society, and to effectively fight them requires linking together the struggle against them and bringing to bear the power of the multiracial working class. This requires that we fight to unchain workers power from all capitalist parties, institutions and politicians, putting forward a program of class struggle to uproot all forms of capitalist oppression through *international socialist revolution*. The urgency of this is clearer than ever when the all-sided crisis of capitalist society has put power into the hands of a clique of sociopathic billionaires and grifters headed by a wannabe dictator.



Magnus-Hirschfeld Gesellschaft

than half that in the U.S., a main reason being the greater availability of free childcare and healthcare. But, of course, in the U.S. those are precisely some of the programs the new administration is slashing, eliminating all funding for Head Start ... and cutting \$65 million from family planning programs. So the Trump program means more unwanted kids and more childhood poverty.

Yet in Western Europe, as well, birth rates are falling, as women don't want to be chained to "hearth and home." The Trump-Vance-Musk crew would take away women's hard-won gains. But while the rich can afford to pay for the needed services – notably by hiring undocumented nannies and housecleaners at poverty pay – few working-class families can make ends meet with just one income. Under capitalism it is close to impossible for working women to escape the curse of the double shift, on the job and as domestic caregiver. This double oppression of women workers is a key to why Marxists fight for *women's liberation through socialist revolution*. ■

"When a small group of people is targeted, the attacks never stop there," trans activist Chase Strangio pointed out in his January piece for *Time*. Divide-and-conquer is the name of the game for a social system – capitalism – that is based on inequality, exploitation and oppression. Against this, Marxists emphasize that the struggle to defend democratic rights is indivisible.

Many people assume that it's impossible to get workers to defend the rights of groups targeted by discrimination and prejudice. Yet this is largely a question of leadership and program. "Defend Trans People" is the call of the Painters union banner in Portland, Oregon in local Pride marches, reflecting the work of activists from Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP), which works fraternally with the Internationalist Group.¹² The 2016 "Hard Hats for Gay Rights" contingent was also sparked by the CSWP, which has long played an important role in Portland-area struggles against racist and fascist provocations, to defend immigrants, for labor action against the genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza, and for a class-struggle workers party.

Remembering that "an injury to one is an injury to all," *labor must use its power against the deadly dangerous offensive targeting the rights and very existence of transgender people*. As the onslaught intensifies and spreads, the connection between this fight and so many others is highlighted for all to see – working-class defense of trans rights is inseparable from defending the rights of us all. ■

¹² See "Workers Solidarity Against the Anti-Trans Onslaught," *Revolution* No. 20, September 2023.

(Left) Magnus Hirschfeld, who founded the Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin in 1919. In a 1923 visit to the Institute, the Soviet minister of health spoke of how the USSR was the first country to decriminalize homosexuality. In May 1933 the victorious Nazis destroyed his clinic and burned 20,000 books in a towering bonfire.

Fascism, Bonapartism and Donald Trump

The new crew in charge in Washington has a lot of affinity with fascist and fascistic parties in Europe. Musk, who gave a stiff-arm Mussolini-style salute at the inauguration, from a lectern bearing the seal of the U.S. presidency, has attended events of the fascistic German AfD (Alternativ für Deutschland). After he spoke by video link at their last congress, in December, AfD leader Alice Weidel led a chant, “Make Germany great again!” Meaning, basically, like it was under Hitler. Musk has also been a keynote speaker at the annual gathering of Giorgia Meloni’s fascist Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy). Meanwhile, Trump’s VP Vance also embraced the AfD at the Munich Security Conference in February.

Trump has called to complete the U.S./Israel genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza, in order to turn it into a beachfront resort property with lots of opportunities for investors, as his son-in-law Jared Kushner suggested last year in a talk at Harvard.¹ The U.S. president would eliminate the entire Palestinian Arab population there, pushing them to somewhere else, so there won’t be a Palestinian people. This is what the Israeli Zionists have always insisted on. They were and are out to destroy the Palestinian people, which has been forged as a nation through a history of colonial and Zionist domination. A Hebrew-speaking nation also arose from a history of oppression of the Jews, and now oppresses the Palestinians.

There is a lot of talk about Trump supposedly being a fascist, especially from Democratic “progressives,” which we have said is not accurate.² Trump traffics in fascistic rhetoric. He is ultra-reactionary, he is aiming at a regime that would rule with semi-dictatorial powers, but that is not identical with fascism. Fascism is based on a mass movement of “declassed”³ elements – that is, who are filled with rage at having lost status, notably due to economic crisis – particularly from the petty bourgeoisie, that is mobilized in the interests of the big bourgeoisie as a battering ram to destroy the workers movement. The bourgeoisie does not need that in this country at the present time. What they do need is a very powerful and fortified state, or “Bonapartism.”

As we wrote in the introduction to our pamphlet *Marxism vs. Bonapartism*, speaking of the tendency toward police-state measures in the 1930s worldwide capitalist economic crisis, Russian revolutionary Leon “Trotsky generalized the term coined by Karl Marx in his essay, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis-Napoléon*, referring to the French emperor (the

¹ See “Gaza Genocide Made in USA,” *The Internationalist* No. 73, June-August 2024.

² See “Is Donald Trump a Fascist?” in *The Internationalist* No. 74, September-December 2024.

³ “Declassé” comes from the French expression “*déclassé*,” referring to those who have lost class, rank or social position, often due to economic ruin, such as the millions of petty, or small, bourgeois thrown into penury (shop owners and small businessmen thrown into bankruptcy or lower-level government and corporate functionaries who lost their positions) in the Great Depression, who populated the fascist movements of the 1930s, along with some workers thrown into unemployment and into the dregs of the lumpenproletariat, the refuse of capitalist society.



President Donald Trump and Melania Trump visiting the tomb of Napoleon Bonaparte in Paris on 13 July 2017, during his first term. The U.S. commander in chief seeks to emulate the French emperor, pushing for a Bonapartist “strong state” regime to crush opponents and entrench unfettered presidential power.

nephew of Napoléon Bonaparte) who governed France from 1848 to 1871. Bonapartism refers to a regime resting on the state apparatus (military and police) that seeks to raise itself above the different classes to act as an arbiter, sweeping away ‘democratic’ norms in order to defend the ‘higher’ interests of the whole of the ruling class in periods of acute danger (war, potentially revolutionary crisis, etc.).”

Trotsky noted in his 1934 essay on “Bonapartism and Fascism” that Bonapartist regimes were transitional or intermediate forms of government between bourgeois “democracy” and a full-fledged police state, such as the fascist regimes of Mussolini and Hitler. In Europe today there are several major fascist parties that have been growing – Fratelli d’Italia in Italy, Rassemblement National (National Rally) in France, the Austrian Freedom Party – as well as looser fascistic parties like the AfD in Germany or the Lega in Italy. The role of these parties at this time is not to set up a fascist dictatorship that would abolish parliamentary rule completely, but rather to spearhead the drive for a Bonapartist “strong state” with a toughened repressive apparatus.

A key point is that the drive to fortify executive power within the formal framework of parliamentary democracy is not exclusive to Donald Trump and the Trumpers. Trump is ruling by decree? So, to a considerable degree, did Biden (162 executive actions in four years) and Obama (276 in eight years), though not nearly at the breakneck pace as Trump is doing. It was the only way they could get anything done in the face of a narrowly but bitterly divided Congress. Trump wants to use the Justice Department and courts against his opponents? That’s what Biden did to try to keep Trump off the 2024 ballot at all costs. Trump wants to use paramilitary force against protesters? It was Obama who gave local police Bearcat armored cars and military-grade weaponry.

It is important to understand the distinction between a fascist dictatorship and a Bonapartist regime, for various reasons. First, when people call Trump “fascist” (and/or a madman), it portrays him as a uniquely dan-

gerous threat, and the Democrats as, at worst, a “lesser evil.” But the Democrats in office were plenty dangerous and, if anything, even more warmongering than the Republicans, heading pell-mell toward a third world war, this time with nuclear weapons. In the struggle against the Trump regime’s repressive onslaught, continuing to tie the workers and oppressed to the Democrats is a recipe for defeat. Secondly, it is crucial to understand *why* there is a drive toward “strong state” rule, in the U.S. and internationally, which is fundamentally because capitalism in its advanced state of decay requires more repressive force and a forceful executive to counter opposition.

In any fight the first thing you need to know is, who are your friends and who are your enemies? And in the struggle against increasing police-state repression, the Democrats (or in Europe, social democrats and “mainstream” conservatives) are not friends, or even allies, of the working class. Just look at who ordered vicious police assaults on pro-Palestinian protesters last year: it was Democratic mayors and liberal university administrations, who joined the Republicans in smearing demonstrators as “antisemitic.” It was the Democratic Biden administration that supplied the bombs to carry out the U.S./Israel genocide in Gaza and the (somewhat) high-tech arms to escalate the war against Russia over Ukraine.

There will certainly be intensified repression in Trump 2. The police feel that their people are in power, and that now is the time for payback for the 2020 protests against the racist police murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many others. But in fact, there was no reduction in police killing during Biden’s time in office. According to the database Fatal Encounters, there were 1,154 killed by police in 2020; 1,461 in 2021; 1,169 in 2022; 1,357 in 2023; 1,366 in 2024. In 2024, there were 10 days in which police didn’t kill anyone; in the other 355 days, the police killed an average of four people a day. And as we have repeatedly highlighted in our press, in our agitation and on our banners, from

coast to coast, *Democrats are the bosses of the racist killer cops!*

And let’s not forget the Democrats’ role in ramping up the powers and resources of a whole range of repressive forces; how they ran in 2024 as the champions of the FBI and CIA, of being tough on crime and the border, “ensur[ing] that America always has the strongest, most lethal fighting force in the world” (as self-proclaimed “top cop” Kamala Harris put it).⁴

In short, the *Democrats are enemies of working people, of immigrants, of African American, Latino and Asian people, of women and gay, lesbian and transgender people, as are the Republicans*. The struggle against the drive by the all wings of the ruling class to strengthen its rule can only rely on *independent mobilization of the working class and its allies, against all parties and politicians of capital*.

That said, Trump & Co. are pushing hard to assert unlimited power of the executive in every sphere. You don’t hear much from this crew about Montesquieu and the famous separation of powers. The watchword of the hard right is the “unitary executive theory.” Based on the Federalist Papers of Alexander Hamilton and the 1803 Supreme Court decision in *Marbury v. Madison*, they argue that the courts and Congress can’t interfere with the executive on foreign policy, spending, execution of laws or just about anything. With its multiple executive orders and arbitrary actions, the Trump White House is pushing the limits of executive powers by taking steps that are blatantly illegal or based on absurd claims (like the supposed “invasion” by “enemy aliens”).

The United States is moving rapidly along on the road toward authoritarian government. So when could you say that a Bonapartist “strong state” regime had consolidated? An indication might be when a government simply overrides the legislative branch, but this Congress is so submissive – even though the Republicans only have a one-vote majority – that it presents no challenge at all to the executive. Or what if the government refuses to heed court rulings? The administration has done that, violating an order by a federal district judge not to send immigrants to El Salvador. Then, when the Supreme Court told it to “facilitate” the return of Kilmar Abrego García, who a DOJ lawyer admitted was wrongly deported, Trump sneeringly claimed he can’t bring him back.

The liberals are talking about a Constitutional crisis, depending on how the Supreme Court rules. But the Court has responded in advance with its 30 June 2024 ruling in the case of *Trump v. United States*. Trump had asked it to dismiss indictments against him for his attempts to nullify the vote in the 2020 presidential election. It did, but went much further, essentially writing the unitary executive theory into law. The majority held that “Congress cannot act on, and courts cannot examine, the President’s actions on subjects within his ‘conclusive and preclusive’ constitutional authority.” The ruling goes on:

“Neither may the courts adjudicate a criminal prosecution that examines such Presidential actions. We thus conclude that the President is absolutely immune from criminal prosecution for conduct within his exclusive sphere of constitutional authority.”

continues on page 35

⁴ See “The Only Choice: Build a Revolutionary Workers Party,” *Revolution* No. 21, September 2025.

Revolution



“DHS/ICE, Border Patrol: Out of CUNY Now!” Student/Labor Protests Stop Immigration Cops’ Provocation at CUNY Campus

By the CUNY Internationalist Clubs

On February 27, a campaign of protest and exposure caused the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency to cancel a special recruitment session it scheduled at one of the main campuses of the City University of New York, on Manhattan’s West Side. Together with I.C.E. (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), CBP is a key part of the infamous “migra,” as the immigration police have long been known in Spanish: it is a division of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the parent body of the U.S. Border Patrol. The planned session at the John Jay College career fair was a dangerous provocation, seeking to make the largest urban public university in the U.S. a recruiting ground for the Trump administration’s “mass deportation” drive. It was stopped as the result of two protests demanding “DHS/ICE, Border Patrol: Out of CUNY Now!” in front of the campus building where the job fair was held.

The protests were initiated by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, which put out a flier, thousands of copies of which were distributed, exposing and denouncing the incursion by DHS/I.C.E./Border Patrol recruiters and calling a demonstration on February 25, when the three-day “CareerCon” fair opened. Some 150 students and faculty/staff union members, joined by activists from several other NYC-area unions, rallied outside the building. Together with students, faculty and staff from John Jay, many in the crowd came from Hunter College under the banner of the Hunter Committee to Defend Immigrants, and some from other campuses.

Defenders of immigrant rights had mobilized on short notice in response to the news that recruiters from the New York State division of DHS, Homeland Security Investigations (which has been prominent in a number of recent raids) and similar agencies were slated to show up at this campus where – as is the case throughout CUNY – a huge part of the student body comes from immigrant families. (While the school is known for “criminal justice” majors, about half of the students are in other fields.) At the job fair, DHS was to set up shop together with recruiters from the military who plied their deadly trade alongside those sent by a raft of prison, police and sheriff’s departments from across the country.¹

When students then discovered that CBP had scheduled a “special information [i.e. recruitment] session” for the afternoon of February 27, a new Internationalist flier was rushed out denouncing this outrage, and a second demonstration was quickly

¹ The Internationalist flier for the February 25 protest noted that the job fair “even includes recruiters for the Sheriff’s Office of Loudoun County, infamous as the epicenter of ultra-racist ‘massive resistance’ to school desegregation in the 1950s – and now for its crusades against Black History teaching and against the rights of gay, lesbian and trans students.”



Upon learning that U.S. immigration police agencies would be at a job fair at the City University of New York’s John Jay College, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs called a protest on February 25 (above). After a second demo two days later, the deporters canceled a scheduled session.

organized. As reported by the campus student newspaper:

“[News of] this event led to another protest by the John Jay community on the day of the information session as students distributed hundreds of flyers throughout the campus. The crowd spilled over the sidewalk into the street of the 59th Street entrance. Huge posters and signs addressed issues such as birthright citizenship, deportation, and immigrant rights. In deep anger, protesters chanted, ‘DHS, military, and police recruiters out now!’”

– *The John Jay Sentinel*, 3 March

Among protesters quoted by the campus paper was a member of the recently formed John Jay Immigrant Defense Committee, who said he had “talked to many students who were afraid because of these agencies and did not attend school. A professor told me how heartbroken she was when a student asked her if she is still safe on campus.” A leader of the school’s Latin American Student Organization said, “I had heard rumors but didn’t think the school would actually act that way toward students....” The “protest was so powerful and moving,” as “students and faculty came together for such an important cause,” she said.

That evening, word arrived that the CBP had cancelled its recruitment session. After the rally of over 70 demonstrators, it was confirmed that the cancellation was directly in response to the protest campaign.

“Workers and Students Unite!”

Reflecting the multinational demographics of New York City’s working class, according to City University and NYC government figures 40% of CUNY undergraduates speak a language other than English at home and 34% were born outside the U.S. mainland. At the February 25 John Jay protest, a young student told the crowd that her

family had “worked in the fields and suffered discrimination,” as the rulers of this country want immigrant workers’ labor at the same time as they deny them their basic rights.

She said it is an outrage that the DHS and its subsidiaries like the Border Patrol were coming to the college to try to recruit among the student body made up of children of the city’s largely immigrant working class. Several other John Jay students spoke, including a representative of John Jay Students for Justice in Palestine, which together with a number of other campus groups had put out a protest statement demanding “ICE and DHS off our campus!” Students from CUNY’s Hunter College, City College and Brooklyn College were also among those who spoke and helped lead chants such as “ICE Out of Our Schools, ICE Out of New York!”

Linking up with the power of NYC’s labor movement was a key theme of the protests. More than a dozen members of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) faculty/staff union came from John Jay, Hunter and other campuses of the City University, carrying union signs calling for DHS/I.C.E. to keep out of CUNY. The PSC recently established an Immigrant Solidarity Working Group, which together with “Know Your Rights” trainings, production of a poster and “Education Not Deportation” buttons, and other activities, is organizing on campuses across the CUNY system.

Among those joining students in protest outside John Jay were PSC Secretary Andrea Vasquez and former union vice president Mike Fabricant, who spoke against campus incursions by DHS and other repressive agencies. Sarah Chinn and Sándor John of the Hunter PSC chapter also addressed the demonstrators. Speaking to the February 27 rally, longtime former PSC president Barbara Bowen declared: “It is the most cynical and dishonest

action to bring I.C.E., which represents repression, racism and destruction, to recruit here.” Denouncing attempts to portray immigrants as criminals, she said workers and students should join together, “not align with the boss who is saying to take immigrants away and deport them.” Bowen called the deportation raids a form of “kidnapping” reminiscent of the slavecatchers before the Civil War. New York’s notorious Rikers Island jail bears the name of a man infamous for using the Fugitive Slave Act to send escaped slaves back to the slaveowners, she noted.²

An organizer of the Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants (LCDI) led the crowd in an improvised version of Ray Charles’ “Hit the Road Jack,” switching the words to “Hit the road ICE, and don’t you come back no more, no more...!” Emphasizing the “indivisible” connection between defending “immigrant rights, union rights, trans rights and the rights of us all” against the reactionary onslaught, he described the LCDI’s creation in January on the basis of a series of conferences bringing together members of a wide range of NYC-area unions aiming to bring out the power of labor in the struggle to stop the raids and deportations.

A workers’ walk-out against an immigration raid would “electrify the workers movement from coast to coast,” the LCDI speaker said. He contrasted this to the labor leadership’s subordination to the Democratic Party, “which is either prostrate or actively collaborating with Trump,” as NYC mayor Eric Adams is. “Students and workers unite!” chanted the crowd.

A UPS Teamster described immigrant defense efforts in his and other unions, explaining that “the power of the working class can stop everything in its tracks, which is why we started the Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants.” The Committee is bringing together members of many unions including “six different Teamsters locals, the Transport Workers Union, and class-conscious teachers who’ve started committees in their public school.” Healthcare workers are working to set up committees, “because they’re not going to let [I.C.E.] take their patients away.”

A leader of the recent successful drive for unionization of workers at Brooklyn’s Nitehawk cinema/restaurant said:

“We must organize our coworkers and fellow union members to join us in this fight! We must form committees to defend

continued on page 34

² Starting in 1815, Richard Riker presided over the city’s main criminal court for almost a quarter century. Becoming a prominent figure in the Democratic Party, he was infamous for rapidly issuing “certificates of removal” against runaway slaves. (See Eric Foner, “Slavery and Freedom in New York City,” April 2015, and Arun Venugopal, “Riker’s Island, a Present-Day Protest and a Link to NYC’s ‘Kidnapping Club’ Past,” *Gothamist*, 27 February.)

Deportations...

continued from page 1

to seek medical care. Trump has vowed that there'll be no sanctuary in hospitals, churches, schools or anywhere else.

Planeloads of immigrants are being summarily deported to El Salvador, to be stuck in a huge "anti-terrorist" dungeon. Trump claims they are all criminals who are a threat to U.S. citizens. It is a lie. A large portion of the hundreds sent to that hellhole are working people with families in the U.S., and according to journalists' investigations few have any criminal record at all.

Some detentions are like out of a dictatorship, as when they seized Columbia University graduate Mahmoud Khalil entering the door to his apartment building with his eight-month pregnant wife. Others resemble a terrorist operation, as masked agents grab Tufts University student Rümeyza Öztürk on the street and shove her into a car that drives up and speeds off.

Others are full-scale military operations, like when federal agents staged a raid on Cedar Run Apartments in Denver, Colorado on February 5. A Denver minister was an eyewitness:

"The sprawling apartment complex, home to dozens of immigrant families from Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti, and Central America, was on lockdown. Officers with ICE and the FBI stood guard, heavily armed. Some wore face masks. Dozens of trucks – including armored vehicles resembling tanks – blocked the area, making it look more like a war zone than a Denver neighborhood.

–*Denver Post*, 24 February

In a workplace raid on a Italian restaurant in San Diego, California, videos show "armed and masked agents in full tactical gear swarming the area" (NPR, 31 May). A crowd gathered "filming and yelling in protest, surrounding cars and detention vans" until a flash-bang grenade exploded. The DHS agents handcuffed all the workers, and ended up detaining several.

And they are showing up at schools and shelters to do "wellness checks" on immigrant children. The first New York City student known to be detained, a Venezuelan named Dylan, was seized on May 21 at what was supposed to be a hearing on his asylum petition. The new ploy is for administrative judges to reject petitions and then I.C.E. agents grab the person on the spot.

The marauding federal agents are not only trampling on immigrants' rights, they are going after any officials who get in their way, part of Trump's war on "sanctuary" cities and states. On April 25, a courageous Wisconsin judge, Hannah Dugan, was arrested by the FBI for allegedly helping an immigrant evade arrest.

On May 9, New Jersey Democratic congresswoman LaMonica McIver was arrested for seeking, along with other officials, to inspect an I.C.E. detention facility. And on May 28, DHS cops stormed into the office of Democratic congressman Jerry Nadler and handcuffed an aide, accusing staffers of "harboring rioters" who witnessed detentions of immigrants in the building.

While Trump issues one decree after another, federal agents are acting with impunity to enforce his deportation program using the absurd claim that these immigrants were alien enemies invading the U.S. Some federal courts have temporarily blocked deportations that use this subterfuge, but the immigrants are still detained, and the government has violated several of these court orders.



Pre-dawn I.C.E. raid in Chicago, January 28.

Committees to Defend Immigrants Formed

The Internationalist Group and fraternally allied organizations have been organizing in the labor movements as well as a number of workplaces and campuses for the formation of committees to defend immigrants. Though involving still modest forces, these efforts intersect the desire of many for concrete action rooted in the power of labor.

On May 29, union and student activists carried the banners of the Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants as well as the committee at Hunter College (see below) at a protest at the NYC Department of Education over the detained Venezuelan student, calling to "Bring Dylan Home."

That night, 23 protesters were arrested, including two who are active in the immigrant defense committees, for allegedly blocking an I.C.E. van transporting immigrants arrested after coming in for a hearing before an administrative immigration judge.

In the Pacific Northwest, Class Struggle Workers – Portland put forward a "Resolution to Defend Immigrants Against Mass Deportations and Racist Violence" which was passed by six area unions. Also, on March 19, Painters Local 10 called to free Mahmoud Khalil. A Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants has formed and on April 5 held a "know your rights" workshop in the local AFL-CIO building.

In New York, as reported in the last issue of *The Internationalist* (No. 74, September-December 2024), the Internationalist Clubs at the City University of New York (CUNY) initiated the Committee to Defend Immigrants at Hunter College. The Clubs called protests in late February that forced DHS/ICE to call off a recruiting session at a CUNY campus (see article, page 14).

In New York City public schools, supporters of Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) in the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) have taken the lead in building union chapter-initiated Committees to Defend Immigrants in a number of schools in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan.

These committees have worked with parents groups to provide information on immigrants' rights, including making and distributing hundreds of (and at one Brooklyn school, over 1,000) "red cards" explaining that they have the right not to talk to immigration police. At one school, the committee held a demonstration on March 6 for keeping I.C.E. out of the schools.¹

¹ See "FDR Teachers Say, 'I.C.E. Won't Take Our Kids Away'" (19 March) on the CSEW web site, <http://edworkersunite.blogspot.com>.

A supporter has put forward a motion in the UFT Delegate Assembly that calls for chapters to initiate school-based immigrant defense committees and, noting that one can't look to the courts, the government or Democratic or Republican politicians to stop deportations, calls on all of labor to mobilize its power in defense of immigrants. The resolution ends:

"These are our students, our fellow workers, our neighbors, and we will act to support them in this, their hour of need, and always. We will not let them take our students."

As previously reported, on December 16, a preliminary NYC-area Labor Conference to Defend Immigrants was held in Midtown Manhattan, attended by activists and organizers from a range of unions and community groups. These included American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) District Council 37, Teamsters (IBT), Transport Workers Union (TWU), Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), Laundry Workers Center (LWC), UFT, CSEW, Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (TIC), SEIU Local 32BJ, UAW/ALAA, Professional Staff Congress-CUNY and others.

A second conference was held on January 9, with more than 70 members, organizers and officers from unions, worker-organizing and immigrant-rights groups present. These included the Amazon Labor Union (ALU-IBT Local 1); Teamsters Locals 25, 251, 814, 804 and 808; Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA); CBTU; Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 1180; AFSCME DC37; LWC; SEIU Locals 32BJ and 1199; PSC-CUNY; TWU Local 100, UAW Local 2179, and the UFT.

With Trump's threatened mass deportations looming starting on Inauguration Day, January 20, there was a felt urgency to organize *now* to bring the power of labor to bear in defense of immigrants, their families and communities. Among the speakers, Charles Jenkins of the TWU and CBTU emphasized that defense of immigrants' rights "is a *working-class* issue," connecting the exploitation of immigrants to the history of enslaved Africans, and stressing the need for *unity of all workers*, native and foreign-born against divide-and-conquer tactics.

After a spirited discussion, the assembly broke into several working groups including construction and building workers, education, healthcare, hospitality, transport and warehouse workers, students, and outreach. The conference then reconvened with reports of the different working groups' discussions. The Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants (LCDI) was established by a unanimous and enthusiastic

vote. It was also decided to build for an ongoing *labor contingent* in defense of immigrants and against deportations

On February 13, the NYC Labor Committee met again, this time with more than 100 attending. Especially noteworthy were reports from the transport/warehouse and education working groups. A Teamster reported on speaking at a Local 804 meeting after which more than 50 members signed up to join the LCDI. The Local president emphasized the importance of organizing the unorganized, e.g. at Amazon, and linking this to the defense of immigrants, as immigrant workers may be hesitant about joining a union for fear of deportation.

By the time of that meeting, a 75-page LCDI Immigrant Rights Defense Packet had been issued, hundreds of copies of which have been distributed in the New York area. The pamphlet contains "Know Your Rights" material in English, Spanish, Haitian Kréyol, French and Arabic. It was also noted that the Professional Staff Congress, representing CUNY faculty and staff, has organized an Immigrant Solidarity Working Group. And Brother Jenkins reported that he was advocating that the Municipal Labor Council make defense of immigrant rights a central focus of a large-scale May Day march this year.

The LCDI met again on April 29, on the eve of May Day. In opening the session Sándor John, a PSC union delegate and supporter of the CSEW, noted how the government is now going after universities and reported on an April 17 rally "for the right to learn" and against the attacks on higher education. Chris Silvera, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 808, underlined that the fight to defend immigrants is a key part of a huge struggle: "They're going after you, they're going after your Social Security. We're in a battle, and if we lose it, we're back in slavery."

The committees to defend immigrants have stressed the necessity and urgency of mass mobilization based on the organizations of the working class in the fight to stop deportations. As the raids escalate and the horror of militarized police marauding around the U.S. hunting down immigrants sinks in, there will be a reaction. But facing the juggernaut of a government using police-state measures, it is key that the response go beyond spontaneous reactions to atrocities and bring the organization and power of the organized workers movement to bear, in the streets and at the point of production.

On May Day, Internationalist contingents in New York, Portland, Oakland and Los Angeles marched together with contingents of the Committees to Defend Immigrants (see article on page 18). In carrying out this intensive work in the working class, the IG and fraternally allied organization are providing a way for people to struggle against the catastrophe that is upon us, at a time when liberals, labor and the left are largely paralyzed, or doing the same old, same old.

As Becca Lewis of the CSWP put it, "It's become very apparent to us doing this work that there is a gaping chasm of leadership right now. Labor must rise to the occasion. That is the only thing that is going to get results, if we're able to do real shop-floor organizing.... Ultimately the crisis of immigration is not going to be solved under capitalism. The only way to solve the problem is an international workers revolution."

Initiatives like the fight to build committees to defend immigrants are an expression of our overall class-struggle program, for forging a genuinely revolutionary workers party in the heat of the class struggle. ■

Trump, White House Witch-Hunters Besiege Academia

The *Gleichschaltung* of American Universities

It began on March 8 with the seizure of Mahmoud Khalil, a politically moderate Palestinian graduate of Columbia University, by federal agents as he was entering the door of his apartment building with his wife, who was eight months pregnant. Khalil was spirited away almost 1,500 miles to a remote Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) detention center in Louisiana. After first saying that his student visa was canceled (he didn't have one), the feds announced that his permanent residency was revoked. The very next day President Donald Trump announced that \$400 million in federal grants to the school would be cancelled. Showing its obeisance to the new regime, Columbia that same day suspended, expelled and revoked the degrees of 22 students for pro-Palestinian activism.

The Trump administration's drive for mass deportations, reprisals against pro-Palestinian demonstrators and assault on U.S. universities was coming together. As the City University of New York (CUNY) Internationalist Clubs put it in a sign at an April 17 demonstration in defense of higher education: "First They Came for the Palestinians... Free Mahmoud Khalil!" In the following weeks, while pushing to deport international students, the federal government launched an assault on academic freedom and freedom of speech on campus that is intended to be much more deep-going than even the McCarthyite witch hunts of the 1950s. Washington is seeking control over hiring, enrollment, governance and course content, while demanding the expulsion of liberal "activist" faculty and students. They started out with spectacular demands on top universities, in order to intimidate the rest, a typical Trump ploy.

This was truly a purge foretold. A year ago, as the U.S./Israel war on Gaza raged on and a wave of student protest swept universities across the country, college administrators and capitalist politicians of both major parties cynically framed opposition to the Zionist genocide as antisemitism, in order to justify police repression and censorship. In April 2024, Democratic president Joe Biden



NYPD arrests pro-Palestinian demonstrators sitting in at Barnard College at request of university administration. Mahmoud Khalil joined them in solidarity. Three days later he was seized by federal agents for deportation.

"condemn[ed] the antisemitic protests," declaring that the demonstrations "must stop" and "order must prevail." After visiting Columbia, where the first Gaza solidarity encampment was taking place, New York Democratic governor Kathy Hochul tweeted the vile "antisemitism" smear against anti-Zionist protesters. Republican Speaker of the House Mike Johnson chimed in, calling for the deployment of National Guard troops to quash protest.

On the campaign trail in May 2024, Trump vowed in a closed-door meeting with donors that with "any student that protests," he would "throw them out of the country." The Republican National Convention in July included in its platform a call to "Deport pro-Hamas radicals and make our college campuses safe and patriotic again." Then in January 2025, during his second week in office, Trump signed Executive Order 14188, ordering investigations of universities on fallacious charges of antisemitism, and for the Department of Homeland Security and State Department to collaborate in deporting pro-Palestinian international students.

So when protests erupted anew at Columbia in March, federal cops began Gestapo-style abductions and federal funds were pulled from elite private universities where demonstrations took place.

Since Columbia buckled under the pressure of the federal government, the administration has turned its attention to Harvard. It started with an April 11 letter demanding a change in campus governance "reducing the power held by students and untenured faculty" and of any faculty involved in "activism"; a ban on students "hostile to American values" and an ongoing audit of the political ideology of students and faculty to ensure "viewpoint diversity"; shuttering "all diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs" and policies; and more. When Harvard refused to comply, three days later the administration announced it was withholding \$2 billion in federal funding. This was followed by freezing \$1 billion in National Institutes of Health research funds and \$450 million in multi-agency grants, and disqualification from all future federal grants.

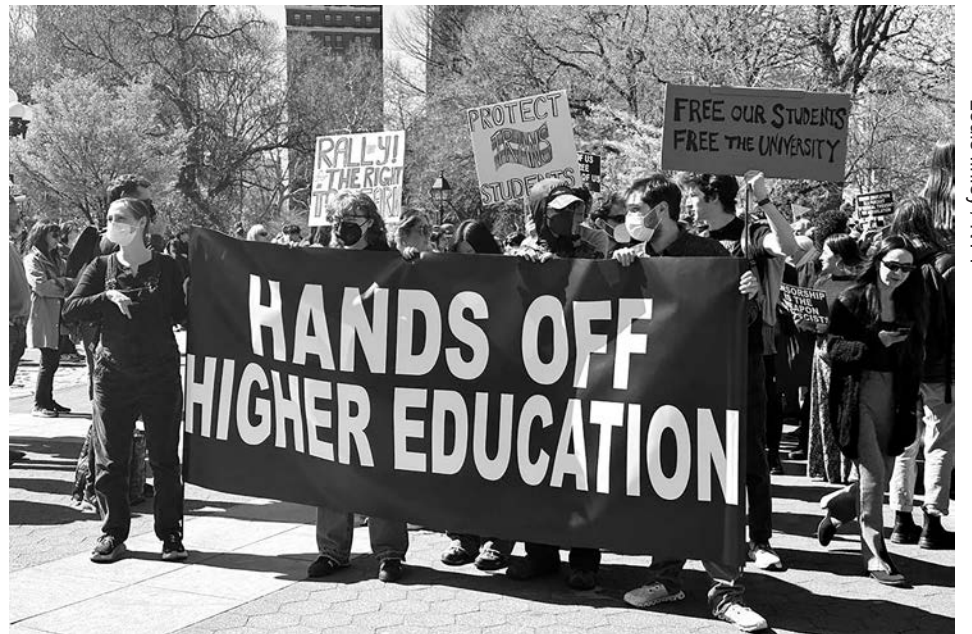
The administration followed up with a letter from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) head Kristi Noem accusing Harvard of having "created a hostile learning environment for Jewish students due to Harvard's failure to condemn antisemitism" – which Harvard, of course, had condemned long ago. The letter demanded individual reports on students, including on their "participating in protests." Then on May 22, Noem informed Harvard that it would no longer be allowed to enroll international students. That evening, the administration formally accused Columbia of violating Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act through "deliberate indifference" toward harassment of Jewish students. But the whole construct is a lie: the supposed harassment of Jewish students was non-existent.

Similar threats of funding cuts have been made or are in the works for other universities on administration lists of suspect campuses. One list is of 60 universities being investigated by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) on suspicion of "antisemitism." Another 131 colleges with endowments of over \$1 billion are potential targets of an ED investigation over DEI programs, under a January 21 Trump executive order. Of those schools facing fund freezes, Cornell, Northwestern, University of Pennsylvania, Brown University and Princeton stand to lose at least \$2.5 billion between them. In short, blacklists are back, with a vengeance. When Senator Joe McCarthy (R, Wisconsin) was witch-hunting "reds" on campuses in the 1950s, hundreds of professors lost their jobs. Now it's whole universities that are losing billions in funding.

The escalation of McCarthyism today, in conjunction with the U.S.-armed Zionist war of extermination against Gaza, is not only bipartisan – as were the "red hunts" of the late 1940s and early '50s – it is emanating straight from the White House, with the full force of the federal government behind it. We wouldn't be surprised to see students or faculty members hauled before inquisitorial investigative panels tomorrow to answer, "Are you now, or have you ever been, a pro-



Hunter Committee to Defend Immigrants and CUNY Internationalist Clubs at April 17 NYC rally for right to learn, part of national day of action.



Protesters on April 17 called for Trump to keep "hands off" academia. But Democrats took the lead in witch-hunting universities over Gaza solidarity actions.

Palestinian protester?” And this time, the aim goes beyond punishing or purging some hundreds or thousands of academics. As the U.S. lurches toward authoritarian rule, we are facing a drive to control all education, whipping educators into line to march in lockstep with the MAGA agenda, imitating the German Nazis’ *Gleichschaltung*¹ of the schools.

U.S. universities are under attack like never before. This assault cannot be diverted with passive resistance, nor can it be defeated by academia alone. It is being driven forward by the forces of xenophobia, bent on driving out millions of immigrants and ripping up the social fabric of the country, as well as by the misogynists who would force women back into the home, obligated to produce the next generation of wage slaves. It is led by virulent racists hell-bent on eliminating any measures to address social oppression, by (genuinely antisemitic) Christian-nationalist fanatics who would impose a messianic theocracy, by ultra-rightists seek to decimate the left, and by labor-haters who yearn to use the repressive powers of a Bonapartist “strong state” to crush the unions. Combined with the push for “patriotic education,” it is a drive to regiment society for war.

The onslaught against American academia can only be defeated by a powerful class struggle by the workers movement in the lead of all the oppressed.

Behind the Trump Game Plan to Attack Elite Universities

Today some academics, including the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), look to the leadership of deep-pocketed elite universities like Harvard to shield higher education from state reprisals. This is illusory. All universities collaborated with local, state and federal authorities to clamp down on student protest and pro-Palestinian activism. Harvard president Alan Garbarino was appointed after the resignation of his predecessor Claudine Gay, crucified at a Congressional hearing over the handling of Palestinian protests. Today he postures as a proponent of free speech, yet it was only last year he had the Palestine Solidarity Committee suspended, Harvard Yard closed and the diplomas of students who participated in encampments withheld – not to mention trying to quash graduate student unionization as provost in 2016.

On April 21, Harvard went to court, accusing the federal government of violating the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Yet Harvard has repeatedly tried to cave in. On April 29, it published a report on supposed antisemitism and “anti-Israel bias,” which among other things accused Jewish Israeli professor Atalia Omer over her course on Palestinian and Israeli history.² On May 8, reports surfaced that top Harvard administrators were considering seeking a deal with the federal government. And on May 12, Harvard’s president Garbarino published a letter saying the university has “common ground” with the Trump administration. But it was never enough, so Noem, the sociopath head of DHS, issued her decree that Harvard could no longer enroll international students, whose tuition provides about a quarter of the university’s overall funds.

In filing its suit against the administra-

tion, both lead lawyers representing Harvard have prior links to Trump, reflecting divisions in the upper levels of the ruling class. Robert Hur, a senior Justice Department official in Trump’s first term, was the Special Counsel investigating President Biden’s handling of classified documents; William Burck represented several Trump officials during the Robert Mueller “Russia-gate” investigation. But the attacks on free speech began under the previous Democratic administration. Along with supplying the weapons for the U.S./Israel genocidal war on the Palestinians in Gaza, in November 2023 Biden initiated the Education Department probe into schools on bogus charges of antisemitism. A month before that, NY governor Hochul launched an investigation into pro-Palestinian activism at CUNY.

Those witch hunts led to the December 2023 Congressional star-chamber hearings of university presidents, orchestrated by “ultra-MAGA” Republican congresswoman Elise Stefanik. And it was largely Democratic governors and mayors who, in tandem with the Biden White House, brought police onto campuses to smash student protests last year, resulting in over 3,000 arrests nationwide. More recently, in February 2025, Democrat Hochul intervened directly to demand Hunter College withdraw a posting for a Palestinian studies job. This unholy alliance also includes ultra-rightists and hardline Zionists driving around “doxxing trucks” to smear defenders of the Palestinians as “antisemitic,” while the fascistic Zionists of Betar announced that they had turned over to the Trump administration a list of pro-Palestinian activists to deport.

The Trump administration’s attacks on pro-Palestinian dissent are part of an insidious long game plan to purge the universities, strategized in advance by the president’s billionaire cabal and think-tank courtiers. In July 2023, Trump posted a video statement on his Agenda 47 campaign website on the topic of “Protecting Students from the Radical Left and Marxist Maniacs Infecting Educational Institutions.” The video laid out plans to use the college accreditation system as a “secret weapon,” purging the accreditation agencies in order to clean out “Marxists” from universities, setting “standards that will include defending the American tradition and Western civilization,” while using the Department of Justice to litigate against schools with diversity programs.

Similarly, in April 2023, the conservative Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 published a playbook for Trump to follow in anticipation of his victory in the 2024 elections calling to “defang and defund the woke culture warriors who have infiltrated every last institution in America.” The basic outlook of the administration can be summed up by the title of the keynote speech delivered by current vice president JD Vance at the 2021 National Conservatism Conference: “The Universities Are the Enemy.” Vance and the right-wing Silicon Valley clique of tech billionaires and venture capitalists to which he belongs cynically seek to exploit popular resentment of the privileges of the elite universities in order to wage ideological war against the liberal wing of the U.S. bourgeoisie, and ultimately replace it with right-thinking reactionaries.

In an interview with the *New York Times* (13 June 2024), the fascistic ideo-



Senator Joe McCarthy (left) and his hatchet man Roy Cohn during April 1954 hearing of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Cohn was a mentor to Donald Trump, whose witch-hunting poses existential threat to universities.

logue Vance cited the unrepentant Nazi jurist “Carl Schmitt – there’s no law, there’s just power.” While Vance tried to pin this on liberals, it is clearly the operating protocol of the Trump crew. Schmitt opposed the Weimar Republic, advocating the program of General Kurt von Schleicher, the last German chancellor before Hitler, for an authoritarian (Bonapartist) presidential regime with unlimited powers.³ In a 1921 treatise, *The Dictatorship*, Schmitt put forward a judicial principle of a “state of exception” (*Ausnahmezustand*) in which the sovereign could transcend the “rule of law.” After joining the Nazi party in 1933, he justified the 1934 SS murder of leading generals (including von Schleicher) on the principle of the “leader order” (*Führer-Ordnung*).⁴

Schmitt’s program for Bonapartist rule is the underpinning of the more ideological elements of the Trump regime – and of the “theory of the unitary executive” which has long been pushed by the right-wing jurists of the Federalist Society, and which in June 2024 was embraced by the Supreme Court. A 2005 post on the blog of Yale Law School professor Jack Balkin, titled “The Return of Carl Schmitt,” noted that the arguments of John Yoo, a legal official in the George Bush II administration, justifying the use of torture in Iraq despite prohibition by the Geneva Conventions, were derived from Schmitt. In his torture memos, Yoo grounds his legal reasoning in the power “which the Framers [of the U.S. Constitution] vested in a unitary executive.” An article in *Rolling Stone* (11 July 2024) notes that “Trumpworld sees him [Yoo] as a guiding light.”

McCarthyism, Then and Now

The reactionary efforts to stifle dissent and root out leftist activists today, as in the 1940s and ’50s, are motivated by the drive of the ruling class toward war. As U.S. imperialism revved up the Cold War against the Soviet Union, it pursued members of the Communist Party, left-liberals and “progressives” as the “enemy within.” Today, the immediate targets are the pro-Palestinian protestors. But the genocidal war the U.S. and Israel are jointly waging

³ See “Fascism, Bonapartism and Donald Trump,” in this issue of *The Internationalist*.

⁴ After the war, Schmitt refused even the superficial “denazification” program of the American victors, remaining an unrepentant fascist to his death.

on Gaza is a way station on their war drive aiming at capitalist counterrevolution in China, threatening a nuclear World War III in the process. (In fact, a bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in December calls to develop anti-communist and anti-China propaganda materials to be disseminated and taught in the classroom.)

The post-World War II red hunt got its name from the infamous Republican senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, whose demagogic antics were emblematic of Cold War hysteria. In reality, today as during the McCarthyism of the 1950s, the interrogations, inquisitions and purges *are being driven by both Democrats and Republicans*. McCarthy, in fact, was a close friend of the Kennedy family, and helped future president John F. Kennedy and attorney general Robert F. Kennedy get their start in politics as aggressive Cold Warriors, hiring Robert as assistant counsel on his Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee. RFK would go on to serve as chief counsel in the McClellan hearings to go after the power of the Teamsters union and wiretap Martin Luther King.

McCarthy was neither the first nor the last cynical politician to use the legislature as an inquisitorial body. There was the 1918-19 Senate subcommittee led by North Carolina Democrat Lee Slater Overman to root out “Bolshevik elements” in the U.S. in the first years after the Russian Revolution. A Special Committee on Communist Activities led by New York Republican Hamilton Fish III was formed in 1930, seeking to bolster immigration and deportation laws to target radicals and labor activists. And, of course, the notorious House Committee on Un-American Activities, or HUAC, established in 1938 by Texan Democrat Martin Dies Jr., for decades thereafter held high-profile public hearings to smear suspected radicals and leftist political activists as “subversive” and “disloyal.”

The precedent for anti-communist witch-hunting at the universities was set in 1940, when the New York State legislature moved on the eve of World War II to investigate leftist activities at City College and other NYC public colleges, and to purge students, faculty and staff over their political views. The Rapp-Coudert Committee subpoenaed and interrogated more than 500 people from Brooklyn College, City Col-

continued on page 32



May Day 2025



On May Day 2025, tens of thousands of people came out across the United States on the international workers day. Organizers claimed 250,000 in more than 1,000 marches and rallies, with some in every state. They were driven by opposition to the assault on working people by the administration of President Donald Trump, with his barrage of executive orders attacking immigrants, transgender people, universities and everyone on the Republicans' hit list.

While Democratic Party front groups held large parades on April 5, with slogans such as "Hands off NATO," these events had no political impact whatsoever. Although reflecting mass discontent, they only served to chain people to the party of imperialist warmongers that with its anti-worker policies on behalf of big money Wall Street donors paved the way for Trump, again.

The Internationalist Group organized contingents in the May Day marches in New York City, Portland, Oakland and Los Angeles focusing on calls for workers action to stop the deportations. In each case, we marched with unions and groups of workers with whom we have been working on this effort.

In New York City (above), the Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants, which includes members of over a dozen unions, had a contingent of 50 marchers, which also included activists from the Hunter College Committee to Defend Immigrants, followed by an Interna-

tionalist contingent of three dozen supporters of the IG, Revolutionary Internationalist Youth, Class Struggle Education Workers and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas. One of the seven banners highlighted the fight to bring back Kilmar Abrego García, a sheet metal worker from Maryland who was illegally deported to El Salvador.

On the West Coast, the Portland Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants, including supporters from the six area unions that have passed motions calling for labor action against deportations, joined with Class Struggle Workers – Portland, the IG and RIY, highlighting the case of farm workers organizer Adolfo "Lelo" García and day laborers organizer Jorge Luis seized by I.C.E.

In Oakland, California (below, left) an Internationalist contingent of 19, including members of a newly formed Committee to Defend Immigrants at Berkeley Community College, took up position next to the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 with its banner calling for workers action against mass deportations and mass firings, for no military cargo to Israel and Ukraine, to "defend the rights of ALL of us."

And in Los Angeles (below, right) the Internationalists marched with a banner of Transport Workers Against Deportations, with signs denouncing the genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza, and calling to "End Capitalism – Workers to Power!" ■



Giorgia Meloni and Her Fascist Fratelli d'Italia

This article and those on following pages are translated from L'Internazionalista No. 8, May 2025.

When Giorgia Meloni, the leader of Fratelli d'Italia (Fd'I, Brothers of Italy), took office as prime minister in late October 2022, there was a wave of concern internationally about a first-ever Italian government headed by a party descended from the fascist movement of Benito Mussolini. In Italy not so much. While leftist anti-fascists protested against the new right-wing coalition government – also including the Lega of Matteo Salvini and the late Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia – the “mainstream” bourgeois parties and media have long since “normalized” the Fd'I. Even much of the left routinely refers to Meloni's party as just another party of the bosses.

Many circumlocutions are used: in the press Fratelli d'Italia is often referred to as “populist,” “right-wing populist” or at most “radical right-wing populist.” The Fd'I defines itself (in its 2017 *Trieste Theses*) as a “patriots movement” and “national conservatives.” Another frequent label is “post-fascist.” For our part, the Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia and League for the Fourth International hold that there is nothing “post” about it: while the Fd'I may adapt its electoral pitch, it is the latest iteration of the post-WWII fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI). And the aim of the right-wing coalition government that it leads is to erect a bonapartist “strong state.”

Fratelli is a personalist party, with “Giorgia Meloni” in big letters in its logo (along with the MSI tri-color flame). But then, what fascist movement hasn't had a leader cult? Her campaign biography (*Io sono Giorgia* [I am Giorgia]) and viral campaign video (“I am Giorgia, a woman, a mother, an Italian, a Christian”) project an everywoman, “just folks” image. Internationally, Meloni has portrayed herself as the top European ally of Joe Biden and Donald Trump. The imaging is all very “mainstream.” But on the domestic front, the Fd'I's hobbyhorse is virulent anti-immigrant xenophobia, with anti-Muslim hysteria taking the place of

antisemitism in the cosmography of previous fascist movements, combined with anti-gay and anti-trans bigotry.

If today, the Fd'I strikes a populist pose for the masses while enforcing austerity and militarization for the “democratic” imperialists, this does not contradict its fascist credentials. Mussolini and Hitler both served (and were financed by) top Italian and German industrialists. In 2025, Fratelli d'Italia and their cognates around Europe – National Rally (RN) in France, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) – as well as fascistic (fascist-like) electoral parties like the Lega or Alternative for Germany (AfD) look to beef up the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state. If they don't have squads of marauding blackshirt thugs, it's because they will use the police.

And let's not forget that Mussolini initially ruled through a parliamentary alliance with liberals and conservatives. That right-wing coalition government pushed through the 1923 Acerbo Law that gave the largest party two-thirds of the seats in parliament, if it got at least 25% of the vote. On that basis, and a program for “God, fatherland, nation, strong state and traditional values,” in 1925 *Il Duce* installed a full-fledged police state. Today, Meloni's right-wing council of ministers is pushing an ominous constitutional reform for direct election of the premier, with a guaranteed majority in parliament, while increasing police powers to suppress protests.

Fratelli d'Italia's Forefathers: the Postwar Fascist MSI

Italy is the one country in Europe with an unbroken lineage of a fascist movement, with several incarnations going back for over a century. It started out as shock troops for the employers and landowners in crushing factory occupations by leftist workers peasant land seizures and heading off revolution during the *Biennio Rosso* (Red Two Years) of 1919-20. These paramilitary “fasci fighting squads” founded by Benito Mussolini formed the National Fascist Party. At the culmination of the October



Flavio Lo Scalzo / Reuters

Giorgia Meloni, keeper of the flame ... of the fascist MSI. Here at an election rally in Milan's Piazza del Duomo on 11 September 2022.

2022 March on Rome by 25,000 *squadristi* in black shirts, Mussolini was named prime by King Vittorio Emanuele III.

In carrying out this *putsch*, Mussolini was backed by big business and the military. After two years of parliamentary government in coalition with conservatives and liberals, *Il Duce* dissolved parliament and instituted the fascist dictatorship. This bonapartist regime imposed a corporatist system in which both workers unions and employers syndicates were firmly controlled by, and integrated into, the capitalist state. After Hitler's 1933 takeover of Germany – also via the parliamentary system – and Mussolini's alliance with him, fascist Italy increasingly resembled Nazi Germany, notably in passing the antisemitic laws “in defense of the race” in 1938.

In World War II, as the fascist Axis of Germany and Italy began to crumble in 1943 with the defeat of the German Wehrmacht by the Soviet Red Army at Stalingrad and the invasion of southern Italy by the U.S. and British Allies, Mussolini was ousted by the king in concert with military leaders. The German army quickly occupied northern Italy and set up a puppet “Italian Social Republic” (RSI) with Mussolini as titular head. This “Salò Republic,” named after the last fascist stronghold, was then overthrown and the German occupiers driven out by a coordinated partisan uprising culminating in Liberation Day, 25 April 1945.

At the end of World War II, Italy was in vast turmoil. From huge strikes that braved fascist repression in 1943 up until the defeat of the popular front led by the Communist Party (PCI) in the 1948 elections, the Italian working class showed over and over its power and willingness to do class battle. In the massive upheaval of April 1945, armed workers strung up Mussolini and drove out the Germans: northern Italy was de facto in workers' hands. But instead of leading the struggle forward to socialist revolution, the Communist Party (PCI)

handed power back to the bourgeoisie, joining a Christian Democratic-led government together with the Socialists.

Both before and after the PCI's April 1944 “Salerno turn” (*svolta di Salerno*) – when under Stalin's instructions it joined a “national unity” coalition with “anti-fascist” bourgeois figures, monarchists and former fascist general Pietro Badoglio – the Communist Party followed the Stalinist program of a “popular front” of class collaboration. As minister of justice in the postwar government, in June 1946 PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti issued an amnesty of almost all fascists except for a few of the most notorious butchers. Later that year, the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) was formed by veterans of the Salò republic to carry forward the “flame” of fascism.

Despite all the leftist references to Italy's “antifascist Constitution” of 1947, the laws that supposedly ban “condoning fascism” were deliberately written so as not to apply to the “neofascist” MSI. The historic leader of the MSI, Giorgio Almirante was a propagandist for the antisemitic Racial Laws of 1938 in the Mussolini regime, editor of the hate-sheet *Difesa della Razza* (Defense of the Race). In 1942 he wrote that “our racism must be that of blood.” He didn't change his colors. At the 1956 MSI Congress Almirante declared that “what we really are” is “the fascists of the RSI” (the Salò Republic) and not “fascists in a democracy,” from which they were “estranged.”

“Almirante routinely insisted that fascism did not die with Mussolini but continued as a ‘movement’ once the regime was over,” writes journalist David Broder in his book *Mussolini's Grandchildren: Fascism in Contemporary Italy* (2023). Giorgia Meloni became a fascist activist in 1992 at the age of 15, when she joined the Fronte della Gioventù (Youth Front), the youth group of the MSI. To this day, Meloni has never stopped praising MSI founder-leader Giorgio Almirante. At the first congress of Fratelli d'Italia, standing before a giant image of Almirante, Meloni praised “those who run from one era to the next ... carrying with them a fire, a flame.”



Giorgia Meloni in the court of Donald Trump, 18 April 2025.

Eric Lee/The New York Times

The Normalizing of the MSI

In the post-World War II period, when the not-so-neo-fascists of the MSI felt ghettoized in the purportedly “anti-fascist republic,” these heirs of Mussolini sold their services as the cutting edge of the anti-Soviet Cold War in Italy (see article on page xx). The fascists were up to their necks in Operation Gladio, the P2 secret lodge, coup plotting, horrific massacres and street fighting against leftist 68ers and the Communist Party. Whether the dirty work was carried out directly by the MSI or by its offshoots, they worked together with the state repressive organs as the fascist battering ram of imperialism.

The counterrevolution, under intense imperialist pressure, that destroyed the bureaucratically degenerated, Stalinist-ruled Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states during 1989-1992 had a seismic effect in Italy. The end of the Cold War was intimately related to the explosion of the *tangentopoli* (“kickback city”) scandals of the early 1990s. While there was plenty of personal corruption (over half the members of parliament were indicted), at bottom this reflected the *lotizzazione* (parceling out) of different sectors of the government apparatus and state-owned enterprises among the various factions of the *partitocrazia* of anti-Communist rule.

The *mani pulite* (“clean hands”) judicial investigation led to the collapse of the Christian Democracy (DC), which ruled Italy continuously from 1947 to 1993, either alone until the 1980s or in coalitions thereafter. At the same time, the PCI, long the largest Stalinist reformist party in West Europe, abandoned any pretense of communism or even socialism. The PCI rebranded itself as a bourgeois party, at first the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS), then as the Left Democrats (DS) and ultimately (in 2007), eschewing even the “left” qualifier, as the Democratic Party (PD). The parallel demise of the DC and PCI has been termed the end of the “First Republic.”

The fascist MSI saw this as a political opening to make its way out of the “ghetto.” With Gianfranco Fini, Almirante’s chosen successor, at the helm, at the beginning of 1994 the Movimento Sociale Italiano – Alleanza Nazionale (MSI-AN) was launched, hoping to pick up right-wing sectors of the now defunct Christian Democracy. It promptly joined a coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia (FI), winning 105 seats in parliament and five ministers in the coalition government. At a final conference in Fuggi in 1995, Fini buried the MSI and proclaimed the A.N. (the *svolta di Fuggi*). Pino Rauti split off to form the Tricolor Flame party.



The tricolor flame in the MSI symbol evokes the one burning on Mussolini's tomb. The symbol has been maintained through the various iterations of the Italian fascist movement after World War II. When Fratelli d'Italia was formed in 2012, it claimed the exclusive right to use the flame in its party symbol, and Giorgia Meloni has refused to remove it.

In 1996 Meloni was elected national leader of Azione Studentesca (A.S.), the high school student group of the Alleanza Nazionale. While Fini portrayed the A.N. as a “postfascist” party, in reality it was the continuation of the MSI, keeping its tri-color flame as an insert in the new party’s symbol. For her part, A.S. leader Meloni told French TV channel FR3, “I think that Mussolini was a good politician. Everything he did, he did for Italy. There were none like him in the politicians we have had for the last 50 years.” In the 1996 elections, A.N. became Italy’s third-largest party, although the “center-left” Ulivo (Olive Tree) coalition won the vote.

Over the next decade and a half, the Alleanza Nazionale alternated in office (1994-96, 2001-06) and in opposition (1996-2001, 2006-08), always as part of a right-wing alliance led by Berlusconi. Then in 2008, Fini dissolved the A.N. into *Il Cavaliere*’s new party, Popolo della Libertà (Pd’L), which governed during 2008-11. But Berlusconi’s high-handed behavior rankled, and a year after losing elections at the end of 2011, he abruptly canceled primary elections in the Pd’L. The former A.N. cadres revolted and in December 2012 Fratelli d’Italia was born, initially led by Ignazio La Russa and Giorgia Meloni, both ministers in the Pd’L government.

The formation of the Fd’I was basically a reaction against the step-by-step distancing from the MSI heritage that Fini had carried out with, culminating in the dissolution into Berlusconi’s Pd’L. A month before Fratelli was formed, the whole of the ex-MSI “family” gathered at Pino Rauti’s funeral, where hundreds raised their arms in fascist salutes. In many respects, the Fratelli embraced Rauti’s heritage, as the hard-liner who refused to go along with the “turn” at Fuggi to formally bury the MSI. Now the MSI’s tri-color flame, which had disappeared during the Pd’L phase, reappeared in the symbol of Fratelli.

Rauti was one of the heroes of the MSI’s Azione Studentesca when Giorgia Meloni took the helm in 1996, and he is a hero today for the reborn A.S., the high school student group of the Fd’I. Meloni was at Rauti’s funeral, as was his daughter, Isabella, who since 2018 has been a member of the Senate on the Fd’I slate. She is also president of the Pino Rauti Studies Center, which in 2020 held an exhibition of *50 Years of Press and Propaganda of the Italian Right, 1945-1995* – that is, of the MSI – stressing the continuity of she called the “anti-communist right” up to today. So the Fd’I honors the man who declared “democracy” the “enemy.”



Fratelli d'Italia Reclaims Its Fascist Heritage

In the lead-up to the 2022 vote, Giorgia Meloni expressed exasperation with Fratelli d’Italia being called neofascist, postfascist “or afascist.” Yet the Fd’I’s claim to the heritage of the MSI and its leaders, veterans of the Nazi puppet Salò Republic who frankly proclaimed their fascism, is ostentatious in the Fratelli symbols. The Fd’I received exclusive permission to use the tri-color flame, including the initials MSI, from the Fondazione Alleanza Nazionale which held the legal rights (and is controlled by Fd’I). Likewise with the MSI/AN/Fd’I youth groups, which from the 1950s to today feature a tri-color flare, while the high school group sports a stylized Celtic cross.

The direct fascist lineage of the Fd’I is also seen in its personnel. The title of David Broder’s book on *Fascism in Contemporary Italy is Mussolini’s Grandchildren*. In the case of Fratelli, the latest incarnation of the MSI, this is literally the case. Alessandra Mussolini, the granddaughter of *Il Duce*, came in first in Rome’s 2021 city council elections as a candidate of the Fd’I. Her half-sister Rachelle Mussolini has been a Rome city councilor for the Fd’I since 2016 (until going over to Forza Italia last year). In 2019, Caio Giulio Cesare Mussolini, his great-grandson, was an Fd’I candidate in the European Parliament elections (where Alessandra is a MEP).

Clearly, the name Mussolini is still a vote-getter in a sizeable sector of the Italian electorate. Other Fd’I candidates also come from prominent fascist families, like the senator Isabella Rauti. Ignazio La Russa, who cofounded Fratelli d’Italia in 2012 and was its first president for a year until Meloni took over, was given the middle name of Benito by his father, who was a local leader of the National Fascist Party in the early 1940s and later a parliamentary deputy for the MSI. A week before the 2022 elections, La Russa declared that “we are all heirs of the *Duce*.”

Many of those who characterize the Fd’I as “postfascist” try to distinguish it from other fascist groups, such as CasaPound (named after the American poet Ezra Pound, die-hard backer of Mussolini), and action groups like Forza Nuova (FN), known for its attacks on immigrants and leftists. But there is no hard separation – they are all part of the fascist milieu. At a 2019 leadership meeting of CasaPound the Fd’I’s La Russa said that he considered accusations of being a fascist a “compliment.” And during the COVID-19 pandemic, he proposed to replace “unhealthy” handshakes with the straight-arm “roman (i.e., fascist) salute.”

As for Forza Nuova, its leader Roberto Fiore was a main speaker at the Fd’I youth’s annual Atreju festa, along with spokesmen of Memento, a group which honors fascist black-



The bodies of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini and his lover Clara Petacci, caught by resistance fighters and brought to justice, 28 April 1945.

shirts from the 1920s and the Salò republic. FN has strong influence in the fascistic anti-abortion group ProVita, which was a sponsor of the 2017 World Congress of Families where Meloni gave a speech denouncing “gender ideology.” In 2018 after FN and Casa Pound demonstrated in support of the racist thug (a Lega candidate) who carried out an armed attack on African immigrants in Macerata,¹ Meloni declared that “CasaPound and Forza Nuova are not xenophobic parties.”²

During the 2022 election, the Fratelli d’Italia leader and soon-to-be prime minister criticized “operetta nostalgics” – i.e., those who look back fondly to Benito Mussolini’s rule – saying they “serve the interests of the left.”³ Yet at the same time, Meloni ostentatiously uses Mussolini-era slogans, with big banners proclaiming “God, Fatherland, Family.” The leader of Fratelli claims disingenuously that this triad is “not a political slogan” but “the most beautiful manifesto of love through the centuries,” going back to Cicero’s “For hearth and home.” Others attribute it to 19th-century republican leader Giuseppe Mazzini, although he added “humanity.”

But, in fact, “God, Fatherland, Family” was coined as a political slogan by the head of the National Fascist Party, Giovanni Giuriati, in 1931. As journalist Paolo Berizzi noted, it was to call youth to sacrifice for the Patria, and *Il Duce*. It included “criminalization of homosexuality, attachment to homeland and identity, blood, soil, in the lexicon of xenophobia.”⁴ In 2022 Meloni, the keeper of the MSI flame stridently proclaimed at a meeting of the xenophobic Spanish Vox party: “Yes to natural families, no to the LGBT lobby, yes to sexual identity, no to gender ideology.” But for moderates, “Donna” Giorgia preaches the “balsam” of love.

As for those nostalgic for Italy’s fascist dictatorship, the fact that Meloni took office as premier on the centenary, practically to the day, of Benito Mussolini’s October 1922 March on Rome was fortuitous. On 28 October 2022, 2,000+ fascists caelebrated in Mus-

¹ See “La lezione di Macerata: Azioni operaie di massa per difendere gli immigrati e fermare i fascisti!” *L’internazionalista* supplemento, febbraio 2018

² *Il Giornale*, 10 February 2018

³ *Libero*, 28 July 2022.

⁴ “Meloni e quel motto fascista, slogan nostalgici per la scalata”, *La Repubblica*, 6 August 2022.



Giorgia Meloni as a teenage fascist in 1996, when she became national head of the high school group formed by Azione Giovani, the youth group of Alleanza Nazionale. It was then that Meloni, interviewed on French TV, praised Mussolini as a “good politician,” saying that “everything he did, he did for Italy.”

solini’s home town, Predappio, and marched, without police interference, to the cemetery where his crypt is located. There 2,000+ gave fascist straight-arm salutes. Meanwhile, the new government shut down a dance party rave in Modena. Predappio is a fiefdom of Fd’I, whose mayor celebrated the reopening of the ornate mausoleum with Alessandra Mussolini, saying it was good for tourism.

From “Camerati” to “Patrioti”: The Matrix Is Fascism

As noted above, the formation of Fratelli d’Italia in 2012 was in reaction to the prior abandoning of attachments to the fascist MSI. That year, the Fd’I mayor of Afile, a small municipality near Rome, erected a mausoleum honoring the fascist war criminal Rodolfo Grazian. He interned 100,000 Libyans in concentration camps in 1930-31, used mustard gas in the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935-36, and as defense minister for the German puppet Salò republic, decreed the death penalty for draft resisters. After a firestorm of protest, the mayor was convicted of promoting fascism, but an appeals court overturned it saying that “commemoration” is not “exaltation.”

At its second congress, in December 2017, Fratelli d’Italia passed extensive programmatic theses. Although various academics have argued that these are of a “modern” right-wing populist character, they are distinctly fascist. Beginning with announcing its “Appeal to Patriots” from Trieste, “the most Italian of cities.” Why is that? Because Trieste was “returned” from the shadow of the “Iron Curtain,” wrested from “communist” Yugoslavia. This was a throwback to the *irredentism*⁵ of the ultranationalist fascist poet Gabriele D’Annunzio, who led military bands into the territory in 1920, and Mussolini, who in 1924 annexed “*italianissima*” Trieste.

The “Trieste Theses” tell a tale of

⁵ Calling to bring back “lost territories.” Just as Mussolini “recovered” Trieste and its hinterland Fiume from Yugoslavia, Hitler sought to bring ethnic Germans in central Europe “*heim ins Reich*,” (back home to the Third Reich).

national identity under siege from “radical universalism,” and fighting against an “abstract multiculturalist principal” that negates the “classical Judeo-Christian roots” of Europe. It claims Italy is beset by “indiscriminate and uncontrolled” immigration of “persons from other continents in numbers that portend a bona fide ethnic replacement.” The Fd’I’s embrace of this fascist “Great Replacement” thesis came soon after torch-bearing Nazis, KKKers and other fascists marched in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017 chanting “Jews will not replace us,” and “You will not replace us” – and the next day murdered an anti-fascist protester.

Prime Minister Meloni claims that Fratelli’s condemning antisemitism and Mussolini’s 1938 Racial Laws are proof that it is not fascist. Not at all. The Fd’I’s “defense of Christian roots” and opposition to “Islamisation of Europe,” serves the same purpose as the Nazi-fascist demonization of Jews: fanning nationalist hysteria against Muslims as “outsiders,” and “the enemy within.”

This *identitarian* exaltation of “*italianità*” (Italianness) and Islamophobia goes together with calls for militarization of society, to use the army to combat “criminality” in the cities and for police/military patrols on the highway. Ultranationalism has always been a hallmark of fascism.

Virulent national chauvinism is also behind the Fd’I’s misogyny and homophobia. “A people that doesn’t make children is a people destined to disappear,” the Trieste Theses declare, saying that as “Patriots” they demand “boosting the birthrate as the national priority.” So Fratelli says it is the patriotic duty of Italian women to have more Italian babies . . . to be raised by the “natural family,” which is threatened by “gender ideology.” While Meloni said during the 2022 election campaign that she would not touch Law 194, Italy’s extremely limited abortion law,⁶ Fd’I local and regional governments have for years done everything possible to make abortion inaccessible.

The fascism of Fratelli d’Italia is not only in its program, but in its internal culture. Dramatic videos by an undercover reporter of the online news site Fanpage⁷ showed how, when they thought themselves away from prying media eyes (“tra noi”), everyone from top Fd’I politicians to rank-and-file members reveled in fascist talk. Calling each other “*patrioti*” rather than “*camerati*,”⁸ greeting each other with “gladiator” forearm handshakes, Fd’I Eurodeputy Carlo Fidanza, accompanied by the “Black Baron” Roberto Jonghi (who ran for parliament for the Fd’I in 2018), gives a “Roman” salute and appeals for “black” (illicit) funds for an Fd’I candidate.

⁶ Under Law 194, abortion is legal in Italy during the first trimester, thereafter only if continued pregnancy or giving birth constitutes a serious threat to the woman’s life, physical or mental health. Moreover, 70% of Italian gynecologists refuse to perform abortions “for reasons of conscience.”

⁷ “Abbiamo le lavatrici per fare il black”: così il big di Fdi vuole finanziare la campagna elettorale,” Fanpag.it, 30 September 2021.

⁸ In Italy, left and labor movements refer to comrades as “*compagno*”; the title “*camerata*” is used only by fascists.

Amid the scandal, Fidanza briefly “suspended” himself from Fd’I, Meloni tsk-tsked and a judicial inquiry was begun (which went nowhere). A couple of years earlier, he had spoken at meeting of Lealtà Azione, a fascist social center of skinheads and football hooligans in Milan. And when in 2019 Caio Giulio Cesare Mussolini, running for Eurodeputy for the Fd’I, was slated to give an after-dinner talk on “The Doctrine of Fascism” written by his great-grandfather, a table was reserved for the leader of the Veneto Fronte Skinheads (which specializes in attacking gay pride events), who had just joined Fratelli. It’s all one big fascist family.

It’s the same with the fascists who carry out terror attacks. In the case of the former Lega candidate who in February 2018 drove through Macerata in the Marche region shooting at black people in the street, wounding a number of African immigrants, and the subsequent provocation by CasaPound and Forza Nuova justifying the shooter (“driven to despair”) Meloni’s response was not only to declare that CasaPound and FN were “not xenophobic parties.” She told TV news that “in Italy there is a plan for ethnic replacement” and denounced the anti-fascist mobilization of tens of thousands in Macerata for “creating another rift in the country.”⁹

And when on 9 October 2021, a mob of no-vaxxers led by Roberto Fiore (national leader of Forza Nuova), Giuliano Castellino (capo of FN’s Rome section) and Luca Castellini (leader of Verona football ultras and FN deputy leader) assaulted and sacked the offices of CGIL, Italy’s largest union federation, Meloni wouldn’t take a position on the FN. She said she “didn’t know the matrix,” or what was behind the attacks, but “whether it was fascist or if it was not fascist is not the point.”¹⁰ Only a few weeks earlier, it turns out, the Fondazione Alleanza Nazionale, controlled by the Fd’I, gave a grant of 33,000 € (euros) to the FN’s Fiore.¹¹

Paoli Berizzi, the courageous journalist

⁹ “Meloni: “Casapound e Forza Nuova non sono partiti xenofobi,” *Il Giornale*, 10 February 2018.

¹⁰ “Meloni: “Non so quale fosse la matrice,” in *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (10 October 2021).

¹¹ This was shown in documents uncovered by investigative reporter Giuliano Foschini of *La Repubblica*. See “Finanziamenti e affari, i rapporti tra il partito neofascista Forza Nuova e Alleanza Nazionale,” in the “PiazzaPulita” program of La 7 television channel, 13 September 2024.

for *La Repubblica* who has exposed the deep fascist heritage and complicity of Fratelli d’Italia, for which he has received death threats, wrote in his recent book, *Il ritorno della Bestia* (The Return of the Beast):

“Zones of contiguity. Acronyms that intertwine. Plans that overlap even with formal – rather than substantive – differences. The Italian far right . . . has a thousand different facets. Some very obvious, others less so. . . . [T]he rise of a former MSI member to the Chigi Palace [the prime minister’s offices] and the growth of her political franchise has been welcomed from CasaPound to Forza Nuova. Although Meloni’s electorate is far broader and also embraces moderate political sectors, Fd’I has offered the Italian right that identifies with the flame designed by [MSI founder and longtime leader Giorgio] Almirante a new home. . . .”

Fratelli d’Italia, Forza Nuova, CasaPound, Veneto skinheads, etc.: they’re all *camerati*, even though some now euphemistically call themselves “*patrioti*.” The “matrix” is fascism. Those who claim that the Fd’I is not fascist may be in for a rude awakening.

“Mainstream” Bourgeoisie Moves Right

In the 2013 parliamentary elections, the first after its formation, Fratelli d’Italia received under 2% of the vote, increasing to 4% (1.4 million votes) in 2018. In both cases it won seats solely as part of a right-wing (Forza Italia-Lega-Fd’I) coalition. In the 2019 elections for the European parliament, it got 6.5%. And then in the 2022 parliamentary elections Fratelli’s vote share shot up to 26% (7.3 million votes), making it the largest party and enabling it to form a coalition government with Gioria Meloni as premier. Meanwhile, the overall share of the right-wing vote for parliament increased from 31% in 2013 to 37% in 2018 and 44% in 2022.

So why did Fratelli’s vote more than quintuple between 2018 and 2022? At the parliamentary level there was Lega leader Matteo Salvini’s spectacularly failed bid to win full powers in 2019 by bringing down the government of which he was deputy premier. Then came the implosion of the populist Five Star Movement (M5S) after the two governments of Giuseppe Conte flip-flopped from “center-right” to “center-left,” and their disastrous handling of the 2020-21 COVID crisis. Most important was the fact that the Fd’I was the only opposition to the “national



On 28 October 2022, a few days after Meloni was sworn in as prime minister, more than 2,000 fascists, many of them in black shirts, converged on Predappio, a stronghold of Fratelli d’Italia, to celebrate the centenary of Mussolini’s 1922 march on Rome, heading to his grave where they gave the fascist salute en masse.

unity” austerity government of former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi.

It’s hardly accidental that of all the countries of West Europe, Italy is where fascist forces have grown the most in the past decade. A key factor is that, uniquely in the European Union (EU), real wages in Italy fell sharply (-13%) between the onset of the world capitalist crisis in 2008 and 2022. The decline in living standards affected not only the working class but also the petty bourgeoisie, the stronghold of the right. Italy was also the first and hardest-hit European country in the COVID-19 slaughter, where almost 200,000 people died amid apocalyptic scenes in understaffed, overcrowded hospitals, the result of years of cutbacks and privatization.

Fratelli d’Italia and its Lega and Forza Italia coalition partners managed to blame immigrants for unemployment and falling wages, when in fact these were the result of employers driving up the rate of exploitation and of the austerity policies of one government after another. The near-collapse of the public health system, in turn, was used by the fascists to take the lead in fanning anti-vaccine hysteria, and to attack the left and labor movements. The Fd’I was able to turn desperation into monumentally false consciousness due to decaying capitalism’s inability to provide even the most basic protection of the health and welfare of the population it exploits.

During the 2022 election campaign, as it was evident that Fd’I would come out on top, there was nervousness among Western media and leaders about the fascist background of the likely victors. So Meloni went on a media offensive, giving reassuring interviews and statements (while carefully omitting the distancing from fascism in Italian versions). But at the same time she delivered an anti-immigrant, Islamophobic, homophobic rant, vituperating against “leftist secularism” and “gender ideology” at a meeting of the xenophobic Vox party in Spain, heirs of the dictatorship of Francisco Franco.

Meloni and her Fratelli d’Italia have not “moderated” their politics and program. What has happened is that their reactionary policies have been increasingly adopted by “mainstream” bourgeois sectors. Almost all right-wing leaders have said that “Mussolini also did good things” (Berlusconi); that one can’t “deny the works, the reclamations, the grand stations” built by *Il Duce* (Salvini); it would be hard to have “a negative overall judgement on fascism” up until “the minute before the signing of the Racial Laws” in 1938 (Fini), etc. Meloni herself has not repudiated her youthful

praise of Mussolini as a “good politician,” better than all who followed.

Berizzi talks of a “fascistization of everyday thinking resulting from a policy based on the instrumentalization of fear” and appeals to “the most retrograde, reactionary, obscurantist, intolerant and nostalgic underbelly of Italians.” Broder notes how Fratelli “have become increasingly successful at shaping public history to their liking.” But while both refer to the Fd’I as “postfascist,” the identity and “the symbol [it] jealously and proudly preserves,” as Berizzi puts it, is the flame of the postwar fascist MSI. And “The Idea” that Meloni and “the old and new *camerati* – who today call themselves *patrioti*” refer to elliptically “is fascism.”

One of Meloni’s mantras during the 2022 election campaign was referring to “people who have had to keep their heads down for so many years” who now “can say what they think.” What people might those be? And when, in her speech to the Chamber of Deputies asking for a vote of confidence she vowed “we will not betray,” who or what was she referring to? She was pledging, as she has done repeatedly, to be true to the electorate and politics of the fascist MSI, and to its leader, the racist former Mussolini lieutenant Almirante, who spoke of “pass[ing] on the baton” to the youth, “before it falls from [our] hands.”

Buttressing the description of Fratelli d’Italia as “postfascist,” Broder writes, “Meloni’s party is not rallying Blackshirted militias, will not form a one-party state and is not creating a fascist order.” In the same vein, Berizzi comments, “the fascistization of the prevailing mentality does not, of course, mean that we are faced with a repetition of historical fascism – the dictatorial regime of [torture by] castor oil and truncheons, of the black shirts” which are “inapplicable today.” Still, there were the more than 2,000 who gathered in black shirts at Mussolini’s crypt on 29 October 2022 to celebrate the Fd’I victory and the centenary of the March on Rome.

There are also Fratelli d’Italia’s youth groups, Gioventù Nazionale, and for secondary school students Azione Studentesca, which in their internal events revel in fascist symbolism, training to be Spartan-like fighters and exalting the “courage of a choice in the service of the Idea” (see “The ‘Little Black Shirts’ of the Fratelli d’Italia Youth,” on page 26). What is behind this resurgence of fascism in Italy, where the republic was founded on the ashes of Mussolini’s fascist dictatorship? Berizzi’s answer is that fascism is “in the belly of the country,” that “it was defeated militarily but not culturally,” and “like a virus that was never eradicated, it returns in a mutated form.”

Behind the definition of Fratelli d’Italia as “post-fascist” is an idealist, rather than a materialist, understanding of fascism. This leads Berizzi to contrast Italy with “Germany, a country that has come to terms with its past and blocks that past every time it tries to raise its head again.” Except the fascists are again growing in Germany, and the fascistic AfD is now the second-largest party. Fascism is not just an ideology of reactionary social demagoguery, it is a movement mainly of enraged petty bourgeois (and others facing economic decline and ruin) enlisted in the service of capital in times of social crisis to crush the spectre of revolution.

In this period of advanced capitalist decay, as living standards fall and militarism rises, sections of the imperialist ruling class seek to fortify their state power to withstand waves of protest and upheaval by those they exploit and oppress. Fascists like Fratelli d’Italia can serve to lead that movement of preventive counter-revolution on a program of ultra-nationalist reaction. The task of revolutionary Marxists is to clearly identify the mortal threat that such movements represent, and to mobilize the power of the proletariat at the head of the exploited and oppressed on a transitional program pointing to international socialist revolution.

The Stoppable Rise of 21st Century Fascism

What Fratelli is aiming at is to spearhead a drive toward an authoritarian state based on a strengthened police and military and diminishing the role of the legislature. Thus the Fd’I’s constitutional amendment would guarantee a parliamentary majority to the party or coalition whose candidate for premier got the most votes. And if the head of government loses a vote of confidence, they could only be replaced by a member of the same “majority.” Under such a system, the government could enact any law it wished. Parliamentary debate would be a sham. No wonder Meloni said it would be a “revolution that would usher us into the Third Republic.”

It would, in fact, provide the framework for a bonapartist regime. But while the electoral “reform” has languished, the Meloni government proceeded with two other measures pointing to a police state. The first is the project to send asylum seekers to detention camps in Albania. This recalls the infamous *lager* (concentration camps) set up in Italy under the Nazis for Yugoslavs, Jews, Roma and leftists. The transit camp in Bolzano held thousands of Italians arrested by the Nazi puppet Salò republic (whose cadres later founded the fascist MSI, forerunner of Fratelli d’Italia). Plus the camps in Albania under the bloody 1939–43 Italian occupation.

Giorgia Meloni’s “reception” *lager* in Albania, designed to hold some 30,000 people in glorified containers surrounded by high barbed-wire fences, were “open for business” in October 2024 to warehouse refugees picked up at sea. However, Italian judges immediately ruled that it was not clear that they came from “safe” countries, and so all 16 of the original detainees were brought back to Italy. Now the government is trying to turn the empty camps into “repatriation” centers with migrants already slated for deportation. But the reason they have not already been deported is that no other country will take them, so they would languish there indefinitely.¹²

¹² The fascist-led government of Italy is not alone in trying to offshore immigrants. The Tory (Conservative) government in England pursued a scheme to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, in central Africa. And now the Trump administration in the United States is sending hundreds of immigrants caught up its mass deportation dragnet to a vast prison complex in El Salvador.

Meloni’s Acerbo Law

The present Italian election system is already quite undemocratic: with 43% of the vote in 2022, the right-wing coalition led by Meloni has 60% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies. But in order to put an end to the “scourge” of “revolving door” coalitions (68 governments in 75 years of the republic), under the plan put forward by the government in November 2023, even if the largest party or coalition got 40% of the votes, it would be guaranteed a 55% majority in parliament. This is being called a “semi-presidential” system, but it would grant total power to the executive.

The other main initiative of the right-wing government was the draft “security” law known as DDL 1660, which was approved by the council of ministers at the end of September 2024. This measure included a hodge-podge of different clauses, which would strengthen the repressive apparatus. In particular, it would make blocking of streets and highways, even by a single person, a crime (it is presently an administrative violation), and extend this to rail lines. This is to be used against climate protesters, antiwar demonstrators and striking workers, all of whom have frequently (and non-violently) sat down, marched or picketed in streets.

(On April 4, the Meloni government turned the draft “security” law into a decree-law, to be implemented immediately. See “For a Real General Strike to Stop the ‘Security’ Decree and Arms Build-Up!” on page 5.)

In fact, all sectors of the Italian bourgeoisie have been pushing to fortify their state power for quite awhile. This reflects the fact that Italy is one of the economically weakest of the imperialist countries, with historically one of the most militant left and labor movements. We have written about this going back to the 1990s, in “Italian Capitalists Demand a ‘Strong State,’” *Workers Vanguard* No. 554, 26 June 1992;¹³ in a two-part article on “Italy: Popular Frontism and the Strong State” (*Workers Vanguard* Nos. 609/610, 26 October/11 November 1994), and in “Fascism, Bonapartism and Police Terror in Italy” (*The Internationalist* No. 13, May-June 2002)¹⁴ on the bloody suppression of the “anti-globalization” protests in Genova.

Electoralist Left Tranquilized by Fratelli d’Italia Fascists

Today, most of the left buys the tranquilizing story that Fratelli d’Italia is a “post-fascist” or merely right-wing conservative party. The Rete dei Comunisti (RdC) objects to “demonizing this political force which has been present in parliament for some time,” calling the Fd’I a “conservative right that doesn’t disdain its roots” (*Contrapiano*, 28 August 2022). The Federazione della Giovantù Comunista (FGC) and Fronte Comunista claim that the Meloni govern-

¹³ At the time, *Workers Vanguard* was the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism. It now espouses an idiosyncratic nationalist version of anti-Trotskyist opportunism.

¹⁴ The article polemicized against the Lega Trotskista d’Italia, the section of the by-then ex-Trotskyist International Communist League, which on the eve of the Alleanza Nazionale’s entry into the Berlusconi wrote that A.N. was not fascist but “essentially an electoral phenomenon.”



In February 2018, as part of the election campaign, Meloni and other Fd’I leaders went to the Egyptian Museum in Turin to stage a cynical bigoted provocation “against Islamization.”

The Fraud of Italy's "Anti-Fascist" Constitution

One factor behind much of the blindness as to the fascist nature of Fratelli d'Italia is confusion about the so-called "anti-fascist Constitution" of 1947, which much of the left hails as a supposed bulwark against "the return of the beast." In reality, this magna carta of the capitalist "anti-fascist republic" was not a great "democratic conquest" in "the direction of socialism," as PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti claimed. It was a cover for the *betrayal of the workers revolution of 1943-45* by the Stalinist leaders, who ordered the disarming of the partisans. And when in the autumn of 1947 and in 1948 proletarian uprisings convulsed Italy, the PCI squelched them again.¹

Moreover, the charter served to mask the general amnesty of almost all fascist officials, proposed and written by Togliatti as minister of "mercy and justice" of the tripartite provisional government. The PCI leader promulgated that shameful decree three days prior to the opening of the Constituent Assembly, doubtless to prevent the demand for revolutionary justice for these hangmen from being raised there. Rather than *eradicate* the fascist plague, the intention of the supposed "anti-fascist Constitution" from the outset was to *integrate* not only the 10 million members of the National Fascist Party but also "the leaders responsible for the fascist regime."²

There was to be no historic reckoning with the Mussolini dictatorship, no trial for the war criminals who led it – not even the

¹ See 1943-1948: *Lo stalinismo contro la rivoluzione* (Bollettino dello NId'I, supplement of *L'Internazionalista*, November 2021).

² The fascist regime tops were released from prison and given only a 5-year ban on holding office.



Palmiro Togliatti, general secretary of the Italian Communist Party, during a rally in April 1946.

hypocritical (and very partial) "victors justice" of the Nuremberg War Trials. Instead, the big fish of the 20-year fascist rule were immediately released from prison and given only a five-year "temporary limitation of the right to vote and eligibility for election." Moreover, the Constitution ratified Mussolini-era laws, including the notorious 1931 public security laws – on which provisions of the new Meloni security decree are explicitly based. This was

all the doing of Togliatti, hailed by the Stalinists as *Il Migliore* (the best).

The rise of fascism, Mussolini's 20-year rule and the devastation of the imperialist Second World War were history's punishment for the failure of the Italian Socialists to carry out a socialist revolution in the *Biennio Rosso* of 1919-20 at the end of World War I, when it was entirely possible. The resurgence of fascism

in Italy today is in good part due to the Stalinists' sabotage of the workers revolution that broke out in 1943 in the final months of World War II and kept rearing its head, despite the PCI's treacherous "popular front" policies, until the imperialists finally buried it in the massively manipulated 1948 Cold War elections.

Although the PCI is long-gone, these class-collaborationist policies continue today – and not only among the Stalinist zombi remnants trying to reincarnate it – in the illusory call on the bourgeois state to outlaw fascist symbols and ban fascist groups. In the first place, the state apparatus of the capitalist ruling class won't – and can't – do this in more than a token fashion, because they need to hold the fascists in reserve for moments of crisis. And secondly, such prohibitions can easily be turned around and used against the communists. We do not call on the capitalist regime to do what only powerful workers mobilization can accomplish.

Fratelli d'Italia is not just one more right-wing conservative or populist electoral party, nor is it a break from the politics of the postwar fascists. During the anti-Soviet Cold War, the MSI sold its services (literally) to the imperialists as a club against the Communist left. Today, the Fd'I wants to beat down the anti-fascist left and purge the Italian state of any vestigial "anti-fascist" stipulations. While participating in elections as part of a broader right-wing coalition with the fascistic Lega and populist Forza Italia, it is the most ideologically coherent party, with a hard core of members and youth apparatus that can be mobilized in extra-parliamentary action. ■

ment, aside from the cosmetic aspects, is in substantial continuity with the policies of the various governments" in recent decades (*Fronte Comunista*, 28 October 2022).

The Partito Comunista Rivoluzionario (PCR)¹⁵ is even more explicit, saying "the Meloni government does not represent the rise of fascism, nor of bonapartism." Not surprising, coming from the Italian section of the Revolutionary Communist International of Alan Woods, which claims that talk of a "supposed 'fascist' danger" is misleading because "mobilization of the enraged petty bourgeoisie as shock troops to destroy the workers' organizations" is "ruled out by the changed balance of forces" from the 1930s.¹⁶ How very reassuring! But the PCR does call the thugs of the Fd'I's Azione Studentesca that assaulted students in Firenze in 2022 fascists.

The Tendenza Internazionalista Rivoluzionaria (TIR), associated with the SI Cobas rank-and-file union, refers to "The Meloni Government of the Bosses," and also "of the banks, of war and of lies."¹⁷ It is, of course, all of those things, but that is true of every Italian government in the history of the republic. So for the TIR and SI Cobas, the current fascist-led hard-right imperialist government is just one more bourgeois anti-worker racist government, like all its predecessors. Still, although the TIR fails to recognize the "matrix" from which it comes, they do say that DDL 1660, and now the "security" decree-law, is a "police-state law" and call to mobilize to stop it.

¹⁵ Formerly Sinistra Classe Rivoluzione, and before that FalceMartello.

¹⁶ "Manifesto of the Revolutionary Communist International" (11 March 2024).

¹⁷ *Pungolo Rosso*, 21 March 2024.

The question is how to do that, and more generally how to combat the ruling-class drive for a bonapartist "strong state." Those on the left who see the Fd'I-led government as just more of the same, perhaps a little to the right of Berlusconi's four times in office, respond in the same vein, forming different networks to hold "broad" protests. Among those who recognize and warn of the resurgence of fascism, the norm is to build popular-front coalitions on a program of class collaboration with "progressive" sectors of the bourgeoisie. But what is urgently necessary is, on the contrary, to organize powerful class-struggle actions of the working class and its allies.

As Leon Trotsky wrote in "The Lessons of Spain: Last Warning" (December 1937), "it is impossible to conduct a genuine struggle against fascism otherwise than through the methods of the proletarian revolution." Indeed, the only way to thoroughly root out fascism, to definitively eradicate the brown or black plague, is through international socialist revolution. To prepare that, *mass strike action* and *workplace occupations* against police attack are called for, along with *defense committees* based on the mass organizations of the working class to teach fascist thugs and strikebreakers a lesson in proletarian democracy.

There should be mass *workers action to shut down fascist provocations*, such as our American comrades did in 2017, mobilizing hundreds of trade-unionists and their supporters in Portland, Oregon days after a Nazi fanatic killed two anti-fascist youth defending Muslim girls.¹⁸ There should be *workers*

¹⁸ See "Azioni operaie per fermare i fascisti," in *L'Internazionalista* n. 3, November 2018.

action to stop deportations, as our comrades in the United States are doing today, building *union-initiated committees to defend immigrants* in schools, hospitals, warehouses and other workplaces. In Italy, laying the basis for *factory committees* and area-wide *workers councils*, including all unions as well as ununionized workers, would be appropriate.

As imperialist/Zionist wars grind on in Ukraine and Gaza, with mounting militarization "at home," as living standards are ground down and social gains of the past are rolled back, it is not possible to defend the rights of working people and the oppressed on the basis of "anti-fascist" bourgeois "democracy," but only through building organs of struggle for proletarian rule. Above all, it was the absence of a genuinely Bolshevik

party of the proletarian vanguard in Italy that made the rise of fascism possible after World War I, its continuation after World War II and its resurgence in the 21st century, due to the failure to fight for socialist revolution.

The *crisis of revolutionary leadership* remains the central issue of our day. The present fascist led government and increasingly dire situation in Italy, as well as throughout Europe and worldwide, underlines the unreformability of decaying capitalism and the urgent need to forge a genuinely communist party. This party can only be built by drawing the lessons of past struggles, including failures and betrayals, on a solid Leninist-Trotskyist program. The Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia, section of the Lega per la Quarta Internazionale, are dedicated to the task of forging this party. ■



On 9 October 2021, a fascist mob led by top leaders of Forza Nuova attacked and ransacked the CGIL offices. The leader of Fratelli d'Italia claimed not to know the "matrix" of the fascist assault on Italy's main trade union confederation.

Italian Fascists Spearheaded Cold War Anti-Communist Terrorism

Ufficio Stampa Rai



Piazza Fontana (Milano)



Piazza della Loggia (Brescia)



Stazione Centrale (Bologna)

Italy Defense Ministry

"The Years of Lead": horrific massacres were carried out at Piazza Fontana in Milan (1969), Piazza della Loggia in Brescia (1974) and Bologna Central Station (1980), and in several other cities. Many were linked to Ordine Nuovo, founded and still guided by Pino Rauti of the MSI, and almost all were in collaboration with U.S. and Italian spy agencies that promoted a "strategy of tension" to keep the Communist Party out of government.

Giorgia Meloni never renounced the fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), instead saying that fascism has been "consigned to history." After becoming prime minister in 2022 she defended the MSI as "a party of the democratic right" and the MSI founder/leader Giorgio Almirante as a "great patriot." This is beyond absurd. One of the MSI's cofounders, Pino Rauti, in 1952 published a book titled *La democrazia: Ecco il nemico!* (Democracy: That's the Enemy). Rauti was also a founder of the first postwar fascist paramilitary group, the F.A.R. (Fasci di Azione Rivoluzionaria) that in 1946 bombed offices of the Communist and Socialist parties.

In 1953, Rauti formed the Ordine Nuovo (O.N.) group in the MSI under the tutelage of former Nazi SS intelligence agent and fascist ideologue Julius Evola. In 1957, Rauti and his O.N. split from the MSI. In 1965, Rauti participated in a meeting of "Operation Gladio," organized by the Italian military high command, bringing together fascists, top-level state officials and leading businessmen. Gladio, whose existence was revealed by Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti in 1990, was the Italian branch of NATO "stay-behind" secret armies to wage underground war should Communists come to power in Western Europe, particularly in Italy. But it was more than that.

In reality, as Judge Guido Salvini exposed in his decade-long investigation into the 1970s "years of lead," right-wing terrorist groups (Ordine Nuovo, Avanguardia Nazionale) that carried out massacres (Piazza Fontana, Italicus, Bologna, Brescia, etc.)¹ in a "strategy of tension" were Gladio's foot soldiers, run by the CIA.² A 2001 report by the Democratic Left Party (PDS) in the parliamentary commission of inquiry into right-wing massacres (the

Commissione Stragi), cited Interior Ministry reports that Pino Rauti, now back in the MSI, "remained in close contact with the Venice Ordine Novo members" involved in the Piazza Fontana massacre.

The 2001 Commissione Stragi report also cited statements by those Ordine Novo terrorists (themselves informants of both Italian and U.S. military intelligence services) that Rauti "had operational connections" with the military high command, and that "Pino Rauti was in contact with the CIA apparatus." Moreover, Rauti for years received regular payments from the press attaché of the U.S. embassy, which by 1970 amounted to 200,000 liras a month (roughly 3,200 € or US\$3,500 today). As the commission report put it, Rauti, "one of the prominent members of the subversive right, was literally 'in the pay of' the U.S. embassy in Rome."³

Pino Rauti was one of the heroes of the MSI's Azione Studentesca (A.S.) when Giorgia Meloni headed it in 1996, as he is today for the reborn A.S. as the student group of Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia. At Rauti's funeral in 2012, hundreds raised their arms in fascist salutes. Meloni was there, as was Rauti's daughter, Isabella, who was elected to the Senate in 2018, where she is the deputy leader of the Fd'I fraction. She is also president of the Pino Rauti Studies Center, which in 2020 held an exhibition

³ Senato della Repubblica, *Stragi e terrorismo in Italia, dalla Dopoguerra a 1974* (2001)

of *50 Years of Press and Propaganda of the Italian Right, 1945-1995* – i.e., of the MSI – stressing the continuity of the "anti-communist right" up to today.

But it was not just Rauti, the MSI itself was deeply involved in the machinations of the U.S./NATO imperialists' anti-Soviet Cold War. While the MSI was electorally marginalized, behind the scenes it was well-connected with top levels of the Italian military and intelligence services, as well as coup plotters and fascist terrorists. According to the 1976 Report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence into covert actions by U.S. spy agencies, the CIA spent \$75 million off-the-books on Italian elections from 1948 to 1974, including "a donation of \$800,000 in 1972 for political forces of the Italian neo-fascist movement." The money went to General Vito Micelli, the head of the SID (military intelligence) who passed it on to the MSI.

Meloni's idol Giorgio Almirante was also up to his neck in the clandestine goings-on at the top levels of the Italian state. Early on in the "years of lead," in 1970, the MSI founding leader met with the Junio Valerio Borghese (who had been president of the MSI in the early 1950s) as the latter was plotting a coup d'état. As the head of the MSI parliamentary fraction at the time revealed 50 years later, Almirante told the putschist "Black Prince" Borghese that in "military matters, we will be the ones to

follow your directions."⁴ In 1976, General Micelli was elected to parliament for the fascist MSI after having been investigated about a military secret society.

In 1975, Almirante travelled to Washington to meet with members of the U.S. National Security Council. He also received financing from Licio Gelli, the "venerable master" of the CIA-linked Masonic Lodge P2, which was responsible for the Italicus train massacre and the bombing of the Bologna central station. He, too, was a former *camerata* from the puppet Salò Republic, when Almirante was the chief administrator of the culture ministry (and ordered antifascist partisans to "be shot in the back") while Gelli was the liaison with top Nazis. Several MSI legislators were also members of the P2 secret lodge.

Not by any stretch of the imagination was the MSI anything resembling a "democratic" right wing, as claimed by Italian premier Meloni. The post-World War II fascist party and its leaders (Almirante, Rauti and the rest) was a vipers nest of former Mussolini officials, Nazi puppets, perennial coup mongers plotting to overthrow parliamentary rule, and a seedbed of mass murderers who always stayed in touch with their mother party. This is the sinister outfit whose heritage is proudly claimed by the Fratelli d'Italia, now at the helm of Italy's fascist-led hard-right government. ■

⁴ "50 anni fa il golpe Borghese. Il Msi preferì restare alla finestra," *FascinAzione*, 8 December 2020.

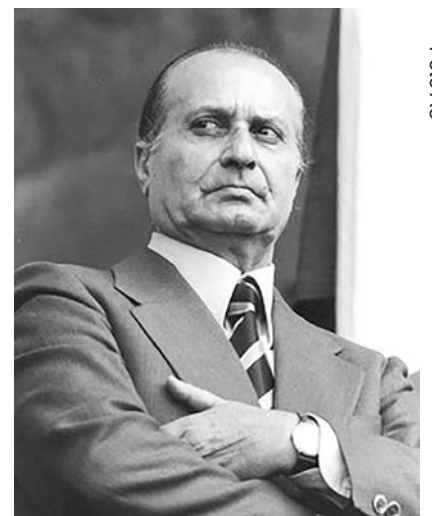


Foto A3

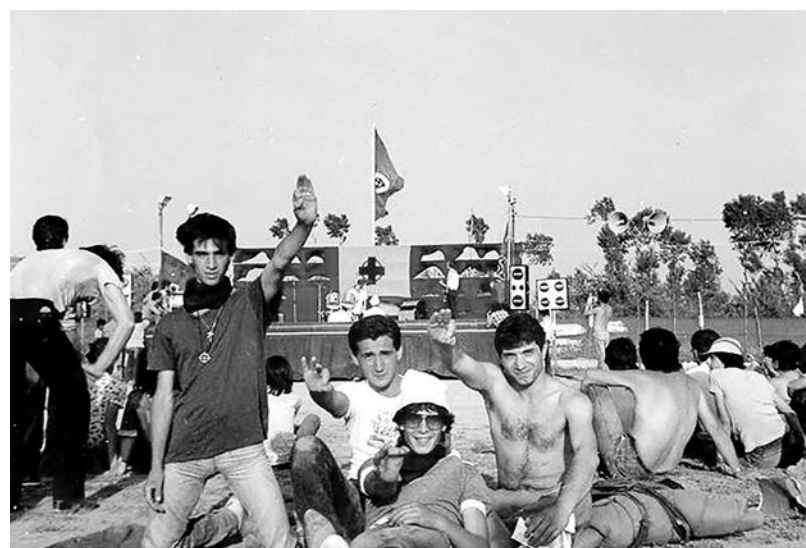
Left: Junio Valerio Borghese, known as "the Black Prince," when he attempted a coup d'état in 1970. **Center:** Borghese in 1945 together with Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, then defense minister of the "Salò Republic." **Right:** Vito Miceli, head of the SID (military intelligence service) later to become a parliamentary deputy of the fascist MSI.

¹ In December 1969, according to official figures, 17 people were killed and 88 injured in a bomb attack in Milan's Piazza Fontana. In 1974, a bomb on the Italicus express train left 12 dead and 55 injured, while in the same year a bomb in a garbage can exploded during an anti-fascist march of unions and leftists in Brescia's Piazza della Loggia, killing 8 and wounding 102. In 1980, a bomb attack in Bologna's central rail station killed 85 and injured 200. All were the work of fascist terrorists.

² "Strage di Piazza Fontana spunta un agente Usa," *La Repubblica*, 18 February 1998.

Fascists and Hobbits

Filippo Attili - Palazzo Chigi



Left: Giorgia Meloni says that as a (fascist) teen she was inspired by Lord of the Rings, the trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien that became an icon of the ultra-right. As premier she used state funds to sponsor an exhibition to promote Tolkien at the National Gallery in Rome that opened in November 2023. Right: the first of the MSI youth group's "Hobbit Camps" in 1977 where youth give the fascist salute and display the Celtic cross, taken from the French New Right.

At the end of the 1970s, members of the MSI youth group *Fronte della Gioventù*, influenced by the rise of the French *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right), sought to confront the New Left of 1968 on a cultural level, rejecting modernity and yearning for an imagined traditional society. They were also steeped in the works of Julius Evola, the fascist philosopher of traditionalism and comrade of Pino Rauti, the guru of the MSI youth. They latched onto the fantasy novels of J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. So starting in 1977, the fascist youth organized annual "Hobbit Camps."

In the U.S. and elsewhere, Tolkien's works were associated with hippie counterculture, but in Italy they took on a very different meaning. The Hobbit Camps combined the MSI's militarist summer camps with elements from of a spreading "Euroright," including adopting the Celtic cross as a symbol. They also featured fascist music groups, including the *Compagnia dell'Anello* (Company of the Ring), which launched the song *Il domani appartiene a noi* (Tomorrow belongs to us), based on the song *Tomorrow Belongs to Me* sung by a Hitler Youth in the stage musical and movie *Cabaret*. This became the anthem of the successive organizations of the Italian fascist youth.

While to some international media, the reference to the *Lord of the Rings* fantasy may seem quaint and cute, the reality is very different. The allegory of small white human-like beings (hobbits) fighting off hordes of brutish swarthy-skinned invaders (orcs), and Tolkien's aversion to race-mix-

ing fit right in with the anti-immigrant politics of a party founded by the racist, antisemitic editor of the Mussolini fascist journal *Difesa della razza* (Giorgio Almirante). And the construct of an evil colossus to the east (Mordor) threatening the hobbits' idyllic Shire to the north and the virtuous kingdom to the west (Gondor) serves as a fantasy version of the anti-Soviet Cold War.

Italian fascists are not the only ones who use Tolkien as a device to fuel reactionary politics. This is also the case in Ukraine, going back to the 2014 fascist/nationalist Maidan coup. A viral video of the U.S./EU-sponsored mobilization, titled the "The Hobbit Uprising," blended footage of the fighting with scenes from Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films. As the Nazis of Svoboda and Pravy Sektor rushed to the Donbass to crush an uprising by the Russian-speaking population, the Azov Battalion and other fascist military units took to calling rebel militia soldiers "orcs." In 2016, Google Translate rendered "Russian Federation" as "Mordor."

After the Ukraine war broke out in February 2022, this language was widely adopted. The first post by the Armed Forces of Ukraine reported, "Orcs from Mordor suffer terrible losses!" Again, this is no joking reference. Azov leader Andriy Biletsky is a virulent racist, who portrays the Ukrainian nationalism as defense of the white race against *Untermenschen* (subhumans). Today, recruitment posters for Third Separate Assault Brigade show Ukrainian soldiers facing an enemy with the features of orcs in the

Lord of the Rings films.¹ The commander of that brigade is Biletsky, and the posters feature the Azov Wolfsangel symbol taken over from the Nazis.

So from Italy to Ukraine, fascists have appropriated the symbolism of Tolkien's fantasies, for very non-fantasy purposes. And while many have cited Meloni's support for Ukraine against Russia as proof that Fratelli d'Italia is just mainstream conservative, *FdI leaders' affinity for Ukraine is fueled by their embrace of the Ukrainian fascists*. Meloni's right-hand man and the author of the FdI program, Senator Giovanbattista Fazzolari, sings the praises of Azov, tweeting his "admiration" for these Ukrainian Nazis' "courage" and "heroism" in the siege of Mariupol (where in 2014 the Azov Battalion carried out a brutal massacre), saying "honor to them."²

In the United States, *Lord of the Rings* is a cultural icon of the libertarian and "technofascist" power brokers of Silicon Valley. U.S. vice-president JD Vance declared that "my conservative worldview was influenced by Tolkien," and named his venture capital firm (Narya) after one of the rings in the trilogy. He has also invested in the defense startup Anduril, named after the sword of the hero in the battle against Mordor. Vance's mentor Peter Thiel,

¹ "How Ukraine uses 'The Lord of the Rings' to frame its battle for survival," *Kyiv Independent*, 29 August 2024.

² "Pim pum pam, chi è Giovanbattista Fazzolari, il braccio destro di Giorgia Meloni qui spara e twita," *L'Espresso*, 17 October 2022. For the 2014 siege of Mariupol, see "The Truth About Ukraine's Fascist Infestation," *The Internationalist* No. 66, January-April 2022.

however, named his company Palantir, after the crystal ball used by the ruler of the army of orcs who live in the dark.³ Whether posing as good or evil, these fantasies are all in the service of rightist reaction.

And not incidentally, in the *The Fellowship of the Ring* the historical boundary of the kingdom of Gondor, representing the declining West that is saved by the Hobbits, is guarded by enormous statues with arms extended in warning that in illustrations resemble the fascist ("Roman") straight-arm salute, while other illustrations show the statues holding axes that in illustrations look like the *fasces* that were the chosen symbol of Mussolini's paramilitary black-shirt squads. The image of fascism as the guardian of the corrupt West against invading hordes.

In November 2023, now with control of state financing, Giorgia Meloni opened an exposition of Tolkien's works at the Galleria Nazionale in Rome, together with her minister of culture, Gennaro Sangiuliano, who described his goal as combatting "the cultural hegemony of the left." In an interview with the *New York Times* on the eve of the 2022 election, Meloni declared, "I don't consider 'The Lord of the Rings' fantasy."⁴ Self-evidently not. It has guided the forging of a new generation of hardline counterrevolutionaries. ■

³ Thiel's sinister Palantir Technology received an early grant of \$2 million from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's start-up fund, In-Q-Tel. By 2013, the customers for its software used to integrate and analyze multiple large data bases included the CIA, DHS, FBI, NSA, Marine Corps, Air Force, Special Operations Command, U.S. Military Academy and other mainstays of the military/intelligence "community."

⁴ "Inspiration for Leader of Italy's Hard Right: World of Hobbits," *The New York Times*, 22 September 2022.



Left: Ukrainian fascists of the Azov Battalion have also embraced Tolkien, portraying Russian soldiers as swarthy orcs of Mordor. Azov leader Biletsky defines Ukrainian nationalism as a defense of the white race against "subhumans." This recruitment poster of the Third Separate Assault Brigade features the Azov symbol taken from the Wolfsangel of Nazi Germany. Right: In illustrations of the novel *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the entrance to the realm of the declining West is guarded by huge statues with outstretched arms, recalling the fascist salute.

Andriy Andriyenko / SOPA Images

The “Little Black Shirts” of the Fratelli d'Italia Youth

The Fratelli d'Italia youth of Gioventù Nazionale has a national membership estimated at some 50,000 (8,000 in Rome), while its high school group, Azione Studentesca, reportedly has upwards of 50 groups across Italy. Every year they hold “training camps” they call *agoge*, after the ἀγωγή camps of Sparta in ancient Greece, dedicated to training warriors for the Spartan armies. The GN/AS version emphasizes “discipline, obedience, loyalty to the group, exercises and tests of strength,” along with indoctrination of the “baby patriots of the Melonian right” (as journalist Paolo Berizzi calls them) in identitarian politics by the most virulent Fd'I spokesmen.¹

The Fd'I's junior-league black shirts decorate their camp with portraits of leading fascists and pro-fascists including Gabriele D'Annunzio, Italo Balbo (one of the quadrumvirate that led the March on Rome), Julius Evola (a photo of Mussolini would be too provocative); there are books on *White Guilt: Racism Against White People in the Age of Multiethnic Society*; music from top bands of the Italian fascist rock scene. This is not some tiny Nazi sect but a gathering of several hundred members of the high school and university youth organizations of the fascist leading party of the right-wing coalition government of an imperialist power.

“We train hard here, not like those wimps on the left who get stoned and play African drums,” says one. And they don't just train. On 18 February 2023 in front of the Liceo Michelangelo, a leading secondary school, in Florence, two members of a leftist student group were arguing with a couple of members of Azione Studentesca who were posterizing near the front door of the school. Suddenly a squad of half a dozen A.S. members, including several adults, fell on the leftist students, kicking and punching them on the ground. This came a few days after A.S. members

¹ See “Coraggio e addestramenti: così i campi estivi in stile ‘Sparta’ formano i baby-patrioti della destra meloniana,” *La Repubblica*, 2 August 2023; “Gioventù Nazionale: campi estivi paramilitari e mito nazi-fascista,” *La Repubblica*, 15 January 2024; and “Gioventù Nazionale, piccole camicie nere,” *La Repubblica*, 30 June 2024, all by Paolo Berizzi.

threatened students at another local school, the Istituto Pascoli.

There have been other reported incidents of attacks by youth of the Fd'I. But if we don't see bands of black-shirted *squadristi* roaming the streets, it's because now that Fratelli are the government they can look to the official organs of state repression. So on 23 and 24 February 2024, as rank-and-file unions called strikes in solidarity with the people of Gaza under genocidal attack, cops in riot gear brutally beat defenseless protesters with truncheons in Pisa, while in Florence police, blocked a march, again beating protesters. Meloni's response was to denounce the pro-Palestinian demonstrators and to “thank the forces of order for their precious work.”

So castor oil may be passé, but the times of police carrying out orders of fascist authorities by beating demonstrators with batons are hardly long gone. This underlines a point made by Leon Trotsky on the nature of fascism: while initially based on bands of shock troops, “[h]aving arrived in power, the fascist chiefs are forced to muzzle the masses who follow them by means of the state apparatus,” which it uses with even more fury against the opposition. Trotsky distinguished “bonapartism” – a transitional “government which raises itself above the nation,” basing itself on the police/military apparatus – from a fascist dictatorship. And he added that, once it holds the reins of power, “fascism is regenerated into Bonapartism.”²

Meanwhile, the fascists are busily embedding themselves in the state apparatus. There are by now countless numbers of

² Leon Trotsky, “Bonapartism and Fascism” (1934)



La Repubblica

(Above) The summer camps (above, at Lago di Garda in July 2023) of the Fratelli d'Italia's Gioventù Nazionale and Azione Studentesca youth groups imitate the *agoge* of Sparta in ancient Greece, paramilitary training camps to prepare warriors for combat, now with fascist indoctrination and physical tests of strength. (Below) Beating at Liceo Michelangiolo in Florence on 8 February 2023 when two young leftists were ambushed by an Azione Studentesca squad.



junior ministers, state secretaries and others in the decision-making echelon of the bureaucracy who are graduates of the MSI/AN/Fd'I youth. And the youth themselves also are going on the government payroll. A FanPage video last year showed a rising star of the Gioventù Nazionale telling GN members that they will soon have a new source of income, as the state will pay 500 € a month for youths enrolling as “volunteers” in the civilian service program, for which they have to do nothing.³

³ “Saluti romani, inni al Duce e ‘Sieg Heil’: dentro Gioventù Nazionale, il movimento giovanile di Fratelli d'Italia,” Fanpage.it, 13 June 2024.

After the Fanpage video came out, the youth leader was told to resign, as she had said too much. But the footage also shows a band concert at the GN offices in Colle Oppio – the most “identitarian” sector of Fratelli and home base of Meloni and her team – with youth singing “we are Mussolini's legionnaires,” shouting “*Sieg heil!*” and “*Duce,*” grooving on throwing fascist salutes. And there is a shot where “the guys” complain that they are not supposed to beat people up now. Multiple videos of the Fd'I youth from the inside leave no doubt: these are militants of an ideologically fascist movement. ■



Pisa, February 23, 2024: Police in riot gear bludgeon demonstrators to prevent them from reaching the assembly point of a protest against the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.



SI Cobas

Trade union activists from SI Cobas, CALP (Autonomous Collective of Port Workers) and other “rank-and-file” unions block the port of Genova on 23-24 February 2024, preventing the loading/unloading of an Israeli ship of the Zim Line.

Our Answer to RCI Rally in Rome: Program Is Decisive Proclaiming Yourself a Communist Doesn't Make You One

The following article is translated from a leaflet issued by the Nucleo Internazionale d'Italia, section of the League for the Fourth International, in November 2024 and reprinted in L'Internazionalista No. 8, May 2025.

This past June [2024], several hundred delegates from a number of different countries met in central Italy and bombastically proclaimed themselves the Revolutionary Communist International (RCI). Now the Italian section of the brand spanking new RCI is out to "plaster the country with tens of thousands of posters and stickers," all building up to a giant rally in Rome in November where it will be proclaimed: "The Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR) Is Born!" Amid the rejoicing, this will then be the kick-off for a campaign to spread the glad tidings far and wide.

The RCI/PCR's campaign "Are You a Communist?" has attracted a considerable number of young people. After a decade of capitalist economic depression followed by the hecatomb (slaughter) of the COVID pandemic and with continuous wars, from the imperialist attack on Afghanistan and Iraq to the NATO imperialist proxy war against Russia over Ukraine and the Israel/U.S. genocide in Gaza, both backed by Italy, for many youth, the word "communism" doesn't have the scare effect that it once did.

The call for November 23 rally declared that "A new international organization," the RCI, "was launched in June, with sections, groups and supporters in more than 40 countries." As Marxist materialists do not believe in a virgin birth, one would have to ask, where does this new international, with groups and supporters in 40+ countries, come from? The answer is that the RCI is the transmogrification of the International Marxist Tendency (IMT), although that organization is not mentioned in the rally call or even in the RCI Manifesto.

"Is the time right for a Revolutionary Communist International?" asks that March 2024 "Manifesto." After listing some of the horrors of the "never-ending cycle of wars, economic collapse and increasing misery" besetting the capitalist world, and the grow-

ing rejection of the "free market economy" – all of which is absolutely true – it concludes that "Now is the time"! But while putrefying capitalism gives rise to potentially revolutionary situations that urgently require a genuinely communist vanguard, it is not enough to simply proclaim yourself one.

Particularly in Italy, which once had the largest Communist Party in the West that after World War II had over 2 million members and in 1976 received over 12 million votes, more than one-third of the total, calls for a generic communist party, even if you tack on the word revolutionary, can mean many very different things, including out-and-out reformism. *Program is key.* In the imperialist age, a revolutionary vanguard can only be Leninist and Trotskyist, guided by the lessons of the 1917 Russian Bolshevik Revolution.

Note also that the RCI's Manifesto, in speaking of the nature of the party they seek to build, refers only to the reference in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto* to the Communists as "the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country." Not a word about the insistence of the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky that, in this imperialist age, when a whole section of the workers movement (the "labor aristocracy") has been bought off by imperialist bribes, what's needed today is a party of "professional revolutionaries," who make the fight for international socialist revolution their life's work.



Uncle Marx goes Italian. Italian section of Alan Woods' RCI (formerly IMT) adopts poster modeled on U.S. patriotic military recruitment image. A genuinely revolutionary communist party today can only be Leninist and Trotskyist.

While RCI leaders appeal to youthful enthusiasm and try to whip up a quasi-religious fervor for their latest campaign, they are heirs of the Militant Tendency that for over three-quarters of a century was buried in the arch-reformist British Labour Party. In a number of countries, the IMT has entered bourgeois parties, and up until recently, particularly in Britain and other English-speaking countries, it consciously and explicitly went out of its way to avoid the word "communist."

So for the IMT, giving birth to the

RCI is definitely a turn, but in many ways it continues its opportunist policies of the past. In its March 2024 Manifesto, the only mention of the word "Trotskyist" is in denouncing "pseudo-Trotskyist sectarians," advising people to stay well away from "ultra-left and sectarian grouplets." A monster (almost 20,800-word) diatribe against the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of our League for the Fourth International, is titled "Marxism vs. Sectarianism" and refers to the IG as "a virulent ultra-left sect."

If in its Manifesto and agitational propaganda the newborn RCI portrays itself as a kind of immaculate conception, coming out of nowhere, for the cognoscenti the nascent PCR has an article by Alessandro Giardiello¹ on "The Origins of the Partito Comunista Rivoluzionario." This upholds the political positions of Militant tendency leader Ted Grant going back to the 1930s and of IMT (now RCI) leader Alan Woods since the tendency split in the early 1990s. What the "Origins" article doesn't spell out is that Grant and his heirs, rather than building an independent communist vanguard, were embedded in the British Labour Party for decades.

Grant founded the newspaper *The Militant* in 1964 as the organ of his group that had undertaken "entrism" in the Labour Party since the late 1930s and remained there for over 80 years. At its high point, Militant Labour controlled the Liverpool City Council from 1983-87. In 1985 the Militant-led Council fired 31,000 city workers because "they did not have the money to pay them." When the workers organized strikes and protest actions, *Militant* (4 October 1985) stigmatized them, writing that "it would be crazy to carry out a general strike." In short, the Grantites' brief sojourn in office served to carry out capitalism's dirty work.

¹ "Le origini del Partito Comunista Rivoluzionario," *Rivoluzione* 109, 1 July 2024.

In 1991 the large majority of Militant, then the leading group of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), decided to leave the Labour party. Ted Grant and Alan Woods refused to do so and split from the CWI to set up the IMT in 1992. They stayed in Labour under Prime Minister Tony Blair during 1997-2007 when he continued the "neo-liberal," anti-worker policies of Margaret Thatcher's Tories. This also meant that Grant and Woods were part of the government party of British imperialism during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 and the 2003 U.S.-U.K. invasion of Iraq, and thus bear responsibility for those crimes.

In 2021, Alan Woods' group (Socialist Appeal) was finally forced out of the Labour Party in the purges around the ouster of Jeremy Corbyn. It did not want to leave, and would no doubt still be ensconced in Labour today, as it continues warmongering from Ukraine to Gaza, if it hadn't been axed. More than any other ostensibly Trotskyist current, the IMT was wedded to "entrism," turning what Trotsky put forward as a short-term tactic in the 1930s as masses of workers were moving left, into a long-term strategy. It's the underlying reason why Grant and his group were not part of Trotsky's Fourth International on its founding in 1938.

Thus part of the reason for the current "left turn" of the IMT is that its mother section in Britain was forced into an independent existence. There is also less possibility to do entries into other forces in some other countries. But the March 2024 RCI Manifesto makes clear that it is always ready to carry out other deep entries, if the opportunity should arise: "Under certain circumstances, it cannot be ruled out that it may be necessary to send all our forces into the reformist organizations," adding that presently that is not posed.

Moreover, the IMT/RCI's predilection for entrism extends even to bourgeois parties, which it rebaptizes as "reformist" for the occasion. The same Manifesto polemicalizes against the left that capitulated to SYRIZA in Greece (as well as to Bernie Sanders in the USA, Jeremy Corbyn in Britain, Podemos in Spain). What the RCI does not say is that the IMT *hailed* the election of SYRIZA in January 2015 and that its group in Greece was posing at the time as a Communist Tendency of SYRIZA.

The fact that the IMT was part of such a bourgeois party is nothing new, as it has for years posed as the "Marxist wing" of populist capitalist parties from Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party to the Party of the Democratic Revolution in Mexico. This is diametrically counterposed to one the pillars on which Trotsky built the International Left Opposition and to the lessons he drew from the bloody defeat in China in 1927. In response to Stalin's disastrous policy of entering the bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang, leading up to the slaughter of tens of thousands of Communists by GMD leader Chiang Kai-shek in April 1927, Trotsky wrote:

continued on page 30



The founding congress of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), in Rome on 23 November 2024.



Combative trade unionists have also faced repression from “center-left” governments and the “national unity” government led by Eurobanker Mario Draghi. In response to the house arrest orders against the SI Cobas and USB leadership, and the “investigations” of more than 100 members of the rank-and-file unions, thousands of workers across Italy took to the streets in protest, including in Piacenza (above) on 2 August 2022.

General Strike...

continued from page 5

Those “security” decrees took particular aim at immigrants. The government of central banker Mario Draghi, in turn, escalated attacks on labor organizers and pickets as it imposed austerity cutbacks amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In early 2021, strikers in Prato were viciously attacked by police; in Piacenza, homes of FedEx-TNT logistics workers were searched, union organizers Carlo and Arafat arrested and residency permits of immigrant workers revoked. In Modena, 300 SI Cobas union members faced charges for strike activity.² In October 2021, 67 mostly female Italtel workers in Modena were charged for their 2018-19 strike.

More recently, the Meloni government has stepped up repression. A maxi-trial against 43 members of the 7 November unemployed movement, Cantiere167 Scampia and Iskra, began on 28 October 2024 in the prison bunker of Poggioreale in Naples. The charges against them include unauthorized demonstrations, aggravated resistance and interruption of public services. A defiant demonstration of over a thousand protesters marched on the prison on opening day. There are also by now hundreds of administrative measures, penal trials and legal actions directed against trade unionists and organizers, pro-Palestinian activists, social centers, anti-fascist militants and, in short, against anyone who rebels.

The connection between the “security decree” and repressing protests against Italy’s involvement in imperialist and Zionist wars (in Ukraine and Gaza) is direct. When on 23 and 24 February 2024 strikes and demonstrations were called by the “rank and file unions”³ against the genocide in Gaza, police in Florence blocked demonstrators from reaching the U.S. consulate, attacking them with batons. In Pisa, cops in riot gear didn’t even let student demonstrators reach the starting point, viciously beating defenseless protesters with truncheons. Meloni’s response was to denounce the pro-Palestinian demonstrators and to “thank the forces of order for their precious work.”

² See our article, “Italy: Draghi Government of Repression, Impoverishment and Death,” *The Internationalist*, April 2021.

³ In Italy, the main labor federations (CGIL, UIL and CISL) have been so closely tied to successive governments that it has given rise to a host of combative *sindacati di base* (rank-and-file unions), separate from and often at loggerheads with the reformist federations.

This was not an isolated case. On 5 October 2024, a national demonstration in Rome in solidarity with the Palestinian people, part of a Europe-wide mobilization, was banned. Police attacked the march of some 10,000 protesters, using truncheons, tear gas, armored cars and water cannons, injuring at least 40. Police set up checkpoints at highway toll booths and train stations to inspect people coming to the protest, hauling scores into police headquarters. Rai-TV (a.k.a. *tele-meloni*) reported the premier’s “full solidarity” with the police against “so-called ‘demonstrators.’” With the new security decree, such measures will be standard operating procedure for the police.

The Decree-Law No. 48 (ex-DDL 1660) was published in the Gazzetta Ufficiale on April 11 and is immediately in force. Parliament has 60 days to enact it. The time for the workers movement to act to stop it is now.

For Class War Against Imperialist / Zionist War

The fascist-led Italian government of Giorgia Meloni has vociferously supported the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu with its fascist ministers in their war of extermination against the Palestinian people. Italy has become the sixth largest arms exporter in the world, and the third largest exporter of arms to Israel after the USA and Germany. Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani (Forza Italia) claimed that all arms shipments to Israel were suspended starting October 7, 2023. This is false. Investigations by Altreconomia revealed that Italy exported weapons and ammunition worth approximately 817,536 € to Israel in October and November 2023, with more in December. By January 2024 the total was over 2 million € (*Il Post*, 10 April 2024).

Leonardo is the largest arms producer in Italy, with 31,000 employees and multiple production sites. Leonardo confirmed to *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (1 October 2024) that “for the year 2024, a total amount of around 7 million euros is planned” for sales to Israel. On 15 April 2024 the Italian railroads signed an agreement with Leonardo that “ensures the movement of military resources, inside and outside of Europe,” on “short notice and a large scale.”

So the railroad authorities are giving priority to military cargo over passengers and civilian cargo. There have been several rail and transport strikes over the last year over deaths at work due to lack of safety. These struggles should be linked in concrete action against the imperialist and Zionist wars.

As an example of what can be done, on 25 June 2024 a couple thousand trade unionists and pro-Palestinian youth blocked entrances to the port in Genova in solidarity with Gaza. Dozens of trucks were lined up in the street, unable to enter the port for many hours. Traffic was in chaos in most of the city. Port workers of the Collettivo Autonomo di Lavoratori Portuali (CALP) in Genova were active and SI Cobas called a national strike on the same day that successfully shut down some important logistics centers. There have also been workers actions to block arms to Israel and the Ukraine in Greece, including blocking a container with 21 tons of ammunition.

In addition, Italy has played a leading role in the EU military mission Aspides in the Red Sea, directed against the Houthis (Ansar Allah) movement in Yemen, which has shown their solidarity with Palestinians facing genocide in Gaza by firing on some ships headed for Israel. While the United States and Israel repeatedly bomb Yemen, indiscriminately killing civilians, the EU operation, which includes several frigates and an Italian destroyer, protects ships of the Italian-Swiss owned Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), one of the few lines still transiting the Suez Canal. The League for the Fourth International calls to defend Gaza and Yemen and to defeat the U.S. imperialists and Zionist mass murderers.

Meanwhile, under the Meloni government Italy has been a big supporter of the U.S./NATO imperialist proxy war against Russia over Ukraine. The Italian premier has met with Ukrainian puppet president Volodymyr Zelensky at Palazzo Chigi (the seat of government) at least three times since the start of the war. As of early 2025, Italy has given 17 billion € in aid to Kiev, including the SAMP/T Franco-Italian air defense systems. Significantly, the “opposition” Democratic Party (PD) has also consistently voted for sending arms to Ukraine. But after the White House humiliation of Zelensky for not acting like a proper puppet, the Italian premier has a problem (see “Meloni, Trump and Musk” on page xx).

The “rearmament” motion, approved by parliament after a single day’s debate, is actually much broader than the 800 billion € EU loan authorization, with an open-ended commitment to “continue the work of rein-

forcing defense and national security capacity.” This will no doubt be used by Meloni, as von der Leyen explicitly stated, to curry favor with Trump, who is demanding military expenditures by EU countries of 5% of GDP, more than double the current level in Italy. With a hard-right, fascist-led government in office, this will not be defeated in parliament, or with endless parades. It will take militant class struggle to shut the country down, in other words, exactly the actions that the new “security” decree outlaws.

The Meloni Government’s War on Working People at Home

Under the Meloni government, the imperialist war and sanctions against Russia (with electricity bills doubling from 2021 to 2022) have exasperated an already dire situation. Old people are forced to work until 67 (or even beyond, to make ends meet) while there is massive youth unemployment. Many women are fired or lose their job when they are pregnant, while childcare is too expensive or insufficient. Since most of the jobs are precarious and low paying, a number of youths go to live and work abroad. The total population is declining and aging as young people mostly can’t afford to have a family. Italy has one of the lowest birth rates in Europe at 1.3 children per woman, far below the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman.

But contrary to Fratelli d’Italia’s hysterical myth of the “replacement” of Italians, only 10% of the population has an immigration background, including “irregular migrants,” much less than in Germany or France, where 30% are either foreign-born or with at least one parent born outside the country. But rather than raise wages and increase social services, the first thing the FdI did in office was get rid of the “citizens’ wage” (*reddito di cittadinanza*) that provided a minimum level of welfare payments of up to 780 € per month (including rent aid) to families including nearly 2.5 million people. This was replaced by “inclusion checks” (*assegno di inclusione*) of at most 500 € for the elderly and individuals with disabilities only, received by 1.5 million people.

So 1 million people were just thrown into poverty, and the rest had their minimal incomes slashed. On top of this, the Meloni government cut back spending on public health as the Sistema Sanitaria Nazionale (SSN) is being dismantled. Total expenditures on health care fell from 9.6% of the gross domestic product in 2020 to 8.4% in 2023, while public expenditure was only 6.3% of GDP in 2024-25, well below the level in France and Germany



March in Genoa during the 25 February 2023 strike by CALP (Autonomous Collective of Port Workers) to block arms shipment for NATO’s war over Ukraine. It is a first step, but it will take an all-out general strike to defeat the “Security” Decree and rearmament.

(12%). This continued a trend since the onset of the worldwide capitalist economic crisis in 2007-09, with 30,000 hospital beds eliminated and 200 hospitals closed in 2007-2020. Those who can afford it turn to private health care, and with frenetic workloads, overworked doctors and medical personnel are retiring.⁴

In addition, this government is calling for a highly regressive “flat tax” that would make the rich richer and the poor poorer, and introduced regional “*autonomia differenziata*,” an old battle cry of Salvini’s Lega (formerly Northern League). The law, which took effect in July 2024, permits all regions to keep almost all of the revenue they collect and, essentially, to spend it as they wished. This means that the richer regions like Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Veneto in the north will have billions more every year, while the poor regions in the south will have billions less. There, 430,000 agricultural workers, mostly immigrants, toil for 12 or more hours a day, live in makeshift dwellings and are subject to abuse by bosses and labor contractors.

The conditions of these superexploited workers were brought to the fore by the death of Indian laborer Satnam Singh in June 2024. Satnam lost an arm at work, was loaded into a van and abandoned in front of his residence where he bled to death. The boss took away the phones of other workers to prevent them from calling for help. There are on average three reported deaths at work every day in Italy, while the real figure is probably significantly higher. Three high school students died at worksites in the past year as part of their “training” (exploitation for zero pay). And many logistic and other workers work in conditions recalling those of the industrial revolution, for wages insufficient to pay their bills even for basic necessities.

There have been ongoing workers struggles, notably at the GKN automobile parts factory in Florence, where workers have occupied the plant ever since the British investment fund owner fired all 422 workers in July 2021. This is by far the longest factory occupation in Italy’s history, as workers have sought to stop the bosses from carting off the machinery. As of March, the workers haven’t received unemployment stipends for five months, and are camped outside the Tuscan regional government demanding that the plant be reopened under public ownership. Meanwhile, there were explosive protests in Trieste against the Finnish-owned Wärtsilä Bagnoli naval engine plant which shut down production, eliminating the jobs of 450 workers.

These struggles will not be won on the basis of simple trade-unionism. In order to get around the sabotage by the union bureaucracies, rather than seeing each union in a plant strike separately (a frequent occurrence) and let members of other unions scab to get to work, *democratically elected strike committees are needed representing all the workers in the facility*. Against plant closures and mass firings, occupations and strikes should extend to other companies

⁴ It takes months to get different medical procedures from the public system, with wait times up to 2 years (715 days) for an ultrasound! That and the high cost to individuals led 4.5 million people to renounce medical treatment in 2023. And even though parliament approved a “Waiting List Decree” in July 2024, unions complained that the government didn’t budget money to hire the additional personnel needed to carry it out.

in the sector. Strike support committees should include other unions, non-unionized workers, the unemployed and other sectors. Against unsafe workplaces, there should be union safety committees empowered to shut down production in dangerous conditions.

Against the superexploitation of agricultural workers and state repression of immigrants, unions should fight for *full citizenship rights NOW for all immigrants*.⁵ Against runaway inflation and unemployment, they should demand a *100% sliding scale of wages and hours*. Against the double oppression of women workers, class-struggle unionists call for free 24-hour childcare and free abortion on demand. Against fascist goons and strikebreakers, union-based workers defense committees should be formed, and mass picket lines built that no one dares cross. Taken together, such *transitional demands*, as raised in Leon Trotsky’s *Transitional Program* (1938), point to the only real solution: a workers government and international socialist revolution.

Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership

All these struggles and crises have played out pretty much in isolation from each other, but now they are facing a common threat from the new “security” decree, which presages a heavy police crackdown on just about any social protest, and the militarization of the economy, which will predictably be used to justify further cuts to social services. But this is not a fight over budget “priorities” – “guns or butter,” “jobs not war,” etc. – but a ruling-class attack against all working people. As such, it must be fought by a united *class* struggle, with a combative workers movement taking the lead in defending all the oppressed against the capitalist warmongers and strikebreakers, and the bosses’ fascist-led government.

That is not what is happening, however. The workers movement and left groups are quite divided. The CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labor) has made clear from the beginning that it supports the NATO war on Ukraine, as well as the genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza. These “labor lieutenants” of the imperialist bourgeoisie are closely aligned with the Democratic Party of Elly Schlein, which has repeatedly voted to send arms to the (fascist-infested) Kiev government. But on April 5, the PD sent a parliamentary delegation to a sizeable (70,000+) M5S “peace” demonstration saying it was against the (fascist-led) government’s “rearmament” motions, but in favor of a “common European defense” – against Russia, of course.

On the “far” left, some groups in effect line up with the NATO imperialists over Ukraine, the most explicit being the Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori (PCL, Workers Communist Party), which calls for military support to and arms for the Ukrainian puppet government of Zelensky (see our article on “NATO Socialists in Italy,” *The Internationalist* No. 66, January-April 2022). Much of the left correctly despise

⁵ A referendum being pushed by the CGIL labor federation calls for the possibility of citizenship for those who have legally resided in Italy for five years (rather than the current ten), provided they meet other requirements. Children born in Italy of foreign-born parents would still have to apply to receive citizenship at age 18, and only if they have been in the country uninterruptedly from birth. We say anyone residing here should have full rights, no conditions.

Meloni, Trump and Musk

Over the last three years, Giorgia Meloni has sought to position herself as a key European ally of Donald Trump, speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) three times. The second time, in 2022, shortly after war began, she vowed to back Ukraine to the hilt. This has been portrayed as proof of her “Atlanticism” and used to deny that Fratelli d’Italia is fascist. What this mis-



Meloni and Zelensky: the fascist premier and the puppet president of the Ukrainian fascists and NATO.

es is that the Fd’I is linked to Ukraine particularly by its affinity with the fascist Azov Battalion, who Giovanbattista Fazzolari, Meloni’s closest collaborator, has praised as “heroes.”¹ (CasaPound fascists are fighting in Ukraine with Azov.)

Meloni is also pals with Elon Musk, who ostensibly gave a fascist salute from behind the U.S. presidential podium at Trump’s January 2025 inauguration. Musk has spoken at the Fd’I’s Atreju conference, in December 2023, where he emphasized “it’s important to have children” (he has 14), denounce illegal immigration and the like.

In November 2024, he called to remove the Italian judges who blocked Meloni’s plan to ship asylum seekers to Albania, getting him a slap-down from Italian president Sergio Mattarella who told Musk, the richest man on earth, to mind his own business.

Now Meloni has a little problem as Trump berated Ukraine’s puppet president Volodymyr Zelensky in the White House. But the fascist premier will certainly know how to sidestep that. A publication



Would-be Bonaparte Trump and Meloni: thank’s a lot, but no tariff reductions for Made in Italy.

on the history of the far right by George Washington University in the U.S.,

Italy’s Fascist Heirs: The Brothers of Italy Under Giorgia Meloni (November 2022), noted “Meloni’s ability to switch registers depending on her audience —from doe-eyed steward of Atlantism to rapacious propagandist for a neofascist Italy,” which it found “dangerous and treacherous.” The Fd’I’s answer to this dilemma is to undertake a massive arms build-up. ■

¹ See “Fascists and Hobbits,” on page 25.



It’s official: Musk gives the fascist salute on Inauguration Day, from a podium with the seal of the president of the United States.

these skills for the imperialist warmongers. Coming out of the Stalinist milieu, Rete dei Comunisti (RdC – Communist Network) and its affiliated youth organization Cambiare Rotta (Changing Course) and the high-school-age OSA are generally pro-Russia, although more along the lines of “peace with Russia,” which even the populist M5S calls for.

The RdC and its online newspaper *Contrapiano*, don’t equate NATO imperialism with Russia, a mid-level capitalist regional power, but they do not call to defend Russia against the U.S./NATO proxy war. Nor do they explicitly defend China (which they often call “socialist”), even though the clear goal of the imperialists – all of them, from Trump to the EU – is to foster a counterrevolution to destroy the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state. The Nucleo Internazionalista d’Italia and League for the Fourth International call instead to defeat the NATO proxy war over Ukraine and to defend Russia and China against the imperialist war drive pointing to a thermonuclear Third World War.

Domestically, the RdC, CR, OSA and the allied USB (Unione Sindacale di Base) rank-and-file union engage in Stalinist-style class collaboration, seeking to ally with bourgeois “progressives.” This includes supporting Potere al Popolo (Power to the People), left-populist bourgeois for-

mation along the lines of La France Insoumise (France Unbowed) of Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France. On the other hand, there is SI Cobas, one of the most prominent and left-wing of the several “rank-and-file” unions, and the Tendenza Internazionalista Rivoluzionaria (TIR) closely associated with it, which has roots in the tradition of Amadeo Bordiga. On Ukraine, the TIR calls for “defeatism on both sides,” precisely equating Russia with NATO.⁶

SI Cobas and the TIR last year called for the formation of a Rete Liberi/e di Lottare – No DDL Sicurezza calling for a “united front” against the draft law. In October, the RdC/USB and SI Cobas/TIR held demonstrations against draft law on different days. Then the CGIL and the social-democratic UIL labor federations called a one-day “general strike” against the government on November 29, mainly for economic demands but also calling for withdrawal of DDL 1660. Several of the rank-and-file unions also called to strike on the same day, to have the biggest show of opposition to the hard-right Fd’I/Lega/Forza Italia government’s drive to step up repression. A Palestinian solidarity demonstration was called for the next day.

⁶ See the section “What Is Revolutionary Defeatism?” in our article “Italy: Workers Action Key to Defeating Imperialist War Drive Against Russia, China,” *The Internationalist* No. 71, June-October 2023.



Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and her Defense Minister Guido Crosetto inspect Alpini mountain troops assembly in Udine, 15 May 2023.

The turnout for both was quite large, with hundreds of thousands of workers striking and tens of thousands marching in scores of cities on the 29th, and 25,000 demonstrating against the genocide in Gaza on the 30th. However, while the rank-and-file unions struck the same day, their marches (at least in Rome) stayed away from the CGIL/UIL concentration. And the RdC/USB boycotted the strike/demo, calling their own “general strike” for December 13. This scenario has played out hundreds of times before, as the class-collaborationist confederations and the militant rank-and-file unions each do their own thing. This is the exact opposite of the Bolsheviks’ classic formula for a genuine united front, “March separately, strike together.”

The question of Italy’s evolution toward an authoritarian, bonapartist police state is posed point-blank. That the security decree is a watershed in Italy’s post-World War II history is no secret. Multiple watchdogs (e.g., Osservatorio Repressione) are tracking developments. The imperialist “human rights” organization Amnesty International is on the case. The European Commissioner of Human Rights wants the government make a few modifications – which would change nothing, the whole package is *liberticida*, a mortal threat to civil liberties. At least two networks have organized protests, the already mentioned Rete Liberi/e di Lottare and the more “moderate/mainstream” Rete No DDL Sicurezza – A Pieno Regime (Full Speed Ahead).

The latter is a genuine popular front, bringing together liberal activists such as Greenpeace and Fridays for Future, certified reformists like the Partito Rifondazione Comunista and now the CGIL, and bourgeois politicians of the PD and M5S. One can’t separate the “security decree” from the militarization it is to protect, yet the PD has repeatedly voted for arms to Ukraine, and the first government of M5S leader Conte imposed the Salvini Decrees. Even the Rete Liberi/e di Lottare calls to fight the decree on a purely (bourgeois) democratic basis. Yet to defeat the attack on democratic rights, it is necessary to mobilize the power of the proletariat in a sharp *class* struggle against the capitalist regime..

Just as we don’t use the descriptive “fascist” lightly to describe the Fratelli d’Italia, but instead analyze it in detail,⁷ we do not promiscuously throw around calls for a general strike. In the mouths of reformists and centrists, this usually means a one-day or 48-hour work stoppage plus parade: a tactic to

⁷ See “Giorgia Meloni and Her Fascist Fratelli d’Italia” on page 19 of this issue.

pressure the capitalist rulers. What’s posed today, in contrast, is the need for a *real, unlimited general strike*, to bring the country to a screeching halt until the repressive decree is defeated and the arms build-up squelched. Rather than reformist calls for a “welfare state, not warfare state” (RdC), revolutionary Marxists counterpose a transitional program to smash a looming capitalist police state by fighting for a workers government.

This requires above all the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist communist party of the proletarian vanguard. Italy has never had a truly Bolshevik party, as the nascent PCI of the early 1920s had barely broken, very partially, from social democracy (and its Bordiguist variant) before it was purged and refashioned by Stalinism. This ultimately led to the policy of the popular front that sank the burgeoning Italian workers revolution during 1943-48. In periods of sharp struggle, such as we face today, the urgency of putting forward a “transitional program for socialist revolution” becomes clearer day by day, as the failure of parliamentary maneuvering and endless empty parades is evident.

The Nucleo Internazionalista d’Italia and League for the Fourth International seek to build the party that can make real the cry of revolutionary-minded workers in the Biennio Rosso to “do like in Russia,” in the Red October of 1917 under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

RCI...

continued from page 27

“Never and under no circumstances may the party of the proletariat enter into a party of another class or merge with it organizationally. An absolutely independent party of the proletariat is a first and decisive condition for communist politics.” [emphasis in original]

–L.D. Trotsky, “The Political Situation in China and the Tasks of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition” (June 1929)

In 2024, the newborn RCI’s Mexican section is critical of Claudia Sheinbaum, the victorious presidential candidate of the bourgeois-populist Morena party of her predecessor Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who has acted as a border guard for Yankee imperialism for years. But in 2012, the IMT’s Mexican section bragged about being part of Morena, and again in 2018 it backed AMLO for president. And for over ten years Grant and Woods were perhaps best known for their fawning over the bourgeois-nationalist Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, wholeheartedly praising his “socialist” rhetoric.

The IMT also supported other bourgeois nationalists in Latin America like Evo Morales in Bolivia and Pedro Castillo in Peru. These are the politics of class collaboration, in direct contradiction to the Bolshevik politics of Trotsky. Real communists do not give political support to bourgeois parties and politicians.

The IMT/RCI also practices class-collaborationist politics in the imperialist countries. In France, the IMT backed bourgeois populist Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the elections of 2017 and 2019, and this June, the RCI “call[ed] for people to mobilize in the streets and vote for the candidates of the Popular Front” (marxiste.org, 13 June 2024). The Nouveau Front Populaire is a bourgeois electoral alliance of Mélenchon’s La France Insoumise, the Communist Party, Socialist Party and Greens, harking back to its namesake in the 1930s, pushed by the Stalinists, which led to the defeat in France (1936) and in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39).

Another example: in the September 2022 Italian elections that led to the Meloni government, the IMT section, Sinistra Classe Rivoluzione, wrote that it would “give our vote to Unione Popolare,” which it said was “the only option that is in the camp of the working class” (*Rivoluzione*, 8 September 2022). In the camp of the working-class? Unione Popolare was headed by bourgeois ex-judge and ex-mayor of Naples, Luigi De Magistris, and is mainly pushed by the bourgeois populists of Potere al Popolo (Power to the People). Over and over the IMT has given political support to such class-collaborationist alliances. From Latin America to Europe and the U.S., the rebranded RCI is incapable of drawing a class line.

In Britain, in the 4 July 2024 elections, the RCP wrote: Get the Tories out! But we also say no trust in a Starmer government” (*The Communist*, 22 May). This classic opportunist “fight the right” rhetoric is a subterfuge to appear left while not calling straight out for no vote for Labour under (now prime minister) Keir Starmer. Then, following the racist and fascist-led anti-immigrant riots that broke out at the end of July after a fatal stabbing falsely ascribed to a Muslim refugee, the RCP wrote, “We can have no trust in Starmer or the police to protect us” (*The Communist*, 12 August). “No trust”? The police are the guard dogs of capital, among whose jobs for the bosses is meting out racist repression of immigrants.

This is no momentary or minor blip. The Militant tendency headed by Ted Grant and then the IMT has long claimed that the cops are “workers in uniform,” they call for unionization of police and prison guards, and have repeatedly supported “strikes” by police. When the police go on strike they do it to increase their repressive powers. The League for the Fourth International has long denounced the IMT’s betrayal of class principle with its support for police “unions,” and has for decades called for *cops out of the unions*. See our article on the Militant/IMT’s talk of “Bolshevik Bobbies” (an affection name for police).²

This gross denial of Marxist class politics is the product of a social-democratic milieu where reformist leftists dream of taking over the state apparatus and being the bosses of the cops, *as Militant Labour did in the 1980s*. This is in line with the IMT/RCI’s longstanding call for the British parliament with a Labour Party majority to approve an “Enabling Act” which would nationalize the largest companies and

² “Her Majesty’s Social Democrats in Bed with the Police,” *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009. Also “RCA/IMT’s Long History of Supporting Cop ‘Unions,’” *Revolution* No. 21, September 2024.

thereby supposedly establish socialism, all while the bourgeois state remains intact. Far from fighting for socialist revolution, such policies hark back to the left Labour government of Aneurin Bevin in the late 1940s.

The historical Militant/IMT political current has nothing to do with Trotskyism and has systematically capitulated to imperialism. Two examples: in World War II, Trotsky and the Fourth International stood for revolutionary defeatism on both sides in the clash between the fascist and “democratic” imperialists, while fighting for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism. Ted Grant’s Workers International League, in contrast, had a social-chauvinist position of backhanded support for British imperialism. And in the 1982 Falkland/Malvinas Islands war between Argentina and Britain, the Militant group sided with British imperialism, even calling for “workers boycotts” against Argentina.

Today, NATO imperialists and their puppet Ukrainian government have been waging a proxy war against Russia, which now may be escalating to a direct war, as a step in their imperialist war drive ultimately aimed at restoring capitalist rule in China, the one major country in the world that, precisely because of its planned economy was able to mobilize to protect its population against the ravages of the COVID pandemic. We of the Nucleo Internazionalista d’Italia, section of the League for the Fourth International, stand forthrightly for the defeat of NATO and defend Russia in the current war and unconditionally defend the Chinese deformed workers state against imperialist war and counterrevolution.

The LFI warns that the frenzied imperialist warmongering, reflected also in the U.S./Israel genocidal war on Gaza, is careening dangerously toward a thermonuclear World War III. In contrast, the not-so Revolutionary Communist International refuses to defend Russia or China against imperialism, a “plague on both your houses” line that is a capitulation to imperialism. Moreover, the RCI Manifesto assures us that “a world war is ruled out under present conditions,” both because a nuclear conflict mean “mutually assured destruction,” and due to “mass opposition to war.” But that hasn’t stopped the U.S./UK/NATO imperialists from constantly escalating their attacks in the Ukraine proxy war on Russia.

The Manifesto also reassures us that talk of “an alleged danger of ‘fascism’” is disorienting, and that a fascist regime as a “battering ram to destroy the workers’ organisations” is “ruled out by the balance of forces.” This “keep calm and carry on” message may be news to the RCI’s Italian supporters who are already saddled with a fascist-led government. Is the Meloni government a full-fledged fascist-bonapartist regime? No, but then neither was Mussolini’s parliamentary government in its first years. Until it was.

We of the League for the Fourth International encourage those who have been attracted to the “new” Revolutionary Communist International by its flamboyant “left turn” to verify what is written here, and to study the history of the communist movement. The renewed interest in communism among youth is encouraging, but it must lead to the understanding proclaiming yourself a communist doesn’t make you one. What is decisive is program. We also encourage you to get into contact with us and to read our press. A revolutionary communist international today can only be explicitly Leninist and Trotskyist, it cannot be built on the basis of class collaboration and capitulation to imperialism. ■

Vietnam...

continued from page 4

nam). Intel and SpaceX have announced future investments. In March, more than 60 American tech, defense and energy companies joined a business mission to Vietnam to explore investment opportunities. In addition, the South Korean electronics conglomerate Samsung is the largest foreign investor in Vietnam.

The Democrats looked to “soft power,” (diplomacy, USAID subversion, Radio Free Asia propaganda, etc.) backed up by the U.S. Pacific Fleet, while Trump wants to erect tariff walls, dispensing with diplomatic niceties, and give \$1 trillion to the Pentagon. And as the new defense secretary Pete Hegseth put it in mangled Pentagon-speak in a leaked policy document, “China is the department’s sole pacing threat” (*Washington Post*, 29 March). The Trump administration is systematically gearing up for war on China. In this, the MAGA Republican militarists are in lock step with the Democratic Party Cold Warriors.

Bipartisan U.S. Imperialist War on Vietnam

Like the bipartisan war drive against China, the Vietnam War was waged by both main U.S. political parties. After the French colonialists’ defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, Republican president Dwight Eisenhower established the South East Asia Treaty Organization, a Pacific version of NATO, and sent 700 military personnel and military/economic aid to bolster the corrupt South Vietnamese dictatorship of Ngo Dinh Diem. In May 1961, Cold War Democrat John F. Kennedy sent additional military “advisors” to South Vietnam, including 500 Special Forces. Kennedy authorized the start of clandestine warfare against North Vietnam with U.S.-trained South Vietnamese agents. By the end of 1962, there were approximately 11,000 military advisors in South Vietnam. Their policy was “sink or swim with Ngo Dinh Diem” – until Diem became too much of a liability and was assassinated in a CIA-backed coup in November 1963.

Following JFK’s assassination that same month, Lyndon Johnson massively escalated the war. The trigger was the so-called “Gulf of Tonkin incident” in August 1964 when the Johnson administration claimed a U.S. destroyer had been struck by North Vietnamese forces in an “unprovoked attack.” (The attack never happened, and the U.S. warships were engaged in covert operations near Vietnam’s territorial waters.) Using the imaginary incident as a pretext, Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution which was then used to authorize the massive deployment of some 500,000 U.S. troops, non-stop carpet bombing of North Vietnam and indiscriminate bombing with chemical agents in the South, including Agent Orange to destroy vegetation and force peasants from their land.² The horror of the U.S. war was captured in the famous photos of soldiers torching peasants’ huts and a naked young girl running from a napalm bombing attack.

In the stunning Têt Offensive of January-March 1968, North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front forces overran U.S. bases

² This went hand in hand with the “Strategic Hamlets” program where U.S. troops rounded up entire villages and removed them to enclosed “hamlets” that could be guarded and isolated to keep out the “VCs” (Viet Cong). Of course, the vicious program backfired, creating so much resentment that support for the NLF skyrocketed.

and pounded the army of the South Vietnamese puppet regime. Amid escalating antiwar protests and rampant demoralization of U.S. troops, defeatist sentiment spread in Washington over the losing imperialist war. LBJ decided not to run for reelection. Following the 1968 election, victorious Republican president Richard Nixon launched a policy of “Vietnamization” of the war. The aim was to reduce U.S. casualties coupled with intense bombing of North Vietnamese cities, mining its harbors, secretly bombing and invading Cambodia and Laos, and threatening to use nuclear weapons. But the heroic Vietnamese tenaciously kept on fighting while U.S. troops were close to rebellion, with over 900 incidents of soldiers “fragging” (throwing fragmentation grenades at) officers.

Meanwhile, on the home front, U.S. cities were exploding with protests against racist police repression of Northern ghetto upheavals. There was a direct connection with the Vietnam War, as black troops complained of being given the most dangerous missions and world boxing champion Muhammad Ali refused the draft, saying “No Viet Cong ever called me n----r.” In April 1970, when Nixon invaded Cambodia, over 1 million students at over 880 college campuses around the U.S. staged walkouts and/or occupied campus buildings. On May 4, four protesting students were murdered by National Guard soldiers at Kent State University in Ohio, and a week and a half later two students were gunned down by city and state police at Jackson State College in Mississippi.

With no end in sight, Nixon ordered a U.S. withdrawal following the February 1973 ceasefire. U.S. forces dragged away in defeat, but the war continued. The then-revolutionary Spartacist League (SL) issued a statement, “There Is No Peace! The Civil War Goes On” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 16, February 1973). It noted: “Especially since the massacre of hundreds of thousands of workers and communists in Indonesia in 1965 accomplished a major imperialist aim in Southeast Asia, key sectors of the American bourgeoisie have favored an end to U.S. involvement in Vietnam.”

The SL statement declared that it did “not support in any way this robbers’ peace,” and called for military victory to the NLF. But it noted that the NLF program called for a coalition government and a neutral (capitalist) South Vietnam. In the end, the talk of coalition evaporated as the puppet government collapsed, and after two more years of bloody fighting, the Saigon regime fell on 30 April 1975. The SL proclaimed:

“On April 30 the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the National Liberation Front (NLF) rode triumphantly into Saigon as leaders of the defeated puppet regime and South Vietnamese bourgeoisie fled the country by every means available. The military victory of the DRV/NLF marks the end of 30 years of civil war against colonialism and imperialism and their local allies. It means the overthrow of capitalist rule in South Vietnam, a historic conquest for the working people of the entire world and one which must be unconditionally defended by class conscious workers against imperialist attack.

“We hail this stunning defeat of U.S. imperialism, the first in a major war during this century and greet the victory of our class brothers and sisters in Indochina with internationalist proletarian solidarity.”

—*Workers Vanguard* No. 68, 9 May 1975

At the same time, WV added: “we warn the Indochinese masses that they must place no confidence in their Stalinist leaders” who



In an April 1970 antiwar protest at the Washington Monument, the revolutionary Trotskyist Spartacist League called for socialist revolution, while reformist pseudo-Trotskyists and Stalinists built popular-front alliances with Democrats.

still seek “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism. It called for “workers’ political revolution led by a Trotskyist party in order to establish the organs of proletarian democracy and open the road to socialism. All Indochina Must Go Communist!”

The article recounted how in August 1945, when British and French forces arrived to end Japanese occupation in World War II, the Vietnamese Trotskyists organized thousands of workers to rise up in Saigon against the reestablishment of colonial rule while the Stalinists sought to negotiate with the imperialist allies. The Trotskyists proclaimed “Long live the arming of the people! Land to the peasants! Nationalization of the factories under workers control! Toward the workers and peasants government!” The Stalinists, in contrast, proclaimed a “bourgeois democratic government,” adding that “Those who incite the peasants to seize landed property will be severely and mercilessly punished.” The Trotskyists went down fighting against the imperialists while the Stalinists stood by, and then murdered the surviving Trotskyists.³

Nevertheless, the Vietnamese Trotskyists of the International Communist League called for military support to the Stalinists’ Viet Minh nationalist front against the French colonialists.

Popular Front Antiwar Movement

The widespread opposition to the imperialist U.S. war in Vietnam is well documented and even mythologized in popular culture. Coming on the heels of the 1960s civil rights movement, hundreds of thousands took to the streets to oppose the war. There were considerable divisions within the movement, as many demonstrators became radicalized by the nightly horror show on TV and the audacious actions of the National Liberation Front fighters, while the leadership was oriented to winning support from Democratic Party “doves.” You couldn’t miss that the big antiwar marches were in odd-numbered years, while in the even-numbered years the energy was drained into Congressional campaigns of liberal Democrats appealing for the “peace” vote. By late 1969 there were confrontations between marchers with “Viet Cong” flags⁴

³ See John Sharpe, “Saigon Insurrection 1945,” in the Spartacist pamphlet *Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam* (1976). Also Simon Pirani, *Vietnam & Trotskyism* (Communist League [Australia], 1986-87). And Ngo Van, *Revolutionaries They Could Not Break: The Fight for the Fourth International in Indochina, 1930-1945* (1995).

⁴ The NLF flag – red on top, blue on the bottom with a yellow star in the center – was such that radicals took to painting yellow stars on post boxes, which at the time were similarly red and blue, so that the “Viet Cong” banner was ubiquitous in certain parts of the U.S.

chanting “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, NLF is gonna win!” and demonstration marshals, some chanting “peaceful, legal” over and over, trying to keep the radicals away from the rest of the protesters.

The two main antiwar coalitions for much of the war were the Peoples’ Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPJ), led by the reformist Stalinist Communist Party (CP), and the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC), led by the equally reformist, long-since ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). There were some differences: PCPJ was multi-issue and called for a ceasefire, NPAC was single-issue and called for withdrawal. But both were “popular front” coalitions bent on shackling antiwar activists to liberal capitalist politicians. Each camp had their favorite Democrats: PCPJ would bring out Oregon senator Wayne Morse while NPAC featured Indiana senator Vance Hartke as a speaker (and member of its steering committee). When the Spartacist League and other leftists including the Progressive Labor Party protested the presence of bourgeois politicians at NPAC conferences, they were ejected, sometimes violently.

Radicals who came out of the New Left Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which split between different Maoist and Guevarist factions in 1969, organized coffee houses for antiwar GIs (drafted soldiers) and organized in the army while identifying with the NLF fighters. This gives the lie to the right-wing myth of “peaceniks” spitting on returning soldiers. However, both official antiwar coalitions called to “bring our boys home,” thus fostering the consciousness of a social-patriotic “peace” movement rather than waging a revolutionary struggle against imperialism. The coalitions with liberal Democrats, meanwhile, served as guarantors that opposition to the war would stay within the bounds of capitalism. That is not what Vietnamese workers and peasants were fighting and dying for.

The upshot was that when Nixon abolished the draft and, following the Paris Accords in early 1973, withdrew U.S. forces, the “antiwar” movement soon petered out while the war in Vietnam dragged. In retrospect, many participants in the antiwar movement credited it with ending the war. An article on “The Four Stages of the Antiwar Movement” in the *New York Times* (24 October 2017) concluded, “The fourth stage of the antiwar movement had mobilized enough people to force Congress to finally end the war.” This is not true. While millions marched in the streets, as *Workers Vanguard* (No. 379, 17 May 1985) wrote on the tenth anniversary of the end of the war, “It was not Fifth Avenue peace crawls

but the Vietnamese peasants and workers who ‘stopped the war’ – by winning it on the battlefields in Indochina.”

Struggle for Socialist Revolution Against Capitalist Imperialism

In his book *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (1978), SWP antiwar organizer Fred Halstead wrote that, “It is even possible that the antiwar movement will prove to have been in a number of aspects a rehearsal for the coming American socialist revolution.” On the contrary, it was because the popular-front antiwar movement did *not* fight for revolutionary opposition to the imperialist war, but rather made a class-collaborationist bloc with liberal sections of the bourgeoisie, that it acted as a *brake* on radicalization toward revolution. Among Democratic Party politicians the “Vietnam doves” soon became “Middle East hawks” during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. On the left, some Maoist groups closed up shop after Nixon went to Beijing, along with war criminal Henry Kissinger, to clink glasses with Mao Zedong and enlist the Chinese Stalinists in a front against the Soviet Union.

In popular culture, liberal despair was reflected in a spate of movies about “older (and sadder) but wiser” former antiwar protesters. This was exemplified by the 1983 film, *The Big Chill*, which portrays University of Michigan (where the first Vietnam War teach-in was held) alums who marched on Washington in the ’70s as they gathered a decade later lamenting the loss of their former ideals. And as Democratic president Jimmy Carter in 1980 set out to overcome the “Vietnam syndrome” by engineering a CIA-sponsored war of Islamist “holy warriors” in Afghanistan, the liberals were joined by reformist leftists in howling against Soviet intervention to prop up the reform regime in Kabul. A year later, these pseudo-socialists were enthusiastically embracing CIA-supported Solidarność in Poland, union-buster Ronald Reagan’s favorite “union.” By the end of the ’80s, Solidarność had spearheaded a counterrevolution, the Gdansk shipyard workers who started it lost their jobs and Polish women lost the right to abortion.

The then-revolutionary Spartacist tendency stood its ground, hailing Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and calling to “stop Solidarność counterrevolution in Poland.” When much of the left supported the annexation of the East German deformed workers state (DDR) by imperialist West Germany in 1989, and two years later cheered the Yeltsin-Bush counter coup in the Soviet Union, the Spartacists fought tooth and nail, on the ground, against counterrevolution, from the DDR to the USSR. But the imperialist-led destruction of the Soviet-bloc deformed workers states led to a wave of defeatism in the Western left, eventually including the Spartacist League. In 1996, it expelled the authentic Trotskyists who went on to form the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International. Today, under new management, the born-again SL has renounced virtually everything the revolutionary Spartacist League stood for, turning from proletarian internationalism to chasing after and embracing bourgeois nationalism.

Today, as Trump escalates his tariff war with the world, Washington is demand-

ing that Hanoi cut trade ties to China, which would kill the Vietnamese export industry since almost all the products assembled there use Chinese components (“China in Way of U.S.-Vietnam Trade Deal,” *New York Times*, 24 May). Both under Democrats and Republicans, the U.S. is gearing up for a war to bring about a counterrevolution in China that would inevitably engulf Vietnam. Yet that would be a nuclear World War III, threatening all of humanity. Meanwhile, as Vietnam faces ever-present threats, both military and economic, from the U.S. and its allies, the gains of the revolution are also endangered by its leaders who continue to seek accommodation with imperialism. On May 4, CPV general secretary To Lam signed Political Bureau Resolution 68 saying “Vietnam’s private sector will be the most important driver of the national economy.”

The private, i.e. capitalist, sector of the Vietnamese economy is already large, powered by giant imperialist corporations. Lam is known as “an ardent supporter of private businesses” (*Fulcrum*, 23 September 2024), and Resolution 68 is an invitation to increase and accelerate capitalist restorationist forces. Now under the hammer of sky-high tariffs, the Vietnamese leadership is racing to push through construction of a \$1.5 billion golf complex outside Hanoi and plans for a Trump skyscraper in the capital. To do so, it is ignoring a half dozen legally required steps and seizing land from a number of families with long-term use rights in order to curry favor with the “first family” of U.S. imperialism (*New York Times*, 25 May). In Vietnam, land seizures have frequently sparked protests, sometimes quite militant, in the past.

There has also been resistance to government support for foreign-owned corporations, notably in 2018 protests against a law to establish special economic zones. There have also been thousands of strikes, sometimes quite large, over miserable wages and working conditions, particularly in garment factories owned by Hong Kong, Taiwanese and South Korean companies, but also in a plant of the Japanese manufacturer Canon.⁵ Resistance to Western domination is a point of tremendous pride for the Vietnamese people. Yet the “multinational” conglomerates that are at the heart of Vietnam’s private sector are a threat of neocolonial domination, after the Vietnamese workers and peasants bravely fought and vanquished the French and Americans. To reinforce the state sector as the motor force of the economy will require the initiative of the workers through organs of revolutionary workers democracy.

This must go together with the struggle – both in Vietnam and China – to expropriate the dangerous capitalist sector of the economy and oust the Stalinist bureaucracy that fosters it, threatening the revolutionary gains millions fought for. Rather than building illusions of cooperation with the former imperialist masters, establishing genuine *xô viết* rule of workers councils with a revolutionary internationalist communist leadership is key to defending and extending the Vietnamese Revolution. A half century after the victory that ended the Vietnam War, the task for revolutionaries is to build Trotskyist parties internationally capable of leading proletarian struggles to open the way to the genuine socialism of a classless society throughout the world. ■

⁵ Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, *Speaking Out in Vietnam* (2019).

Gleichschaltung...

continued from page 17

lege of New York (CCNY), Hunter College, and Queens College. Around 50 teachers and staff members from City College were fired in what was “by far the largest purge of politically undesirable professors ever” in American history.⁵ Those who lost their jobs included CCNY’s first black faculty member Max Yergan, Philip and Jack Foner, trade unionist Moe Foner, and English tutor Morris Schappes, who was sentenced to 14 months in state prison.⁶

After the war, in 1947, Democratic President Harry Truman established a loyalty program of oaths and screenings for federal employees. Across the country, states created their own witch-hunting committees modeled on Truman’s program, and required public employees to swear their allegiance to the state and that they had no current nor prior affiliation to the Communist Party. By the early 1950s, 32 states required loyalty oaths from their teachers. New York would continue to see some of the largest purges in the country following the 1949 passage of the Feinberg Law barring suspected communist teachers from the classroom. Over 1,150 teachers were subject to questioning, and 378 lost their jobs.⁷

At the University of California in 1949, when its Board of Regents imposed its own anti-communist loyalty oath on faculty and staff, 157 employees refused to sign. The Board voted to dismiss them. All but 31 faculty members capitulated to the hysteria. The university had to settle with the fired teachers in 1951, but only because the state legislature had passed its own more harshly-worded loyalty oath, and faculty overwhelmingly toed the line. At the federal level, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee questioned faculty at NYC colleges in 1953, resulting in the dismissal of several CCNY faculty members for invoking their Fifth Amendment right to refrain from responding. At the University of Michigan, some professors cited their First Amendment right of free speech or refused to answer at all, and were jailed for contempt of Congress.

As historian Ellen Schrecker explains in her classic work, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (1986), opposition to the witch-hunters from within the universities was weak. Overall, administrations dutifully cooperated with government inquisitors. The AAUP, although it formally opposed loyalty oaths and censorship and defended faculty members’ right to invoke the Fifth Amendment, failed to

censure any specific violations of free speech rights or academic freedom until 1956, when the tide had al-

⁵ Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (1986). See also “Witch-Hunters Target ‘The Unpatriotic University,’” *Revolution* No 3, November 2005

⁶ See “Free Speech at CCNY, 1931-42” for an account of the fight over this attack on academic freedom, and “Free Speech at CCNY, 1931-1942,” at the CUNY Digital History Archive, for a collection of documents.

⁷ Dennis Hevesi, “Irving Adler, Teacher Fired in Red Scare, Dies at 99,” *New York Times*, 27 September 2012.

ready begun to turn. Schrecker concludes: “Professors and administrators ignored the stated ideals of their calling and overrode the civil liberties of their colleagues and employees in the service of such supposedly higher values as institutional loyalty and national security.... The academy did not fight McCarthyism. It contributed to it.”

McCarthy fell out of favor and was censured by the Senate when he launched accusations against the military brass, boiling over in the heated (and televised) Army-McCarthy hearings of 1954. By the mid-1950s the fortunes of the red-baiters were beginning to change. The rigid Cold War McCarthyite control of social life in the U.S. was ultimately defeated by the rise of black struggle, first to integrate the schools after *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, notably in the 1956 battle over school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott that same year, followed by civil rights struggles all over the South. The ideological monolith of anti-communist cultural regimentation fractured.

A key moment was when students and labor joined forces against the witch-hunters. As we wrote in 2017, during Trump’s first term, about rightist provocations on university campuses in California: “What’s going on, not only in California but nationwide, is a push for a new McCarthyism on campus.” Noting how Joe McCarthy’s chief inquisitor, Roy Cohn, was Donald Trump’s mentor, we wrote: “The threat of a new McCarthyism is real. The danger is that, as in the 1950s, the intended victims fail to mobilize and vigorously fight back.” But, we added:

“What finally broke the grip of fear instilled by McCarthyism was a militant mobilization of students and workers against the House Un-American Activities Committee when it came to San Francisco in 1960. One of the main targets was the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which defied the 1947 Taft-Hartley law banning Communists from union leadership positions. HUAC also subpoenaed teachers and a student. Instead of intimidation, the committee’s hearing galvanized opposition. Professors and students from UC Berkeley and San Francisco State College joined with ILWU Local 10 members and effectively broke up the hearing.” –“Milo Yiannopoulos, ‘Free Speech’ and the Assault on Universities,” *The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017⁸

⁸ See also “The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) Hearing and Riot of 1960,” on Found SF, the San Francisco digital history archive, including video footage of the protests.



Protest by International Longshore and Warehouse Union, students and supporters broke up 1960 HUAC witch-hunt hearings in San Francisco.

Gleichschaltung of Academia,
Then and Now

During the World War II and Cold War witch-hunting in academia, the most avid inquisitors were waging their anti-communist crusade from Congress and state legislatures. Today, the assault on universities is coming straight from the Trump White House, with the full force of the federal government behind it. There is another important difference: the aim in the 1950s was to purge leftists from schools and colleges. Today, while leftists – and anyone that is pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist or against genocide in Gaza – are in the crosshairs, there is a broader aim: to drive out liberals and remake higher education according to MAGA dictates. The Trump regime seeks to “replace the existing ruling class with another ruling class,” as JD Vance put it in a July 2024 interview with *The Federalist*, by taking over and forcing the universities into line.

We have explained why it is not correct to classify Trump as a fascist,⁹ but the parallels to what is now being demanded of American higher education and what took place in German universities in the 1930s are such that the Berlin daily *Der Tagesspiegel* (15 April) headlined: “‘Gleichschaltung’ Feared: What the Trump Regime is Demanding of Harvard.” Even before taking power, the Nazis used intimidation to force leftists out of academia. In 1930 after the University of Heidelberg hired Emil Gumbel, a Jewish mathematician and outspoken opponent of fascism, as an instructor, Nazi youth spearheaded a smear campaign against him, issued death threats, led physical attacks and organized mass provocations and disruptions of his lectures. Ultimately, most of his colleagues capitulated and he was removed from his post in 1932.¹⁰

The Gumbel affair set the tone for what was soon to come. Hitler became chancellor (prime minister) in January 1933, and promptly passed an Enabling Act allowing him to rule by decree. The Nazis moved swiftly to remove Jews and leftists from public employment and require an oath of allegiance to the German state (and its *Führer*). The purge of higher education that began that spring culminated in the dismissal of 1,000 professors, or nearly one-fifth of university academic staff. The Nazi regime carried out a reorganization of the university, eliminating faculty governance bodies (as the Trump administration is now demanding)¹¹ and concentrating administrative authority in the office of the rector. The propagation of fascist propaganda was demanded, while today a Trump executive order mandates “patriotic education.”

Most administrators and professors complied willingly with these orders. In-



(Above) April 1933 Nazi decree ordering *Gleichschaltung* of German education. (Left) Philosophers Martin Heidegger carried out purge of leftists and Jews at Freiburg University.

famous among these opportunists was the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who became rector of the University of Freiburg just as the Nazis began to establish their control over the academy. Heidegger wasted no time in joining the Nazi Party. He dutifully carried out the reorganization of the university in accord with the dictatorial *Führerprinzip* (leader principle) and applied Nazi racial “cleansing” laws that targeted “Jewish or Marxist” or otherwise “non-Aryan” students. Today the targets are Palestinian or pro-Palestinian faculty and students. The eminent philosopher was one of the prominent signatories of the “Vow of Allegiance of the Professors of the German Universities and High Schools to Adolf Hitler.” In his inaugural address as rector, Heidegger proclaimed that “[t]he much-lauded ‘academic freedom’ will be expelled from the German university.”

So deep was Heidegger’s complicity in Nazi crimes that he was banned from teaching for several years after World War II. But his former lover and longtime friend, the German Jewish academic Hannah Arendt, became a court philosopher of the anti-Soviet Cold War. Her book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), which made a false and cynical equivalence between the Soviet Union and arch-racist genocidal Nazism, was heavily promoted by the U.S. government via the notorious CIA conduit, the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Meanwhile, the doctrines of Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt are being taught in law schools in the United States as a foundation of the doctrine of “legal realism.”

For Labor Action to Defend
Free Speech and Defeat the
New McCarthyism

Today in *Trumpland USA* universities are under siege, as academic freedom and the rights to free speech and protest are menaced by the federal government as never before. The Trump administration is going after top private universities first of all because of their role in the intellectual formation of the ruling class, and is using financial blackmail to compel adherence. What’s called for is a struggle at universities throughout the country, in conjunction with labor and others threatened by the Trump attacks. As the administration criminalizes anti-Zionism, it is urgently necessary to join in common action with those fighting to defend Palestinians and to oppose the joint U.S./Israeli genocidal war on Gaza. Likewise, a successful struggle requires linking the struggle with the fight against mass deportations, against attacks on trans people and all those victimized in the repressive onslaught.

Today, many have hailed Harvard University as a counterpoint to the abject surrender of Columbia and as an example

as they look to university administrations to stand up to Trump. As already noted, the administrators of this, one of the wealthiest universities in the world (endowment, \$53 billion), are hardly champions of academic freedom and free speech. Even more explicitly than other private universities, Harvard is literally a corporation, a business entity, not a “community of scholars.” And the masters of this corporation have repeatedly sought to bow down to Trump, including by forcing the resignation of Harvard’s previous president when she was pilloried by the witch-hunters in Washington. To look to this mainstay of American capitalism to lead the “resistance” to Trump is a lesson in futility and a recipe for defeat.

The same goes for university administrations in general, whether of private or public schools, small liberal arts colleges or large research universities. An open letter signed by over 600 college and university presidents and other “educational leaders” is circulating denouncing “the unprecedented government overreach and political interference now endangering American higher education.” But while espousing “the defining freedoms of American higher education,” it calls for “constructive engagement” with the Trump administration, which must be one of the all-time most illusory of pious hopes. This regime is not one to be “constructively engaged” – just ask the U.S.’ Ukrainian puppet president Zelensky. And while university execs have a certain vested interest in “academic freedom,” they surely aren’t going to defend pro-Palestinian protesters, students or faculty.

The origins of academic freedom go back to the *libertas scholastica* of the Middle Ages in Europe, when the few universities sought autonomy from papal or imperial control, as laid out in the 1158 charter of the University of Bologna. Later, during the Enlightenment, university autonomy served to protect the development of science and other disciplines linked to the rising bourgeoisie against the dead hand of the semi-feudal absolutist state. In the United States it is associated with the 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure of the AAUP. But in this period of capitalism’s decline, as science itself is under fire, the Trump regime’s attacks on academic freedom are a facet of its broader assault on bourgeois democracy in the drive toward an authoritarian “strong state.”

The threat facing American universities today goes well beyond McCarthyism. It is a full-on drive to control higher education by a would-be Bonapartist government, such as Leon Trotsky analyzed in the 1930s, which seeks dictate to all of society. The Trump regime, using the “power of the purse,” arrogates to itself the power to determine what is taught (no courses on

Palestinian or black history), who teaches it (no Marxist radicals), who are the students (no international students who support Palestinians), how the university is governed (all power to the admin, no diversity programs), who plays on varsity sports teams (no trans athletes) while replacing liberal faculty and students with right-thinking conservatives. Meanwhile, in K-12 schools their demand for “patriotic education” aims to indoctrinate students in “American values.”

Despite the pantomime of defiance by the Harvard administration – which is dependent on the courts, and ultimately the Trump enablers of the Supreme Court – the experience of the last three months underlines that, as during the witch hunts of the 1940s and ’50s, college officials will capitulate before the reactionary onslaught. This is no accident, for they administer academia as the agents of capital, both in private and public universities, not on behalf of an imagined campus “community.” The Internationalist Group along with the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and the fraternally allied Class Struggle Education Workers call to **abolish college administrations** and boards of trustees or regents, and to institute democratic **student/faculty/worker control of the university** through elected assemblies.

The Trump administration’s campaign to intimidate one and all, ruling by decree and tightening the grip of the state over society, augurs worse to come. While many who work and teach at universities are shocked and outraged by the blatant violation of democratic rights, the struggle cannot be waged in isolation within the ivory tower. Instead, it must reach far beyond the walls of the university and link up with the multiracial working class. This is especially so, as the attack on universities is accompanied by mass deportations of immigrants, mass firings of government workers, war on transgender people, an economic program that will impoverish all working people due to tariff-induced inflation, and continued support for, and even escalation of, the U.S./Israel genocidal war on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Ultimately, the offensive against the universities as the “enemy within” and the stripping away of the democratic façade of capitalist class rule are part of preparations for imperialist world war aiming at counter-revolution in the remaining, bureaucratically deformed, workers states, China first and foremost. To defeat this full-bore offensive, it’s necessary to bring out the power of the working class. The banner of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 for the May 2025 march in Oakland, California pointed the way, calling: “For Workers Action to Stop Mass Deportations and Mass Firings! No Military Cargo for Israel’s Genocidal War Against Palestinians! Defend the Rights of ALL of Us!”

At the City University of New York (CUNY), the faculty/staff union, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), has denounced attempts to censor Palestinian solidarity actions, formed an Immigrant Solidarity Working Group and circulated a petition demanding that the university:

“1. Refuse to capitulate to authoritarian demands that threaten academic freedom, free speech, faculty governance, free association, and our right to protest on campus; refuse to curtail CUNY’s commitment to racial, gender and other forms of diversity.

“2. Provide emergency legal representation for any CUNY student or worker facing the threat of deportation or cancellation of visa.

“3. Ensure that no CUNY college will allow ICE and Homeland Security to enter or recruit on CUNY campuses.”

On May 27, the PSC delivered to the University administration this petition that was signed by over 7,300 people at CUNY, including 3,000 faculty and staff and 3,900 students. The CUNY Internationalist Clubs and Hunter Committee to Defend Immigrants played a major role in this effort. Now defenders of academic freedom, freedom of speech and immigrants’ rights face the arduous task of turning these demands into reality through resolute organizing. A successful fight here would have reverberations around the country.

Waging this struggle requires above all a political break with the Democratic Party, which armed the genocidal Zionist war machine, and on the home front set in motion the witch hunts, censorship and police repression on campuses – which the Republicans are now capitalizing on – while posing as “tougher than Trump” on the border. The Internationalist Group insists that, now more than ever, what’s needed is to forge a class-struggle workers party to lead all those exploited and oppressed by this rotting capitalist system in a fight for socialist revolution. How to accomplish this is the central issue of our time. ■

CUNY...

continued from page 14

immigrants in our workplaces, in our schools, in our unions. The power of our labor, of the working class, will be the deciding factor in this struggle. We will not allow this disgusting racism to break our solidarity with our immigrant comrades. Their struggle is our struggle, their fight is our fight.”

The student demonstrators (many of them recently out of high school themselves) listened intently as an NYC school teacher spoke about the formation of committees to defend immigrants in several of the city’s K-12 schools, applauding loudly as she ended her remarks with the slogan “NYC Teachers Say: You Won’t Take Our

Kids Away!”³

That the demonstrations at John Jay led to cancellation of the sinister CBP recruitment event points to the potential for systematic and serious organizing on a class-struggle perspective. The protests built on the intensive organizing work at Hunter, City College and elsewhere by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, which in November initiated the Hunter College Committee to Defend Immigrants. (See “Hunter Students Organize Against Anti-Immigrant Drive” on the *Revolutionaries in the Class Struggle* blog.) This harks back to the Committee to Defend Immigrants and Muslims formed in 2017 in response to the grotesque “Muslim ban” that Donald Trump decreed at the outset of his first presidential term.⁴

Today, with a second Trump administration vowing to unleash “the largest mass deportation operation” in U.S. history, it is important to remember that the deportation machine he relies on was ramped up by Democratic “Deporter-in-Chief” Obama and his successors in the Biden/Harris administration. Trump’s “border czar” Tom Homan, whose threats and venomous declarations seek to spread fear among millions of working people, was head of I.C.E.’s deportation branch under Obama, who in 2015 presented him with the U.S. government’s highest civil service award.

With all our rights under attack, it’s crucial that the working class break the chains binding it to the political representatives of capital. This is why we of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs work to win young people seeing the brutal reality of capitalism today to the only alternative: helping to build a revolutionary workers party that fights to put into practice a key slogan we led students in chanting during the recent CUNY protests: “¡Luchar, vencer, obreros al poder!” (Fight, win, workers to power). ■

³ To find out more about the Labor Committee to Defend Immigrants, or to request a copy of the LCDI’s *Immigrant Rights Defense Packet*, write to Laborconference@gmail.com.

⁴ See “CUNY Internationalists Initiate Committee to Defend Immigrants and Muslims,” *Revolution* No. 14, January 2018, and “CUNY-Wide Conference in Defense of Immigrants Held at Grad Center,” *Advocate*, 23 April 2018.

Chris Knox (1944-2025)

Chris Knox died on 14 April 2025. We honor him in particular for his invaluable contribution in formulating the guidelines for revolutionary work in the trade unions which have guided our intervention ever since, first in the Spartacist League and the international Spartacist tendency (from 1989 on the International Communist League), and then in the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International.

Chris joined the Spartacist League in 1965 as part of a layer of student recruits from Cornell University. Many were to play leading roles in the organization. Chris was animated when telling the story of how in 1966, at the University of California’s Berkeley campus, he was grabbed by the cops while holding a sign reading “Soviet Nuclear Shield Must Cover Peking, Hanoi.” That was in advance of, but in line with, the Spartacist League’s banner, raised in an April 1970 antiwar protest in Washington, D.C., saying “All IndoChina Must Go Communist”. Early on, Knox contributed articles to *Workers Action*, the predecessor to *Workers Vanguard* (WV), and in 1972 became editor of WV before being succeeded a few months later by Jan Norden.

A printer by trade, Knox headed the SL’s newly-formed Trade Union Commission, helping to write the SL’s crucial documents guiding its work in the unions. Studying the history of the Communist Party’s Trade Union Education League in the 1920s and the Trotskyists’ work in the 1930s and ’40s, particularly the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strike, he authored the four-part series on “Trotskyist Work in the Trade Unions” published in WV in 1973.¹ In that seminal work, in contrast to the practice of left groups forming blocs on the basis of simple trade-unionism, the SL called for building a pole in the unions fighting to cohere a revolutionary leadership, with caucuses based on Trotsky’s 1938 Transitional Program and his 1940 essay on “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay,” stressing the vital importance of independence from the state,

Knox directed the SL’s intervention and class-struggle caucus-building in the maritime, warehouse, auto, telephone and steel industries and among public employees. After a militant strike in 1974 at KNC Glass Company in Union City, California in which undocumented workers defiantly battled the employer and their watchdogs, the police, the strikers had to confront the Stalinist leadership of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) who undermined any kind of militant action against the employer. That struggle was led by SL supporters in the longshore and warehouse divisions, and out of that came the decision to organize a caucus in ILWU.

Knox was fond of saying a revolutionary program is not something to be stored in a safe place for posterity, nor is it to be doled out in bits and pieces as various reformists and centrists are wont to do. The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International are uniquely carrying forward the orientation first formulated by Knox in the then-revolutionary Spartacist League, to fight against the “labor lieutenants of capital” on a

¹ This series is reprinted in the Internationalist Group Class Readings bulletin, *Trotskyism and Trade-Union Struggle* (2005).



Chris Knox in New York in 2016

program leading to a revolutionary workers government. This has been the case with the Class Struggle Caucus led by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil that grew out of the 1996 fight to expel police from a municipal workers union (which the latter-day SL/ICL deserted in the heat of battle), and also with the Class Struggle Education Workers and Class Struggle Workers – Portland, fraternally allied with the IG.

Knox left the Spartacist tendency in 1981 over one of several fights in the Australian section. He never joined another self-proclaimed Trotskyist tendency but continued to work for a socialist future. He helped organize demonstrations on the San Francisco docks in support of the 1984 longshore workers’ boycott action of a ship from apartheid South Africa, the *Nedlloyd Kimberley*. In 1999, he assisted in organizing the 25,000-strong march in San Francisco in connection with an ILWU Local 10 port shutdown calling for Mumia Abu-Jamal’s freedom, linked to a work stoppage by teachers in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, organized by the LFI and the LQB. In his later years, Knox continued to be active as organizer of the Bay Area Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia, working with our comrade Jack Heyman and others of Mumia’s many supporters.

In the 1980s, Knox was very involved in protests against U.S.-backed wars in Central America, and he later wrote extensively on the environment for *Socialist Viewpoint*. We did have a difference with him on the issue of nuclear power, which he opposed but which we are for, with necessary safeguards. When he was in New York on May Day 2016, Chris marched with the Internationalist Group contingent with a sign saying “Wall Street = War Street, Defeat U.S. Imperialism.” Despite our differences, we shared the conviction that a small revolutionary Trotskyist party with roots in the working class can play a vital role in important class battles.

Where the revolutionary SL called for workers strikes against the war, the IG/LFI continued to do so and on that basis was instrumental in initiating the 2008 May Day shutdown of all West Coast ports protesting the U.S. imperialist wars raging in Afghanistan and Iraq. The inspiration for those interventions was the conception of building a revolutionary pole in the mass organizations of the working class put forward by Chris Knox more than 50 years ago. He will be remembered for his important Marxist contributions to the class struggle for proletarian revolution. ■

The Internationalist



A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism for the Reforging of the Fourth International

Publication of the Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International

Annual subscription US\$10 for five issues.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Apt. # _____ Tel. (____) _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Postal Code/Zip _____ Country _____

Make checks/money orders payable to Mundial Publications and mail to:
Mundial Publications
Box 3321, Church Street Station
New York, NY 10008 U.S.A.

Write the Internationalist Group at the above address, or contact:
Tel (212) 460-0983 Fax (212) 614-8711
E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

Bonapartism...
continued from page 13

The ruling also stipulated that a president (and former president) has “presumptive immunity from prosecution for all his official acts,” including when Trump tried to get the vice president to overturn the election results, which would have amounted to a coup d’état. In short, “with respect to the President’s exercise of his core constitutional powers, this immunity must be absolute. As for his remaining official actions, he is also entitled to immunity.” The reason for these rulings, it wrote, was “to enable the President to carry out his constitutional duties without undue caution,” for without immunity from prosecution “the President would be chilled from taking the ‘bold and unhesitating action’ required of an independent Executive.”

This decision certainly opens the door to erecting an authoritarian Bonapartist regime, and taking “bold and unhesitating action” without “undue caution” is Donald Trump’s forte. During the 2016 election campaign, Trump famously declared, “I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn’t lose voters.” In 2019, speaking to a conference of the fascistic Turning Point USA, Trump said, “I have an Article II [of the U.S. Constitution] where I have the right to do whatever I want as president.” And this past February he posted on his Truth Social site, “He who saves his Country does not violate any Law.” The quote comes from Napoleon Bonaparte, and in response to criticism Trump posted a picture of Napoleon.

Trump definitely has the makings of a Bonapartist ruler, seeking to raise himself above the contending class forces as the embodiment of the nation. But, Trotsky remarks, “A government that raises itself above the nation is not, however, suspended in air.” Its axis “passes through the police, the bureaucracy, the military clique.” Trump does have his own dedicated strike force in the DHS, whose multiple armed units – I.C.E., Customs and Border Enforcement, DHS Investigations, Border Patrol, Secret Service, Federal Protection Service – are by far the largest police force in the U.S. And they will do his bidding, as we saw in 2020 when they stood masked on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and attacked anti-racist demonstrators in Portland.

Trump wanted then to invoke the Insurrection Act to use the military to suppress protests, but was held back by his cabinet members. Today, his declaration of an emergency at the southern border called for a report from the DHS and the Pentagon on whether to invoke that act. But Trump does not clearly control the military, or the bureaucracy which he is trying to purge. While he has a core of fervent supporters, his margin of victory in the popular vote in the 2024 elections was barely 1 percent. Meanwhile his poll numbers have been steadily dropping, so that today his approval rating stands at 42% and a majority of voters find his actions in office “chaotic” and “scary.” Which means exactly nothing to a real Bonaparte.

Should Trump attempt to free himself from any restraints, he could be in a precarious position if faced with serious opposition prepared to mobilize in action against a power grab. And that’s the nub of the problem, for there is no such opposition force today. The Democrats are catatonic and internally rent, incapable of acting, and share the desire for a “strong state,” just not Trump’s. The left is tiny and by and large still tails after the liberals. The one force that has the power and class interest to stop the imposition of Bonapartist rule would be the workers movement with a class-struggle leadership to prepare it for an all-out fight. The key is forging a revolutionary workers party. ■

Deportaciones...
sigue de la página 36

tación el 6 de marzo para mantener al ICE fuera de las escuelas.¹

Una delegada sindical ha presentado una moción en la Asamblea de Delegados de la UFT que hace un llamado a sus capítulos locales a organizar comités en defensa de los inmigrantes en cada escuela, que señala que no se puede apelar a los tribunales, al gobierno ni a los políticos demócratas ni republicanos para poner alto a las deportaciones y que hace un llamado a la clase obrera a movilizar su poder en defensa de los inmigrantes. La resolución concluye:

“Se trata de nuestros estudiantes, nuestros compañeros de trabajo, nuestros vecinos, y vamos a actuar en su apoyo en este momento en que lo necesitan, y siempre. No les vamos a permitir que se lleven a nuestros estudiantes”.

Como informamos previamente, el 16 de diciembre se realizó una Conferencia Sindical preliminar para defender a los inmigrantes en Manhattan, en la que participaron activistas y organizadores de diversos sindicatos y grupos comunitarios del área de la ciudad de Nueva York. Entre éstos se incluyen el Consejo Distrital 37 de la American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME, sindicato de trabajadores estatales y municipales), Teamsters (IBT), Transport Workers Union (TWU), Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), Laundry Workers Center (LWC), UFT, CSEW, Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (TIC), el Local 32BJ del SEIU, UAW/ALAA, Professional Staff Congress – CUNY y otros.

Se realizó una segunda conferencia el 9 de enero, con la participación de más de 70 miembros, organizadores y funcionarios de sindicatos, grupos de trabajadores y de defensa de los derechos de los inmigrantes. Entre estos se encontraban el Amazon Labor Union (ALU-IBT, Local 1); los locales 25, 251, 804, 808 y 814 de los Teamsters; Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA); CBTU; el local 1180 de los Communications Workers of America (CWA); el DC37 del AFSCME; LWC; los locales 32BJ y 1199 del SEIU; PSC-CUNY; el local 100 del TWU, el local 2179 de los UAW y la UFT.

Con las deportaciones en masa encima, que Trump amenazaba con realizar desde el día de su toma de posesión, el 20 de enero, había un sentimiento de urgencia para organizarnos ya para movilizar el poder de la clase obrera para salir en defensa de los inmigrantes, sus familias y comunidades. Charles Jenkins del TWU y del CBTU enfatizó que la defensa de los derechos de los inmigrantes es un asunto “de la clase obrera” y conectó la explotación de los inmigrantes con la historia de los africanos esclavizados, para subrayar la necesidad de la unidad de todos los trabajadores, nativos y nacidos en el extranjero, en contra de la táctica de “divide y vencerás”.

Tras una animada discusión, la asamblea se dividió en varios grupos de trabajo que incluían trabajadores de la construcción, la educación, la salud, la industria hotelera, el transporte, los almacenes, estudiantes y otros. Luego la conferencia volvió a reunirse para escuchar los informes de las discusiones en los diferentes grupos de trabajo. El Comité de Trabajadores por la Defensa de los Inmigrantes (CTDI)

¹ Ver “FDR Teachers Say, ‘I.C.E. Wont’ Take Our Kids Away” (19 de marzo) en el sitio web del CSEW, http://edworkersunite.blogspot.com.

quedó conformado mediante una votación unánime y entusiasta. También se decidió organizar un contingente sindical regular en defensa de los inmigrantes y en contra de las deportaciones.

El 13 de febrero, el Comité de Trabajadores de Nueva York se reunió nuevamente, en esta ocasión con más de 100 participantes. Vale la pena destacar los informes de los grupos de trabajo del transporte/almacenaje y los estudiantes. Un miembro de los Teamsters informó que habló durante una reunión del local 804 después de lo cual más de 50 de sus compañeros firmaron para unirse al CTDI. El presidente del local enfatizó la importancia de organizar a los no organizados, p.ej. en Amazon, y trazar el vínculo con la defensa de los inmigrantes, toda vez que los trabajadores inmigrantes pueden estar indecisos con respecto a afiliarse al sindicato por temor a ser deportados.

Para cuando se realizó esa reunión, el CTDI había publicado un paquete de Defensa de los derechos de los inmigrantes de 75 páginas, del cual se han distribuidos cientos de copias en Nueva York. El boletín incluye materiales de “Conozca tus derechos” en inglés, español, creol haitiano, francés y árabe. También se señaló que el Professional Staff Congress, que representa a los profesores y trabajadores de CUNY, había organizado un Grupo de Trabajo de Solidaridad con los Inmigrantes. El compañero Jenkins informó de que estaba abogando por que el Consejo Laboral Municipal hiciera de la defensa de los derechos de los inmigrantes un punto central de una marcha a gran escala del Primero de Mayo de este año.

El CTDI se reunió nuevamente el 29 de abril, en vísperas del Primero de Mayo. En la sesión de apertura Sándor John, delegado sindical del PSC y partidario de los CSEW, habló de la manera en que el gobierno está atacando a las universidades e informó sobre el mitin del 17 de abril “en defensa del derecho a aprender” y en contra de los ataques contra la educación. Chris Silvera, secretario-tesorero del local 808 de los Teamsters, subrayó que la lucha para defender a los inmigrantes es parte fundamental de una lucha más grande: “Van contra ti, van contra tu seguridad social. Estamos en una batalla, y si la perdemos, vamos a estar de vuelta en la esclavitud”.

El Comité de Trabajadores por la Defensa de los Inmigrantes ha enfatizado la necesidad y la urgencia de realizar movilizaciones de masas basadas en las organizaciones de la clase obrera para luchar por poner alto a las deportaciones. Mientras las redadas se intensifican y el horror de la policía militarizada acechando en

todo el país para cazar migrantes va asentándose, va ha haber una reacción. Pero frente a la enorme fuerza de un gobierno que emplea medidas de estado policiaco, es fundamental que la respuesta vaya más allá de las reacciones espontáneas a las atrocidades y despliegue la organización y el poder del movimiento obrero en las calles y al nivel de la producción.

El Primero de Mayo, contingentes internacionalistas en Nueva York, Portland, Oakland y Los Angeles marcharon junto con contingentes de los Comités de Trabajadores por la Defensa de los Inmigrantes (ver el artículo en la página 18). Al realizar este intenso trabajo en la clase obrera, el GI y las organizaciones fraternalmente aliadas ofrecen una vía de lucha en contra de la catástrofe que se cierne sobre nosotros en un momento en que los liberales, la burocracia sindical y la izquierda están paralizados en su gran mayoría, o de manera ritual haciendo lo mismo de siempre.

Como dijo Becca Lewis del CSWP, “Nos ha quedado muy claro que al hacer este trabajo hay un enorme abismo en lo que toca a la cuestión de la dirección. El movimiento obrero debe ponerse en pie. Ésta es la única manera de lograr resultados, si es que vamos a hacer genuina organización al nivel del taller... A final de cuentas, la crisis de los inmigrantes no va a ser resuelta bajo el capitalismo. La única manera de resolver el problema es mediante una revolución obrera internacional”.

Iniciativas como la lucha por crear comités para defender a los inmigrantes son una expresión de nuestro programa general de lucha de clases, para forjar un partido obrero genuinamente revolucionario en el fragor de la lucha de clases. ■

League for the Fourth International

LFI, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A. E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

LFI in Australia

E-mail: lfi_aus@proton.me

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

Brazil: write to Caixa Postal 084027, CEP 27251-740, Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

Rio de Janeiro: write to Caixa Postal 3982, CEP 20001-974, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil E-mail: lqb1996@yahoo.com.br

Internationalistische Gruppe/Deutschland

Germany: write to Postfach 80 97 21, 21007 Hamburg, Germany E-mail: permanenterevolution@posteo.de

Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia

Italy: write to Anna Chiaraluce, C.P. N. 78, Ufficio Postale San Sisto, 06132 Perugia (PG), Italy E-mail: it_internazionalista@yahoo.com

Grupo Internacionalista/México

México: write to Apartado Postal 12-201, Admón. Postal Obrero Mundial, CP 03001, México D.F, México E-mail: grupointernacionalista@yahoo.com.mx Tel. Mexico City: 55-3154-7361; Guadalajara: 33-1752-6643; Oaxaca: 951-185-6815

Internationalist Group/U.S.

Internationalist Group, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A. E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com New York Tel. (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711 Los Angeles Tel. (323) 984-8590 New England Tel. (617) 213-5010 Pacific Northwest Tel. (503) 303-8278

¡Acciones obreras para poner alto a las deportaciones en masa!

Está oscuro. Tu familia duerme. De repente, se escuchan golpes en la puerta. Hombres fuertemente armados y con los rostros cubiertos están afuera.

“Agentes del ICE. ¡Abran la puerta!”

En vecindarios en todo el país esta escena se repite a diario mientras el nuevo gobierno intensifica sus operaciones para llevar a cabo la amenaza de campaña del presidente republicano Donald Trump de realizar la mayor deportación en masa de la historia de EE.UU. Es una guerra contra los trabajadores de este país que desgarran el tejido social de innumerables comunidades.

La policía del Servicio de Control de Inmigración y Aduanas (ICE, por sus siglas en inglés) y otros “organismos de seguridad” federales del Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria como el Servicio Federal de Protección y la Patrulla Fronteriza, así como el Buró Federal de Investigación (FBI) y la Agencia de Control de Drogas (DEA) participan en este monstruoso crimen.

Estas agencias, que frecuentemente cuentan con la ayuda de policías y alguaciles locales, emplean medidas de estado policíaco que son abiertamente ilegales, al negar a las personas cualquier forma de debido proceso, aunque éste sea un derecho constitucional para cualquier persona que se encuentre en los Estados Unidos. Estas operaciones son un ataque contra los derechos de todos. Y son realizadas con poca oposición por parte del Partido Demócrata.

Los dos partidos capitalistas que se alternan al timón del imperialismo norteamericano son cómplices en la explotación, opresión y deportación de los laboriosos y pobremente pagados inmigrantes que representan una enorme porción de la fuerza laboral. Los inmigrantes indocumentados y sus familias suman unos quince millones de personas. Y ahora están deportando incluso a inmigrantes que cuentan con un estatus de protección legal.

El Grupo Internacionalista ha hecho llamados a la acción obrera para poner alto a las deportaciones y, junto con los Class Struggle Education Workers, el Class Struggle Workers –Portland y la Juventud Internacionalista Revolucionaria, hemos iniciado campañas para integrar sindicatos a la lucha en defensa de los derechos de los inmigrantes y a la formación de comités para defender a los inmigrantes en escuelas y centros de trabajo.

Escenas del show de los horrores de las deportaciones en masa

Hay un miedo rampante entre las comunidades inmigrantes en Estados Unidos, en donde quienes que no cuentan con documentos trabajan y mantienen a sus familias, pagan casi 100 mil millones de dólares de impuestos cada año, y se encuentran bajo la amenaza de ser deportados. Los padres tienen miedo de llevar a sus hijos a la escuela. Las personas que enferman temen buscar atención médica. Trump ha prome-



Redada de la ICE en Chicago, en la madrugada del 28 de enero.

tido que no habrá santuario en hospitales, iglesias, escuelas, ni en ningún otro lugar.

Inmigrantes están siendo deportados en aviones hacia El Salvador, donde son arrojados en un enorme calabozo “antiterrorista”. Trump dice que todos son criminales que representan una amenaza para los ciudadanos de EE.UU. Es mentira. Una gran parte de los cientos de enviados a ese antro infernal son trabajadores con familia en EE.UU. y, según investigaciones periodísticas, pocos cuentan siquiera con antecedentes penales.

Algunas detenciones son propias de una dictadura, como cuando atraparon al estudiante de posgrado de la Universidad de Columbia Mahmoud Khalil cuando entraba al edificio de departamentos en que vive con su esposa embarazada de ocho meses. Otros se asemejan a una operación terrorista, como cuando agentes enmascarados aprehendieron a la estudiante de la Universidad de Tufts Rümeyza Öztürk en la calle y la metieron por la fuerza en un carro que llega y que luego arranca a toda velocidad.

Otras son operaciones militares a gran escala, como cuando agentes federales realizaron una redada en el complejo de departamentos Cedar Run en Denver, Colorado, el 5 de febrero. Un ministro religioso fue testigo ocular:

“El extenso complejo de departamentos, hogar de decenas de familias migrantes provenientes de Venezuela, Colombia, Haití y Centroamérica, fue sitiado. Oficiales del ICE y el FBI montaban guardia, fuertemente armados. Algunos llevaban los rostros cubiertos. Decenas de camionetas –incluidos vehículos armados que parecen tanques– bloqueaban el área, lo que hacía que pareciera más una zona de guerra que un vecindario de Denver.”

–Denver Post, 24 de febrero

En una redada realizada en un restaurante italiano en San Diego, California, videos muestran a “agentes armados y con el rostro cubierto, con equipo táctico completo, arremolinándose en el área” (NPR, 31 de mayo). Una multitud se reunió para “filmar y para

gritar en protesta, rodeando los automóviles y las camionetas de detención”, hasta que estalló una granada de aturdimiento. Los agentes del DHS esposaron a todos los trabajadores y terminaron deteniendo a varios.

También se están apareciendo en escuelas y refugios para hacer “revisiones de bienestar” a niños inmigrantes. El primer estudiante de Nueva York del que se supo que había sido detenido, un venezolano llamado Dylan, fue arrestado el 21 de mayo en lo que se suponía que iba a ser una audiencia para su petición de asilo. La nueva estrategia consiste en que jueces administrativos rechacen las peticiones y los agentes del ICE aprehendan a la persona en el lugar.

Los agentes federales al acecho no sólo pisotean los derechos de los inmigrantes, sino que también arremeten contra cualesquiera funcionarios que se interpongan en su camino, todo esto como parte de la guerra de Trump contra las ciudades y estados “santuario”. El 25 de abril, una valiente juez de Wisconsin, Hannah Dugan, fue arrestada por el FBI por supuestamente haber ayudado a un inmigrante a evadir su arresto.

El 9 de mayo, la congresista demócrata de Nueva Jersey, LaMonica McIver, fue arrestada por intentar, junto con otros funcionarios, inspeccionar un centro de detención del ICE. Y el 28 de mayo, policías del DHS tomaron entraron por la fuerza a la oficina del congresista demócrata Jerry Nadler y esposaron a uno de sus ayudantes, acusando a su equipo de “proteger a alborotadores” que presenciaron la detención de inmigrantes en el edificio.

Mientras Trump emite un decreto tras otro, agentes federales actúan con impunidad para imponer su programa de deportaciones usando la absurda afirmación de que se trata de enemigos extranjeros que invaden el territorio norteamericano. Algunos tribunales federales han bloqueado temporalmente las deportaciones que pretendían valerse de este subterfugio, pero los inmigrantes siguen siendo detenidos y el gobierno ha violado varias de estas órdenes judiciales.

Se forman comités para defender inmigrantes

El Grupo Internacionalista y organizaciones fraternalmente aliadas se han organizado en el movimiento obrero para formar comités para defender inmigrantes en escuelas y lugares de trabajo. Aunque se trata de fuerzas aún modestas, estos esfuerzos se cruzan con el deseo de muchos de una acción concreta arraigada en el poder del movimiento obrero.

El 29 de mayo, activistas sindicales y estudiantiles portaron las pancartas del Comité Laboral para la Defensa de los Inmigrantes, así como del comité del Hunter College (véase más abajo) en una protesta ante la sede del Departamento de Educación de Nueva York por el estudiante venezolano detenido, exigiendo “Bring Dylan Home”. Esa noche, 23 manifestantes fueron arrestados, incluidos dos que trabajan activamente en los comités en defensa de los inmigrantes, por supuestamente bloquear una van del ICE que transportaba a inmigrantes arrestados tras comparecer en una audiencia ante un juez administrativo en materia de inmigración.

En la costa noroccidental del Pacífico, el Class Struggle Workers –Portland presentó una “Resolución para defender inmigrantes contra las deportaciones en masa y la violencia racista” que ha sido aprobada en seis sindicatos del área. También, el 19 de marzo, el Local 10 del Sindicato de Pintores hizo un llamado por la liberación de Mahmoud Khalil. Se ha formado un Comité Obrero para Defender Inmigrantes del área de Portland, que el 5 de abril llevó a cabo un taller de “Conozca tus derechos” en la sede local de la AFL-CIO.

En Nueva York, como se reportó en el número previo de *The Internationalist*, (nº 74, septiembre-diciembre de 2024), los Clubes Internacionalistas de la Universidad de la Ciudad de Nueva York (CUNY) pusieron en marcha el Comité para la Defensa de Inmigrantes en Hunter College. Los Clubes Internacionalistas convocaron protestas a finales del febrero que obligaron al DHS/ICE a cancelar una sesión de reclutamiento en un plantel de la CUNY (véase el artículo en la página 14).

En las escuelas públicas de Nueva York, partidarios de los Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) en el sindicato magisterial (la United Federation of Teachers [UFT]) han tomado la delantera en organizar Comités para Defender Inmigrantes en varias escuelas de Brooklyn, el Bronx y Manhattan.

Estos comités han trabajado junto con organizaciones de padres de familia para proveer información sobre los derechos de los inmigrantes, incluida la elaboración y distribución de cientos de (y en una escuela en Brooklyn, de más de un millar) “tarjetas rojas” que explican que tienen el derecho de no hablar con la policía migratoria. En una escuela, el comité realizó una manifes-

sigue a la página 35