

## MAGA Regime: Billionaire “Populists” on the Warpath Democrats Reap Bitter Fruit of Scorning the Working Class

# Trump 2: Gearing Up to Rule by Decree



Agence France-Presse

Trump’s secret army: federal agents without name tags, badges or any identifying insignia occupy the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, June 2020.

The 2024 U.S. election is a turning point in recent history, which even imperialist liberals and conservatives recognize as the end of an era. That is the era of U.S. global hegemony since World War II. The “American Century” is over. The victory of Donald Trump was against the Democratic Party of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris and the Republican “establishment,” the partner parties that alternated in office in a “Cold War consensus.” Their defeat reflects the long-term decline of the United

### Break with the Parties of Capital – For a Revolutionary Workers Party

States in the world capitalist economy, and now also in its failing military power. Around the planet, from Ukraine to Gaza, wars have broken out, U.S. allies have slipped the leash, proxy regimes are foundering, coups d’état occur even in U.S.-backed “democracies” – all reflecting the

fact that the world is no longer at Washington’s beck and call.

On the home front, in the United States but also in most other imperialist countries, the decay of capitalism has meant that living standards of the working class and much of the middle class are falling. Infla-

tion has eaten up incomes so that millions of people have difficulty paying for essentials: groceries, gas for their cars, rent and mortgages, electricity and heating bills. This is a main reason for the decline in votes for the Democrats in the November 5 vote, and also for the electoral appeal of Trump and his right-wing populist MAGA (“Make America Great Again”) Republicans, as well as far-right parties in Europe. The result could be, not a new era of un-

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## Republicans and Democrats Declare War on Immigrants

# Mobilize Working Class Power to Stop Deportations

A war is about to be unleashed on the working people of the United States by the government of the United States. Fueled by a hysteria whipped up against “illegal” immigrants, depicted as “the enemy within,” in reality it is an attack on the working class and the democratic rights of all. To carry out his threatened mass deportations, the incoming president, Republican Donald Trump, is planning to declare a national emergency. Constitutional rights, including to due process, will be “suspended” (that is, eliminated) for a huge sector of the population. This assault must be fought tooth and nail, in particular by unleashing the enormous power of the working class,

of which immigrants are a key component, that can bring the deportation machine to a screeching halt. And that requires taking on both of the partner parties of U.S. imperialism, Democrat as well as Republican.

In his October 27 Madison Square Garden rally in New York City, the xenophobic president-to-be Trump vowed to carry out “the largest deportation program in history.” He called undocumented immigrants “vicious and bloodthirsty criminals,” a description that would more accurately apply to the U.S. government itself, including outgoing president “Genocide Joe” Biden. The fascistic soon-to-be vice president JD Vance declared, “Our mes-

sage to illegal aliens [sic] is, pack your bags, because in four months you’re going home.” These vicious threats have caused panic among the more than 10 million residents of the United States who have toiled for years in some of the hardest and lowest-paid jobs, without whose labor whole sections of the U.S. economy would collapse.

Trump has said he plans to use the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 which would make undocumented immigrants “liable to be apprehended, restrained, secured.” They could be detained and deported without trial, or any legal redress whatsoever. Some liberals think that it can’t be done without

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# Mobilize Workers' Power to Free Anti-Austerity Protesters in Nigeria and Kenya

NOVEMBER 7 – The League for the Fourth International adds its voice to the demand for freedom for protesters under attack by the Nigerian government. Protests swept the country since early August against severe austerity measures by the government of President Bola Tinubu, including the elimination of a fuel subsidy which led to record increases in the price of food. Over 1,100 protesters were arrested and 21 killed by police on the first day (August 1) of the “End Bad Governance” demonstrations across Nigeria. In the next week, hundreds more of the largely youthful protesters were arrested and more killed for a death toll of 40 in ten days of unrest.

Some 124 of those arrested were kept in jail for over three months, at least 70 charged with ten felony accounts including treason, which carries the death penalty, for alleged participation in the demonstrations. Of those facing death, 29 were minors. Trials were scheduled to begin on November 8, but when the children were finally brought to court, they were visibly famished and several collapsed. In the face of the widespread outrage this caused, on November 5, the government released 119 of the arrestees and dropped charges against them, including all of the children. The fate of any others jailed in the August protest is not known at this time.

The government is using these draconian measures to head off worker unrest. The president of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) Joe Ajaero was arrested by the



The Nation (Lagos, Nigeria)

**In Nigerian court on November 2, 29 children arrested for protesting austerity, charged with treason and facing death penalty, were released after outcry.**

Department of State Services, an elite police unit, in early September at the airport on his way to Britain for a congress of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). After protests by the TUC and human rights groups, he was released. In June of this year, the NLC called a general strike which blacked out the electricity grid and shut down the nation's airports, but was “suspended” after one day.

Nigerian president Tinubu has also threatened military intervention against neighboring Niger to the north, where a

31 July 2023 coup d'état with wide popular support toppled the imperialist puppet regime. The new rulers then forced out French and U.S. expeditionary forces stationed there as part of “anti-terrorist” operations in the region. The Niger regime has since aligned with Russia, and in the Nigerian protests this past August, demonstrators in Kano, the country's second largest city with a population of 4 million, prominently waved Russian flags.

The Nigerian demonstrations were inspired by the thousands-strong “Gen Z” protests in Kenya in June against austerity measures by the government of President William Ruto. The government's finance bill raised taxes on fuel, bread, sanitary towels, diapers, telephone and internet services, tobacco, alcohol and other consumer products. When protesters stormed the Kenyan parliament on June 25, elite security forces unleashed murderous gunfire against them, reportedly killing 50. And while Ruto's police were gunning down anti-tax protesters at home, he dispatched 400 Kenyan police as mercenaries for the U.S. to clamp down on unrest in Haiti. For services rendered, he was rewarded with a formal White House dinner with Joe Biden.

The international working class must come to the defense of all victims of imperialist policies which bleed their countries dry while the rulers and capitalist elites ride in limousines and reside in palatial mansions. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, with 200 million people, has some of the world's largest oil and gas reserves, accounting for 95% of export earnings and 85% of government revenues. Despite these abundant resources, Nigeria's population is one of the poorest in the world. As in many African countries, control of the state ensures income from graft and bribery and is the source of successive coups and military rule.

Kenya's Ruto and Nigeria's Tinubu are imperialist toadies, notorious for their globetrotting flights to foreign countries, averaging two to three each, every month, while their populations are mired in poverty. Tinubu attended university in the U.S. and was an executive for global accounting firms Arthur Andersen and Deloitte before returning to Nigeria as an executive for Mobil Oil. He was elected last year and almost immediately abolished fuel subsidies (in a county awash in oil) and devalued the currency. Austerity and the worst hyperinflation in over 30 years pushed millions more into ever-deepening misery. The population erupted in anger.

Pillaging of Africa by the West goes back to the millions of Africans who were abducted and lost their lives during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This was followed by conquest and colonial rule. At the 1885 Berlin Conference, Africa was carved up by the major imperialist powers. Even decades after the post-WWII anti-colonial movements won nominal political independence for most African countries, their vast natural resources continue to be sucked out by imperialist powers. Only a pittance is retained in the neo-colonies, with a bribed elite of local capitalists pocketing most of the proceeds.

Imperialist financial control by the World Bank and IMF ensures crippling indebtedness. Most of the poorest billion people in the world are Africans, who overwhelmingly toil in horrendous conditions. Meanwhile, during the COVID-19 the drug monopolies withheld millions of doses of vaccine from African countries. Only the international working class can end imperialist exploitation and murder. We call upon the world's working and exploited peoples to defend the victims of capitalism with all our might – in Nigeria, Kenya and the world over – until international socialist revolution puts a final end to the rulers' barbarism.

**Drop all charges against Nigerian protesters! Down with the death penalty!**

**Hands off the Nigeria Labour Congress and all workers organizations!**

**U.S. mercenary Kenyan police out of Haiti!**

League for the Fourth International  
7 November 2024



Troops patrolling Kenyan capital Nairobi during anti-tax protests, June 18. A week later, security forces staged massacre, killing 50 protesters.



Odelyn Joseph / AP

Kenyan police patrolling Haiti capital of Port-au-Prince for U.S. imperialism.

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## The Internationalist

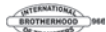
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## For Workers Action Against Imperialist and Zionist War

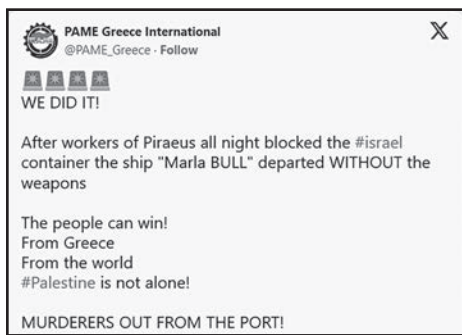
# Greek Workers Block Arms to Israel, Ukraine

Brandishing red flares and chanting “Free Palestine!” on the night of October 17, dozens of dockworkers in Piraeus, the largest port in Greece, blocked a container with 21 tons of ammunition from being loaded aboard the ship *Marla Bull*, bound for Haifa, Israel, then to be deployed in the genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza. The workers spray-painted the message “Murderers Out of the Port” on the container.

The action was carried out by the Union of Dock Workers, ENEDEP, which had voted at a general assembly the night before to stop the cargo. Speaking to the night shift workers at the port, ENEDEP president Markos Bekris said, “We will not permit the transport of war material that will continue the genocide of the Palestinian people.” He added, “We refuse to let the port of Piraeus be used as a war base,” and demanded an end to Greek participation in the war.

As news spread and more and more people flocked to the port, the dock workers and supporters stood behind the union banner proclaiming “Freedom for Palestine! NATO is a Killer.” The Union of Metal Workers of Attica and the Shipbuilding Industry, the Labor Centre of Piraeus and other organizations also participated in the action, as well as a representative of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU).

The shipment was in transit from North Macedonia, which joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 2020, and has since sought to be useful to the imperialist military alliance by supplying munitions to Zionist Israel and to Ukraine in NATO’s proxy war against Russia. The *Marla Bull* is owned by the Israeli ZIM lines and is flagged in the Pacific Ocean statelet of Marshall Islands, a nominally independent U.S. protectorate that provides a “flag of convenience” for major shippers.



The dock union ENEDEP is affiliated with PAME (the All Workers Militant Front), the labor federation associated with the Greek Communist Party (KKE), as are the other unions that participated in the blocking action. PAME immediately posted on X proclaiming, “WE DID IT!” and “WORKERS HAVE THE POWER!” Its statement said, “We will not stain our hands with the blood of the people,” and highlighted that the ship was forced to depart without the death cargo.

In an article hailing the action, the KKE daily newspaper *Rizospastis* (19-20 October) quoted PGFTU delegate Mohamed Iqnaibi, who told the workers that “from your struggles, your support and solidarity we draw strength and courage, until victory. We thank the Greek dock workers.” PAME posted videos of the

# Israel, Ukraine



**Greek port workers block containers with ammunition for Israel, October 15.** action at <https://youtu.be/GVdKOWMQ-xc> and <https://youtu.be/xQC75HgAxdQ>.

This is not the first time Greek dock workers have stopped a ship carrying war cargo to Israel. On June 14, as reports circulated that the *MSC Altair* loaded with military materiel for the Zionist war on Gaza was nearing the port, the ENEDEP warned: “Dockworkers in Piraeus declare that we will not in any way agree to unload the ship at any pier, from one end of the port to the other.... Do not dare to dock the ship at the port of Piraeus” (*Rizospastis*, 15 June).

Moreover, in 2022 and 2023, KKE-led workers stopped rail shipments of arms for Ukraine heading north from the Aegean Sea port of Alexandroupolis. Now they have done it again: on November 6, in the town of Tyrnavos in central Greece, demonstrators from the KKE and its youth group, KNE, blocked a convoy of trucks carrying ammunition and rockets from a nearby weapons depot to the Zelensky puppet regime in Ukraine.

As they blocked the caravan, forcing it to turn back, demonstrators chanted “No land and water for the murderers of the people,” “NATO out of Greece,” and they painted “NATO killers go home” on the trucks with red paint. The Communist Party mayor spoke to the demonstration, saying “The people of Tyrnavos, with their militant traditions, ... will not allow death cargos to pass through the city, will not allow the further involvement of the country in the imperialist slaughterhouse” (KKE, 8 November).

The Greek workers’ refusal to handle war materiel is an exemplary demonstration of what is crucially necessary – workers action – to stop the ongoing U.S./Israeli butchery of the Palestinian people. With almost 50,000 Gazans officially registered killed, and total deaths likely double that number; with 90% of the Gaza population (over 2,000,000 people) displaced and almost 100% facing hunger; with the Israeli military and fascist settlers rampaging on the West Bank, and now with over 3,500 people killed in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and more than one million displaced, all the talk of “ceasefires” or negotiations, by both imperialist governments and “peace movement”

organizers, are a fraud, to divert protest.

From the beginning of this barbaric onslaught, the League for the Fourth International and its national sections have called on the labor movement to defend the Palestinians and to defeat the genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza.<sup>1</sup> In our press and at every demonstration, we have called for workers action to stop the shipment of arms to Israel, as we have also done over the NATO imperialist proxy war against Russia over Ukraine. We publicized a PGFTU appeal for union action in a special May Day supplement in English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish.<sup>2</sup>

Already in October 2023, the PGFTU – Gaza called on labor internationally to take action to “refuse to build weapons for Israel,” “refuse to transport weapons to Israel,” “pass motions in their trade unions” to that effect, etc. In Africa, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the largest union on the continent, dedicated its May Day actions “to the struggle of the people of Palestine.” At its initiative, the International Transport

<sup>1</sup> See “Defend the Palestinians Against U.S./Israel Genocidal War on Gaza!” (10 October 2023) in *The Internationalist* No. 71, June-October 2023.

<sup>2</sup> See “May Day 2024: For International Workers Action Against the Genocidal U.S./Israel War on Gaza!” reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 72, January-May 2024.



**The Greek CP mobilized its supporters in the town of Tyrnavos (central Greece) on November 6 to stop a convoy of trucks transporting ammunition and missiles to Ukraine.**

Workers Federation (ITF) Africa regional conference called on “all ITF affiliates to support workers refusing to handle goods linked to Israel’s occupation.”

In the United States, thanks to the efforts of Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP), five unions in the Portland, Oregon area – IUPAT Local 10 (painters), Ironworkers Local 29 (structural steel), IBEW Local 48 (electrical workers), AFT Local 111 (educational workers) and Carpenters Local 503 – passed resolutions calling for labor action to stop the shipment of arms to Israel, for the immediate end to Israel’s bombing of Gaza, for Israel to get out of Gaza and the West Bank, and to end all arming of Israel now.<sup>3</sup>

The NUMSA May Day resolution highlighted the actions of the International Longshore and Warehouse union (ILWU) against Israeli ships in previous Zionist wars, as well as against the apartheid regime in South Africa. In keeping with their tradition, on May 1 ILWU Local 10 in the San Francisco Bay area, unanimously adopted a resolution “to refuse to handle military cargo to Israel,” and to “honor picket lines protesting the war on Gaza, as we have done repeatedly in the past.” However, this hard-hitting resolution was defeated by the union bureaucracy at the ILWU’s convention in June.

Meanwhile, on the eve of the brief (three-day) strike by the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) that shut down East and Gulf Coast U.S. ports at the beginning of October, ILA president Harold Dagget issued a disgusting statement declaring that “ILA, the ‘I LOVE AMERICA’ Union, will Maintain its Longstanding Pledge to Handle Military Cargo During Strike.”

In Europe, several unions have issued statements declaring their refusal to transport military cargo to Israel, including transport workers in Belgium and dock workers in Barcelona, Spain. However, these have largely remained paper resolutions without much actual implementation, leading the PGFTU-Gaza to complain, in its March 2024 appeal, of the “shocking silence and neglect by the international labor movement.” Worse still, in Germany the metal workers union, IG

<sup>3</sup> To read the resolutions on the web site of the CSWP, go to <https://csw-pdx.org/>.



“Murderers out of the port.”

Metall, has shamefully pushed production and export of arms to Israel and Ukraine.

The exceptions, noted by the Palestinian unions, are **Italy**, where combative “rank-and-file” unions have shut down the ports of Genova and Livorno, refusing to load military cargo for Israel, brought tens of thousands of workers into the streets and twice carrying out one-day national strikes (February 24 and June 25) in solidarity with the Palestinians. Mexican workers in the state of Puebla recorded a video saluting these actions by the militant Italian unions. The mainstream labor federations (CGIL/UIIL/CISL) have, however, done nothing.

And **Greece**, where as reported above, workers and leftists have blocked arms shipments to the NATO war against Russia over Ukraine and the genocidal U.S./Israel war on Gaza. The KKE has a pronounced social-patriotic outlook, vociferously defending Greek “sovereignty” (against Turkey over Aegean islands, for example) and refuses to defend Russia against the NATO proxy war over Ukraine, which amounts to a capitulation to imperialism. But unlike many opportunist leftists elsewhere in Europe, who adopt a hands-off “neutral” policy in order to tail along after the pro-Ukraine, pro-imperialist “peace movement,” the Greek Communist Party at least carries out *concrete actions* against the imperialists and Zionists.

The slaughter of Palestinians continues. What is to be done? As shown by the actions of militant unions and leftists in Italy and Greece, and the failure or outright refusal by “mainstream” unions and labor federations pretty much everywhere to act against this bloodbath, the fight for class-struggle workers action must be part of a broader battle against the pro-imperialist labor bureaucracy. The program of this “labor aristocracy,” as Lenin called it, is that of *class collaboration*, reflecting their ever-greater integration into the imperialist state. Against this, as the League for the Fourth International has underlined, militant *class struggle* requires the leadership of a revolutionary proletarian vanguard based on the Bolshevik program of Lenin and Trotsky.

Stopping a container of ammo to Israel, a convoy of war cargo to Ukraine, a one-day strike or port shutdown – these are first steps, but they are vital in pointing the direction that struggle must take. While calls on governments to declare an arms embargo on Israel (as well as calls for “boycott, divestment, sanctions”) aim at pressuring the imperialists, mostly in vain, class-struggle workers action advances on the road to bringing down the capitalist-imperialist system. As the imperialists hurtle toward a thermonuclear World War III, the struggle against their deadly rule – which produces endless war, poverty, racism and the other social blights besetting humanity – can only be won through international socialist revolution. ■

## Deportations...

*continued from page 1*

getting ties up in the courts. Nonsense. The U.S. used this law to intern Italian and German immigrants during both world wars, including Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. And then there were the 120,000 Japanese and U.S. citizens of Japanese heritage who were locked up in concentration camps during WWII by liberal Democratic president Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Trump has threatened to get rid of birth-right citizenship, established by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, won through the Civil War that ended slavery. He has threatened to get rid of Temporary Protected Status under which many Haitians have legal residence in the U.S. That these are not idle threats is shown by his appointment of Stephen Miller, another fascistic ideologue, as White House deputy chief of staff, who declared that the incoming president would “seal the border shut” with a series of executive orders on Day One of his presidency. Tom Homan, who grooves on channeling his inner J. Edgar Hoover, is slated to be Trump’s “border czar.” (Homan received an award from Democratic president Barack Obama, for his zealotry in deporting record numbers of immigrants, earning Obama the title of “deporter-in-chief.”)

Democrats are posing as defenders of immigrants even as they are finding excuses to go along with Trump’s mass deportation plans. California governor Gavin Newsom tearfully vowed that he would have immigrants’ backs, only to promise, later in the same interview, to deport “violent criminals.” This could include (as it has in the past) anyone listed in the Los Angeles Police Department’s notorious “gang members” roster, including anyone with tattoos or who looked cross-eyed at an LAPD officer. Trump has threatened to withhold federal funds for cities that uphold (very limited) “sanctuary” protections as supposedly being bastions of “migrant crime.” Already, New York City’s Democratic mayor Eric Adams (who has long called for getting rid of NYC’s “sanctuary” laws) is discussing how to cooperate with the deportation cops.

The same liberals who think that Trump will be tied up in the courts say that the U.S. doesn’t have enough detention space to hold the immigrants rounded up for deportation. Yet the incoming president is already making arrangements to rent local and state jail facilities, as was done also under Obama. Even now, 90% of detained immigrants are held in private prisons, a percentage that increased in the Biden administration. And the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which includes the U.S. Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) agencies, already has the largest police force of any entity in the U.S. Trump intends to use them as his own private Gestapo.

Meanwhile, spokesmen for the Trump “transition team” have let it be known that a DHS memo limiting I.C.E. detentions at “sensitive locations,” including schools, churches, hospitals and other sites, will be withdrawn as one of the first acts of the new administration (NBC News, 11 December).

The effect on the U.S. economy will be enormous if deportations are carried out on anything even remotely like the threatened scale. Virtually every meatpacking plant in the country depends on an immigrant workforce, many of them undocumented. Likewise for residential construction, dairy

production in the Northeast, taxi drivers in many cities, port truckers on both coasts, not to mention agricultural labor. To those who support Trump’s mass deportation program we say: forget your steaks and fresh fruits and vegetables, no more taxis for you, also no new houses, and a lot of those toys imported from abroad may be history as well. But beyond that, in big cities and small towns throughout the country immigrants are neighbors and friends, school mates and fellow workers, mainstays of local communities. The war that Donald Trump has declared, and with which Democrats are cooperating, will have a traumatic impact on the whole of society.

The burning issue today is what to do about this. While the Democrats have gone into a deep depression, many people (including some who voted for Trump) want to resist the mass deportations. The Internationalist Group and fraternally allied organizations have put forward calls to form committees to defend immigrants in schools and workplaces in different parts of the country.

In the Pacific Northwest, Class Struggle Workers – Portland has taken the initiative to put forward a “Resolution to Defend Immigrants Against Mass Deportations and Racist Violence” that has been passed by a number of area unions, including IUPAT (Painters) Local 10, Ironworkers Local 29, IATSE Local 28, AFT Local 111 and Carpenters Local 503 to “repudiate the vile attacks on immigrants” and “call for the rest of labor to mobilize in defense of our fellow workers,” or similar language. In 2016, Portland-area unions, including several construction unions, passed motions to defend immigrants, African Americans and others from racist attacks, and in June 2017 “Portland Labor Against Fascists” mobilized some 300 union members and supporters against a pro-Trump fascist provocation.

In NYC, the Internationalist Club at Hunter College, part of the City University of New York, revived a Committee to Defend Immigrants and Muslims that had been formed in 2017. A first meeting of the new Committee to Defend Immigrants in November drew over 70 participants, and has set up working groups, as well as assembling packets of materials including “know your rights” information and more.

In New York City public schools, supporters of Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) in the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) proposed the formation of union-led Committees to Defend Immigrants, which are now functioning in several schools. They are contacting parents groups and preparing to oppose any attempt by I.C.E. or other federal authorities to deport students and their families, and to come to the aid of those targeted by this racist war on immigrants. A motion has been prepared calling on the UFT to sponsor such committees through the NYC school system.

Then on December 16, a preliminary NYC-area Labor Conference to Defend Immigrants was held, bringing together activists and organizers from a range of unions and organizations, including AFSCME District

## Labor Conference to Defend Immigrants

Members of NYC-area unions and worker-organizing groups, together with other supporters of labor and immigrant rights, are invited to this January 9 conference following up on the recent labor gathering to defend immigrants. With the incoming administration vowing to carry out mass deportations, the truth is that all of us in the labor movement face an urgent situation. At the preliminary Labor Conference held on December 16, workers from transport, education, construction, building services and other sectors came together to discuss efforts underway for defending the rights of immigrants in our workplaces, schools and neighborhoods, and how this connects with the struggles, responsibilities and challenges of labor today.

Building on this, we invite labor movement members to attend the January 9 NYC Labor Conference to Defend Immigrants, to discuss and organize next steps.

The fact that immigrants are a vital part of the working class is shown every day here in New York City, where people born in other countries make up 45% of the workforce. In NYC, immigrant workers have been central to building the labor movement and making our city a union town. Solidarity is key to our power – and it’s never been more needed than now. Today it’s crucial to bring that power, and the principles of labor solidarity, to bear in defense of immigrant workers, their families, and the rights of us all.

Many workers and unionists know there’s no time to lose for labor movement organizing right now in defense of immigrant rights. In some workplaces, committees to defend immigrants have started. At the initiative of activists and organizers in several NYC-area unions and community groups, this second Labor Conference to Defend Immigrants will be held on January 9. Bring your ideas and concerns, and invite interested coworkers and friends to come to this event.

When: Thursday, January 9, 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Where: CUNY Graduate Center

365 Fifth Ave. at 34<sup>th</sup> St., NYC (room to be announced)

6 train to 33 St station or B/D/F/M/N/Q/R/W to 34 St-Herald Sq

For more information: Laborconference@gmail.com

Labor donated

### Flier for Second Labor Conference to Defend Immigrants on January 9 in New York City.

Council 37, Teamsters, Transport Workers Union, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Laundry Workers Center, UFT, CSEW, Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (Class Struggle International Workers), SEIU Local 32BJ, UAW/ALAA, Professional Staff Congress-CUNY and others. Reports about the current situation and ongoing labor-oriented work to defend immigrant rights were followed by a productive discussion including reports with particular interest in the formation of committees to defend immigrants in some NYC schools. The December 16 gathering unanimously called on its participants to build such committees in their own unions and workplaces, and a second “Labor Conference to Defend Immigrants” was scheduled for January 9.

The committees and labor conference have underlined the need to mobilize the population in mass to counter the mass deportations. Labor has the power to lead such a mobilization, and the class interest to go all-out to defend co-workers, their families and neighbors. Activists have pointed to the lessons of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, when pro-slavery forces were able to get Congress to authorize the capture of escaped slaves in the non-slave states of the North and Northwest. Furious protests filled the streets, and abolitionists in Syracuse, New York spirited a jailed former slave to freedom.

The biggest response was in Boston, in 1854, when a fugitive, 19-year-old Anthony Burns, was captured by a slave catcher. Masses of people came out to rescue Burns. “Over the following days, as a federal marshal was deciding Burns’ fate, federal troops – as well as local and state units mobilized under the 1850 legislation – transformed Boston into an occupied city. Outside the Boston courthouse, artillerymen mounted cannon and ran through the motions of firing on civilians” (“What the Fugitive Slave Act Can Teach Us About Sanctuary Cities,” *Time* magazine, 7 February 2017).

What is urgently needed today is an independent class mobilization against the mass deportations, to uphold the call for full citizenship rights for all, and to ensure that all those who have made it to the U.S. can stay here. Those fleeing persecution, war and the devastation caused by U.S. imperialism are be welcomed as working people must rise up to stop those who would expel them. ■

# Argentina: Drop the Charges Against Polo Obrero! Stop the Persecution of the Piquetero Movement!

BUENOS AIRES, September 23 – Ultra-rightist Argentine president Javier Milei’s “shock” program of brutal austerity, massive cutbacks, layoffs and wholesale privatizations<sup>1</sup> has gone together with criminalizing protest and escalating repression against the left and broader social movements. Shortly after his inauguration, on December 20 the new regime unleashed emboldened police against leftist protesters and issued an “anti-picket protocol,” under which anyone who participates in blocking streets, including by marching, would lose their social benefits.<sup>2</sup> Then on the day that Milei’s budget was approved by a pliant Senate, June 12, dozens of those protesting outside Congress were arrested. And on September 11, as demonstrators gathered to protest Milei’s veto of a bill raising retirement benefits, the police beat protesters, pepper-sprayed a 10-year-old girl and opened fire on the crowd with rubber bullets.

This campaign to “retake” the streets from protesters has been accompanied by a judicial offensive targeting above all organizations of the left. This included a number of threats to make protesters pay the cost of policing protests. The most prominent recent offensive has been an indictment of leaders of the Polo Obrero (Workers Pole), the mass unemployed organization of the Partido Obrero (PO – Workers Party). The “*piquetero*” organizations like Polo Obrero are a unique Argentine phenomenon going back to the 1990s as thousands of unemployed workers blocked highways. They mushroomed after the severe economic and political crisis of 2001, the *Argentinazo*, as the successive governments, both Peronist<sup>3</sup> and conservative, sought to buy social calm by funneling state and federal welfare benefits through the piquetero organizations, which then distributed them through clientelist networks.

As these social plans were regularly pared back, there have been frequent protests in Buenos Aires seeking to pressure the government and compete for limited resources. Getting the piqueteros off the streets and cutting away their base of support has been a major political goal of Milei’s government. This resulted in the

1 See “Argentina Elections: Mr. Chainsaw vs. Washington’s Favorite Peronist,” *The Internationalist*, November 2023.

2 See “Argentina: Smash the ‘Chainsaw’ Assault on Labor and the Unemployed, Fight for a Workers Government!” *The Internationalist* No. 72, January-May 2024.

3 Since the time of the mid-20th century governments of General Juan Domingo Perón, the Argentine workers movement has been dominated by the bourgeois populist Peronist movement, which has typically sought to defuse protest with welfare programs combined with repression by the capitalist state.

indictment on July 29 of 15 members of the Polo Obrero, headed by its main leader Eduardo Belliboni, and two of the dissident Peronist Barrios de Pie movement, all accused of fraudulent administration of government funds and supposed “extortion” of unemployed workers, allegedly requiring them to attend piquetero demonstrations. On September 24, there will be a court hearing on an appeal by Polo Obrero to present evidence refuting the charges presented by Judge Sebastián Casanello. In conjunction with this, the day before (September 23), international protests have been called in a number of countries.

The League for the Fourth International will be participating in the protests in Mexico, the United States (Oakland) and Italy, demanding: ***Drop the charges against the Polo Obrero! Stop the persecution of the piquetero movement!***

The case against the Polo Obrero, accused among other things of using funds to support Partido Obrero election campaigns, has been full of abuses. In a June 3 raid of the Polo Obrero civic association offices, the police disconnected security cameras so there would be no record of their marauding. The claims of requiring Polo Obrero members to attend demonstrations or lose their benefits are based on testimony of unnamed “repentant” members, but the testimony was not presented in the indictment so that it could be examined or refuted. The judge refused to allow PO to present evidence of 43 soup kitchens and unemployed centers it had set up in 18 provinces, or of the publications printed and equipment acquired (with government approval) with the funds. Meanwhile, the “Ministry of Human Capital” has been withholding food from the soup kitchens (*ollas populares*), keeping it locked in sheds until the sell-by date almost runs out.

The regime’s politically motivated attack made PO’s Belliboni a target from the beginning, as the leading voice of the sector of the piquetero movement which has most sharply protested against the government. At a July 30 press conference where he presented publications and bills for material purchased, refuting the charges against the Polo, Belliboni said “they are treating us as enemies.” In fact, he went on, “we are enemies of the government” of Milei which “is going to lead the country to a disaster as we have never seen before, even worse than in the 90s.”<sup>4</sup> Cases of corruption and clientelism can surely be found among the various piquetero organizations – which seek to pressure and make deals with local and

<sup>4</sup> *Página12*, 31 July.)

national politicians to obtain the money and goods to redistribute to supporters. But this is most apparent in the Peronist organizations allied to the Kirchnerist opposition,<sup>5</sup> which abide by the rules of the new government. They are not being raided or hauled into court.

The left and labor must solidly oppose all attempts to persecute and prosecute those who resist the depredations of the capitalist state, including the deeply corrupt judicial caste, both under the ultra-rightist Milei government and its Peronist and conservative predecessors. At the same time, it is necessary to draw a balance sheet of the “strategy” of acting as a recipient of government funds. Most of the Argentine left has, over the course of the last two decades, accepted a role of a conduit for welfare distribution and thus as an intermediary for the capitalist state. This integration is visible in the charges against Belliboni and the PO, accusing them of diverting funds from a state welfare program, Potenciar Trabajo (Promoting Work), which they were helping to administer. That role eventually opens the way to such charges, and subordinates the left and workers movement to the state of the class enemy. If the funds are cut off, it’s over.

While some left groups like the PTS (Partido de Trabajadores) have not engaged in direct administration of welfare plans, they are still highly dependent on government financing for their apparatus via Argentina’s election finance laws, as part of the reformist United Left and Workers Front (FIT-U) electoral lash-up.<sup>6</sup> (Hence the absurdity of charging Polo Obrero with channeling government money into the electoral campaigns of the Partido Obrero, also part of the FIT-U, which are already heavily financed by the state.) Moreover, when the Partido Obrero split in 2019 between the leadership (including Belliboni) and the old guard around Jorge Altamira, who went on to form Política Obrera, the current PO leaders went to the bourgeois courts to seize control of the organization in Tucumán. And while Altamira (rightly) called the “official”

<sup>5</sup> Followers of ex-president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, representing petty-bourgeois sectors of the Peronist movement.

<sup>6</sup> See “The Left Front in Argentina: A Reformist Electoral Cartel,” *The Internationalist* No. 55, Winter 2019.



Eduardo Belliboni (center), main leader of Polo Obrero and target of the judicial attack, in December 2023 march against anti-worker measures of the Milei government.

PO a “spare wheel of the state” for calling to keep the right-wing government of Julio Macri in office in 2019, hoping to keep the pesos flowing,<sup>7</sup> Polo Obrero got plenty of government funds when he was running the show.

The battle cry of proletarian revolutionaries, and all class-conscious workers, must be to keep the capitalist state out of our organizations. This can hardly be raised if we have been acting as a part of that state’s administration, using it to resolve internal disputes or being on the take for election campaigns. This “strategy” has paved the way for the bourgeois state to now launch an offensive against the organizations of the working class. As we fight to defend Polo Obrero and its members against this latest ruling-class attack, we must insist on the political independence of the workers movement from the bosses’ state. It will take independent, mass workers mobilization to tear even a shred of justice from the ruling class and its courts.

As we called to drop the trumped-up charges in the case of the judicial vendetta against PO militant César Arakaki and Daniel Ruiz of the PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party), facing several years in prison following the bloody police repression of December 2017 protests against the International Monetary Fund,<sup>8</sup> today the League for the Fourth International calls to:

***Drop all charges against Eduardo Belliboni, “Tango” Dotti, Jeremías Cantero and other leaders of Polo Obrero!***

***Stop the repression of the piquetero movement!***

***Hands off Polo Obrero and Partido Obrero!***

***For complete independence of the workers movement from the capitalist state!***

<sup>7</sup> “Nuestra política en el movimiento de desocupados”, *Política Obrera*, 25 November 2020.

<sup>8</sup> See “¡Anular los cargos contra César Arakaki y Daniel Ruiz!” *Revolución Permanente* No. 11, October-December 2021.



Donald Trump's October 27 Madison Square Garden rally was an orgy of racism, with one speaker calling Puerto Rico a "floating island of garbage" along with insults of Jews and black people.

## Trump...

*continued from page 1*

contested "conservative populist" rule, but rather a period of sharp social conflict ... and an accompanying rise in repression, increasingly using police-state measures to quell unrest.

Lots of people are plenty scared. The Democratic Party is gravely wounded. It lost a large part of the youth and many liberals over the genocidal U.S./Israel war on the Palestinian people in Gaza. The erosion of working-class support for the Democrats has reached the breaking point. In exit polls, among voters without a college degree (widely used as a stand-in for blue-collar workers), Trump had a 13-point lead over Harris. The biggest shift was among Latino voters, men and women, barely half of whom voted for the Democrats, rather than by a 2-to-1 margin in the past. The big issue for Republicans was immigration, as Trump whipped up hysteria against "illegal migrants." But, notably, while Trump got 3 million more votes than in 2020, Harris got 6 million less votes than Biden in 2020. The key fact electorally was that this time, millions of Democrats sat it out.

So rather than a sharp shift to the right of the U.S. population, the 2024 election was a vote – active and passive, from the right and the left – against the Democratic Party. To understand this, it is important to look at what did *not* happen. Trump's huge advantage among white voters without a college degree did *not* increase, and even fell slightly among men. Fox News reported that voters from union households voted for the Democrat Harris by 54%, down only slightly from Biden's 56% in 2020. (Trump's gains were mostly among non-union households, 82% of the electorate.) Most importantly, the vote of social discontent went to the Republicans, not to Democrats, who were seen as the party of disdainful elites responsible for escalating wars and architects of policies that have impoverished working people.

Similarly in Europe, social democrats and the major trade unions are hard-line backers of the U.S./NATO proxy war against Russia over Ukraine, with most of the "far left" in tow. These forces of the "center left" also support and enforce the

austerity policies, directly linked to the war drive, that are impoverishing the working class and much of the middle class. It is not surprising that in Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and elsewhere, right-wing populist, fascist (fascist-like) and outright fascist parties are harvesting protest votes, as are pro-Russian rightist parties in Eastern Europe (Moldova, Romania, Slovakia). From the U.S. to Europe, the responsibility for right-wing gains lies squarely at the feet of reformist left and labor misleaders who have long since thrown in their lot with imperialism. In line with this, they have worked to chain the working class to so-called moderate or "progressive" sectors of the ruling class.

In the United States, during the election campaign, the Internationalist Group warned:

"So in November, U.S. voters will have the 'choice' between immigrant-bashing fascistic Republicans preparing to introduce police state measures, and a Democratic ticket that smears pro-Palestinian protesters as 'antisemitic' and is careening toward a thermonuclear World War III. 'Pick your poison' is no answer. We say: no vote to any capitalist party or politicians."

So Democrat "Genocide Joe" Biden's vice president Kamala Harris lost and Republican wannabe "Dictator on Day One" Donald Trump won. His minions are now busily churning out executive orders to be issued on Inauguration Day of Trump 47,<sup>1</sup> January 20, or soon after. The white vans of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) police, the hated *migra*, are being readied to snatch immigrants off the streets – and even from schools, hospitals and churches, mostly off-limits in Trump 45. The demoralized Democrats are lying low or, like New York City's widely loathed mayor Eric Adams, eagerly kissing the ring of the "Don." Not looking good.

With the opportunist left impotent and the sellout labor bureaucracy discredited, it is urgently necessary to organize a hard-hitting *class opposition* to the new imperialist regime, and against all the capitalist parties and politicians. Rather than looking to isolated adventures, it should base itself on the mass

<sup>1</sup> In MAGA numerology, Trump 45 was the 45th president of the U.S., and Trump 47 is when they really let loose.

organizations of the working class, to undertake powerful *labor- and union-led action to defend immigrants and fight to stop the mass deportations* being prepared by Trump, using the deportation machine ramped up by his Democratic predecessors. It must defend all vulnerable populations, among them gay, lesbian and transgender people, who are on the hit list of Trump's racist, homophobic, misogynist reactionaries. And it should prepare for *workers defense groups* against the would-be fascist stormtroopers who consider themselves "Trump's Army." Despite his victory at the polls, the minority of hard-core Trumpers intent on participating in bigoted rampages can be defeated.

Trump frothed at the mouth during the election campaign, vowing to purge leftists from every institution. He is gearing up to go after pro-Palestinian protesters and leftist professors, threatening to cut off funds from cities, states and institutions that resist his desired *Gleichschaltung* (the Nazi purges) of universities and schools. In this situation, the last thing his intended targets should do is "duck and cover." This threat cannot be soft-soaped or slow-walked, it must be faced and mobilized against head-on.

Various pollsters, "moderate" liberals and some social-democratic "Bernie bros" counsel ditching defense of marginalized and oppressed sectors and "focusing on the bread-and-butter issues." Revolutionary Marxists call to unite the working class as the tribune of all the oppressed, on the basis of a revolutionary program to bring the workers to power. What's needed is to forge a *genuinely communist vanguard* with a revolutionary program to mobilize our power, the power of the working class at the head of all the oppressed, in defense of the democratic rights of all. *Break with all the capitalist parties – Build a class struggle workers party to fight for a workers government!*

### The Election Campaign: Democrats Write Off the Workers

In the Electoral College, the highly undemocratic body whose votes determine the victor in presidential elections, Kamala Harris lost by a substantial margin (226 votes, to 312 for Trump). But in the popular vote, the margin was far smaller, with Trump scoring 49.9% of the vote and Harris 48.4%.<sup>2</sup> In the elections to the House of Representatives, the Republican majority narrowed to three seats as the Democrats picked up a seat overall. The basic fact is that the U.S. is very sharply – and very evenly – divided, so that fairly small shifts in votes have big electoral consequences.

<sup>2</sup> The popular vote was 77 million for Trump vs. 75 million for Harris. See <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php>.

It's not like the 1972 elections, when Republican Richard Nixon got 61% of the vote against Democrat George McGovern's 38%, and Nixon took every state in the country except Massachusetts. Even so, three years later, Nixon was out, forced to resign over Watergate.

In the wake of the Democrats' defeat in 2024, once it sank in that Harris got millions less votes less than Biden in 2020, they started coming up with all sorts of excuses: "the Democrats' ground game was not very good," "Kamala didn't have as much time to campaign," "there wasn't enough money available." Nonsense. Kamala Harris' campaign raised a whopping \$2.9 billion for the election, spending \$700 million just on media, while Trump raised \$1.8 billion, including \$277 million from Elon Musk. The dollar "democracy" of U.S. capitalist rule has rarely been more flagrantly on display. The big money was with the Democrats, and the election was dubbed the "battle of the billionaires." So now what's a billionaire Democrat to do? Give a million bucks to Trump's inauguration, as Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg et al. have done.

Another theme was that Trump's win, and Harris' loss, was mainly due to sexism, racism and xenophobia: against having a black and Asian American woman president. Obviously, there is a lot of male chauvinism the world over, and the Trump campaign ran a hyper-macho campaign with gross sexual innuendo. It was dyed-in-the-wool misogynist. Behind all the attacks on "childless cat women" and "childless sociopaths" by Trump's running mate, JD Vance, behind the talk of "tradwives" who stay at home to take care of the kids, they want to force women to be baby factories. Yes, women tend to vote Democrat, but in 2024 a majority of married women, and about half



Vice President-elect JD Vance, a fascistic ideologue who wants to turn women into baby factories.

of women with young children, voted for Trump. So it's not just about sexism.

There was also plenty of nostalgia for "the way things used to be." At a Pennsylvania rally, Trump said, enough talk, let's listen to some good old tunes. So for half an hour he was humming along to "oldies but goldies." No doubt for some of those at the rally that might mean "Take me back to old Virginny." A lot of the white evangelical vote is interlaced with pining for the pre-Civil War South. The Southern Baptist Convention, after all, was founded to defend slavery and is still essentially segregated (as are many other churches), over 90% white, as well as anti-gay and anti-trans. But the songs at that rally included Elvis Presley, "Y.M.C.A." and others from the Sixties and Seventies. So, while "dog



**Republican National Convention in Milwaukee in July reverberated with xenophobia and calls for mass deportations of immigrants.**

whistle” appeals to racial prejudice are fundamental to Trump’s pitch, it’s not just about the racism.

Trump’s campaign reeked with xenophobia. Signs at the Republican convention called for “Mass Deportation Now” and “Stop Migrant Crime.” It reached grotesque proportions as Trump and Vance retailed the (luridly false) scare story of Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, supposedly eating pets. In 2016, Trump called Mexicans rapists and drug dealers, this time he labeled undocumented immigrants “monsters,” saying they are “poisoning the blood of our country.” Yet he got significant support from Latinos: up more than 20% in the Bronx and along the Mexican border. Partly, this reflects conservative religiosity among substantial parts of the Hispanic population, and also anger over the Democrats’ failure to deliver on immigration reform. But even many immigrants, Latino and others, bought the lie of “illegal” immigrants “stealing U.S. workers’ jobs.” So it isn’t just xenophobia either.

Even the culture war over pronouns reflects a more general alienation from the Democrats. For sure, the Republican campaign’s viciously effective ad, “Kamala is for they/them, Trump is for you,” expressed the hysteria whipped up in right-wing media against vulnerable gay, lesbian and transgender people, vituperating against “men playing in girls’ sports” as a mortal threat to civilization. It fed off the

vile campaign that in the last several years has produced more than 500 anti-trans, anti-gay bills in 41 states, scores of which have been enacted. But it also expressed a deep-seated sense that the Democratic Party no longer speaks for or represents working people ... which, of course, it never did. So it’s not just about transphobia and homophobia.

There has been a systematic misinterpretation of the election results in the liberal media reflecting the bourgeois identity politics pushed by the Democrats, to the exclusion of economic factors that drove much of the vote to Trump. Obama accused black men of not wanting to let women get ahead, but said nothing about how black male workers have been particularly hard hit by the economic crisis, laid off in far larger numbers during the COVID pandemic, and still “overworked, underpaid and overwhelmed.” The nostalgia also reflects economic difficulties, as many working people are hard put to pay for food, fuel and housing. Wages adjusted for inflation are still below what they were pre-pandemic.

Working people are hurting, and many see Democratic Party politicians as living in another world. Who could believe Biden’s fairy tale (in his 2024 State of the Union speech) that the U.S. economy was “the greatest comeback story never told”? The Democrats say inflation is falling, yet even by official statistics, food and beverage prices are up by 23% over 2020. The

price hikes of basic staples are even higher: eggs +160%, orange juice +90%, sugar +70%, coffee +60% since 2019.<sup>3</sup> Rents have skyrocketed, up at least 25% just about everywhere in the country. This is reflected in strike demands for cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) raises, from student workers at the University of California to Boeing aircraft workers in Seattle.

Various post-mortems on the elections attest to anger among working-class voters against the Democrats. The deindustrialization of the Rust Belt – the band from southeast Wisconsin to western Pennsylvania that is the historic heart of manufacturing in the U.S. – is key. According to an in-depth article, following Bill Clinton’s enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), from 1997 to 2020, more than 90,000 U.S. factories closed, over 70% of industries that could move did so, unionization was defeated by threats to move, the unionization rate in the private sector fell by half, and “Americans without college degrees have lost nearly \$2,000 in wages” largely due to “free trade” agreements, from NAFTA on.<sup>4</sup>

Democrats’ defeat: first was the millions of former Democratic voters who didn’t vote at all this time; second was a substantial shift to the right of Latino voters, and third, much larger, was the estrangement of large sections of the working class from the Democratic Party. The “New Deal coalition,” which since the 1930s bound workers to the Democrats through the union bureaucracy, keeping a lid on their struggles in exchange for a few crumbs from the capitalists’ table, has been broken. But although some have bought the MAGA fool’s gold, workers are not wedded to Trump and the Republicans either. We must step up the fight for a workers party and a workers government.

### Trump Government of Billionaires Prepares Police-State Measures

Since his first campaign and presidential administration, Donald Trump’s politics have been widely characterized as “conservative populism.” Of course, “populism” is a vague term, often used by “mainstream” bourgeois politicians to re-



Brandon Bell / Reuters

**Donald Trump and his “first buddy,” Elon Musk, who has endorsed fascist and fascist parties and politicians in Europe and pushes racist immigration bans. Musk, the richest man in the world, calls for government “efficiency” through mass firing of federal workers while he feeds off government contracts.**

Over time, many workers concluded that the Democratic Party had written them off, in favor of becoming the party of an educated elite. It was deliberate. In July 2016, during Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign, New York Democratic senator Chuck Schumer summed up the calculation: “For every blue-collar Democrat we lose in western Pennsylvania, we will pick up two moderate Republicans in the suburbs in Philadelphia, and you can repeat that in Ohio and Illinois and Wisconsin.” It didn’t turn out that way, not in 2016 or 2024, as the Democrats lost Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin to Trump, who along with his fascist vice-presidential running mate JD Vance cynically posed as defenders of American workers’ jobs.

Meanwhile, Harris’ campaign went all-out to hype support from a rogue’s gallery of Republican rightists, while seeking to compete with the Republicans on who was “tougher on immigration and the border,” “law and order” and jingoistic U.S. imperialist militarism.<sup>5</sup>

In 2024, there were three major changes in voting patterns that led to the

fer to “mavericks” who play to their electoral base instead of enforcing unpopular governmental dictates. More generally, “populism,” whether of “left” or right, refers to a stance of opposition to rule by elites. Trump certainly rails against “Democratic elites,” but attempts by right-wing ideologues like Laura Ingraham to portray this real estate grifter (and heir), who trades on his image as a multibillionaire, as a “man of the people” fall flat. And as he has assembled his incoming regime, the U.S. president-elect has enlisted some of the wealthiest of the capitalist elite in a *government of billionaires*.

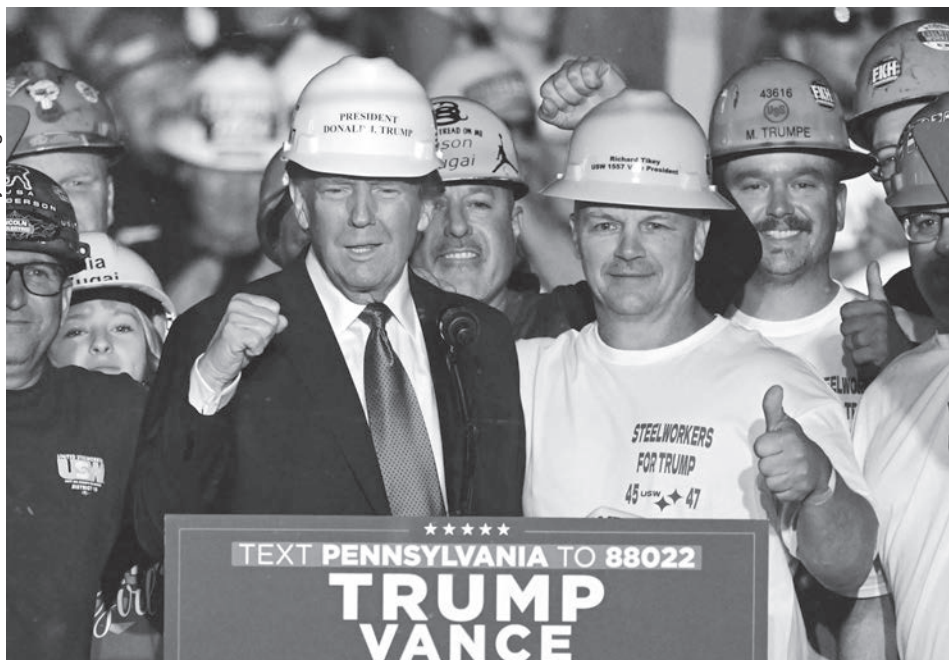
More specifically, it is a government of billionaire businessmen, like Trump himself. First up were the Wall Street billionaires Howard Lutnick as secretary of commerce and Scott Bessent as secretary of the treasury.<sup>6</sup> But that was only the beginning. According to a head count by ABC News (17 December 2024), 13 of the top posts in the Trump administration are set to go to billionaires, making this “the wealthiest presidential administration in modern history.” This list also includes the secretary of education, a slew of ambassadors and, of course, the co-chairs of the notional “Department of Government Efficiency,” or DOGE, Vivek Ramaswamy

<sup>6</sup> “Fiscal Populism To Be in Hands Of Billionaires,” *New York Times*, 26 November 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Figures for household goods and rent from the CBS Price Tracker, 20 December 2024.

<sup>4</sup> “How NAFTA Broke American Politics,” *New York Times Magazine*, 8 September 2024.

<sup>5</sup> See “DNC: Militarism on the March,” “The Only Choice: Build a Revolutionary Workers Party” and other articles in *Revolution* No. 21, September 2024.



**Republican Donald Trump with steel workers officer in LaTrobe, Pennsylvania in October. The 2024 elections marked the breaking point of the Democrats’ hold on labor.**

(net worth \$1 billion) and Elon Musk (net worth \$486 billion).

If Abraham Lincoln's proclamation of "government of the people, by the people, for the people" in his 1863 Gettysburg Address sums up the ideological claim of U.S. bourgeois "democracy," this government of, by and for billionaires would be its antithesis. (In reality, bourgeois "democracy" has always been a particular political form of the class dictatorship of capital.) Naturally, the presence of rich people atop government is nothing new. By the late 1800s, the U.S. Senate was known as a "millionaires' club." Since the election, Senator Bernie Sanders has been denouncing "oligarchical" rule. But this is no less true of the Democrats, whose presidential nomination he sought. The role of "the donor class" in pushing aside Biden, and pouring hundreds of millions into the Harris campaign, was blatant.

This drives home that, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*, the government is the "executive committee of the ruling class." And as Leon Trotsky added in a 1940 introduction to an abridgement of Marx's *Capital*, "Today monopolists are the strongest section of the ruling class" (*Marxism in Our Time*). The whole machinery of the state – centered, as Engels and Lenin put it, on the "special bodies of armed men" of the repressive apparatus (the military, police, courts and prisons) – serves to enforce the interests of the dominant class, in modern times the capitalists. What's (marginally) different in Trump's regime is that, not content to buy politicians to do their bidding, corporate titans are playing an openly direct and dominant role in government.

One reason for this shift is Trump's mantra of running government like a business. So why not bring in businessmen to run it? He didn't succeed in his first administration, and he won't this time either. The mega mogul Musk, who recently endorsed the fascistic Alternative for Germany (AfD) in upcoming elections there, proposes to slash \$2 trillion from the federal government budget, about a third of the total. Ramaswamy talks of cutting 75% of the 2 million federal workers. Both of these supposed "experts" in "government efficiency" are calling for eliminating civil service protections and for *mass firings*, to go along with the *mass deportations* of immigrants. The attempt to do this will produce chaos.

Of the non-billionaires among Trump's picks, the two that have caused most uproar are Matt Gaetz, nominated for attorney general (since dropped out), and Pete Hegseth for war secretary. Objections to them evaded fundamental political issues such as, in Gaetz's case, hobnobbing with Holocaust deniers and white supremacists and calling to "hunt down" anti-racist protesters; or with Hegseth, labeling Muslim communities an "existential threat" to the U.S. and crusading to turn the military into a "Christian weapon" (*Politico*). And then there is the nomination of anti-vaxxer wing nut Robert Kennedy Jr. to head Health and Human Services. Almost all of Trump's draft picks lack any semblance of competence or experience leading large organizations. They will all be at war with the departments they are supposed to lead.

This will produce satire and ridicule, and already has.<sup>7</sup> Trump's plans have

<sup>7</sup> See the article "Incoming" by Eliot Weinberger in the *London Review of Books* (26 December 2024).



**Democratic president Barack Obama for years funneled heavy weaponry to local police, who then used it to suppress anti-racist protesters against the August 2014 cop murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (above).**

been called a real-life rendition of Robert Coover's novel *The Public Burning*, a hallucinatory account of Richard Nixon, upset that the heroic Communists Julius and Ethel Rosenberg had become world-historic figures with "a terrific rating." Or there is Ishmael Reed's (now not-so) surreal first novel, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* (1967), about a used car salesman, Harry Sam (a cross between Nixon and "Doc" Duvalier in Haiti), who named a nation after himself, and even posed as a worker (Trump in a McDonald's apron handing out fries?). But the more sinister reality of MAGA Trump World is that to carry out their program would require a bonapartist "strong state."<sup>8</sup>

On the campaign trail, Donald Trump unleashed non-stop vitriolic rhetoric against anyone, or group, or movement he singled out as "evil." While Nixon kept an "enemies list," the next U.S. president wants to put those he hates behind bars. During his 2016 campaign against Hillary Clinton, Trump had crowds repeatedly chant "lock her up." Now he has said he intends to do just that. Would he really do

<sup>8</sup> Karl Marx in his 1852 essay "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon," coined the term *bonapartism*, a reference to the French emperor (and nephew of Napoléon Bonaparte) who governed France from 1848 to 1871. In the 1930s, Leon Trotsky generalized this term to regimes that, seeking to act as an arbiter between the different classes, sweep away "democratic" norms and base themselves nakedly on the military and police apparatus. See our Internationalist Group Class Reading, *Marxism vs. Bonapartism* (2004).



**In his first administration, Donald Trump held thousands of refugees in pens. Now his "border czar" Tom Homan wants to expand concentration camps for immigrants. Shown here: families being held at Border Guard station in McAllen, Texas in June 2019.**

will be used to go after actual leftists, who his "alt-right" acolytes see as "snowflakes" that will just melt away when they face the heat. Attacking socialists or communists or anarchists could be a warm-up act before going after top Democrats, or it could be a fallback in case Trump runs into obstacles in the courts. But in any case, his most virulent followers may take his rhetoric literally. Genuine Marxists and communists must take it seriously as well.

## **U.S. Imperialist Hegemony Down the Drain, World Capitalism Putrefying**

As Trump and his henchmen gear up to crack down, there is not likely to be any substantial resistance from liberals. Those who pinned their hopes on Kamala, or Biden, are in a deep depressive funk. The day after the election, a number of schools, including top private schools in New York, had "mental health days," so that students (and teachers) could "process" the results. Unlike in late 2016, when there were sizeable anti-Trump rallies (where Democratic hacks yelled at us to "go back to Russia"!), or in early 2017, with the huge women's marches in Washington, Los Angeles, New York City and elsewhere that brought over 2 million people into the streets to protest Trump, now Democrats are demoralized. *New York Times* columnist Michelle Goldberg wrote (6 November 2024) that it is time to mourn, later for organizing.<sup>10</sup>

Or not, because the Democratic Party today is non-viable. It won't turn to the left, as Bernie Sanders and some other liberals hope. During the campaign, Harris doubled down on the "moderate Republican" option, highlighting war hawks Liz Cheney and Dick Cheney (aka "The Prince of Darkness," mastermind of the disastrous Iraq war), giving Trump the opening to pose as a peacenik, warning of the danger of World War III. The Dems have burned their bridges with the working class. Perhaps they will try to rebrand as the party of the "moderate" center, which will leave the liberals and reformist left out in the cold. Even though the U.S. electoral system makes it near impossible to organize a large "third party," the bankruptcy of the Democrats is patent.

Many of the reasons for the Democratic fiasco were self-inflicted. The "ironclad" support for Zionist Israel in the genocidal slaughter in Gaza, the U.S./NATO imperialist proxy war against Russia sinking ever deeper into the Ukrainian mud, of course. But also inflation and the immigration uproar. The huge influx of 2 million immigrants, more than at any time in U.S. history, was the result of Biden's Cold War policy of encouraging immigration from Ukraine, Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. As for the escalating post-pandemic inflation, aside from profit-gouging by grocery monopolies, this was in good part a result of the "American Rescue Plan" which pumped \$1.9 trillion into the U.S. economy while the output of durable goods, for example, stagnated or fell.

The Biden administration basically consisted of diehard leftover Cold Warriors. Substitute the word "authoritarianism" (the Bidenites' term for Russia, China, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea, Hungary...) for "communism" and it's a continuation of the imperialist anti-Soviet drive, but at a time when the U.S. no lon-

<sup>10</sup> "This Is Who We Are Now," *New York Times*, 6 November 2024.





**Internationalist contingent in NYC May Day 2024 march called to break with Democrats and all capitalist parties, and to build a revolutionary workers party.**

ger has the economic and military strength to actually dominate the world. In his first press conference in 2021, Biden said that the world was at an “inflection point” in “a battle between the utility of democracy in the 21st century and autocracies.”<sup>11</sup> When Russian president Putin asked for security guarantees against encroachment by NATO, Biden refused. Instead, Washington rushed arms to Kiev, setting off the anti-Russia Ukraine war.

Biden kept repeating the triumphalist, arrogantly imperialist mantra of the U.S. as the “indispensable nation” even after the phony “New World Order” of supposed “liberal democracy,” that U.S. rulers proclaimed with the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, had run out of steam. Democrat Bill Clinton started the march of NATO into East Europe in 1999. Meanwhile, the push for militarized repression on the domestic front did not start with Trump’s rants against “Black Lives Matter” marches in 2020 (when Biden said “shoot ‘em in the leg”). From 2009 on, Democrat Barack Obama funneled Bearcat armored cars and heavy weaponry to local police, equipping them for civil war. And then the cops used that arsenal on antiracist protesters in Ferguson in 2014. What a surprise!

Behind all of this is the reality of decaying capitalism. Beefing up local police forces was in part a response to the fear of unrest due to the 2007-08 financial crash (when Obama bailed out Wall Street banks) and ensuing depression. That crisis, which impoverished whole sections of the middle class as foreclosures forced people from their homes into living in trailers, fueled the rise of the ultra-rightist “Tea Party” wing of the Republican Party, a precursor of the Trumpian MAGA. Today, a major factor in the rise of far-right parties internationally, as well as the uproar over immigration, is the gutting of social services (such as the National Health Service in Britain, or Social Security in Mexico) as public funds dry up.

Historically, the economic ruin and desperation of petty-bourgeois sectors brought on by capitalist economic crisis creates prime recruiting ground for fascist and fascist forces. The lowering of living standards and the increasingly precarious livelihoods of working people is the main factor pushing many into the arms of Trump. The Democrats don’t see (or care about) this as they see their future with the college-educated middle class whose

incomes have remained steady while the 63% majority without a bachelor’s degree run up credit card debt to make ends meet. No wonder that many with lower family incomes fumed at Biden’s plans to write off college debt, and voted for Trump.

The perpetual economic crisis facing working people is a byproduct of the hollowing out of the U.S.’ industrial base as companies moved production offshore under a “free trade” regime. With this “globalization,” the Democrats foresaw the United States as a kind of *rentier* power that would live off the profits derived from shifting manufacturing to lower-wage countries, to Mexico, or Brazil, or Indonesia, or Bangladesh, etc. That deindustrialization not only eliminated hundreds of thousands of relatively well-paying industrial jobs, it so weakened the industrial base of the U.S. that today it cannot produce the weapons to supply Ukraine. It has exactly one plant (in Scranton, Pennsylvania) producing 155-mm. shells that its Ukraine proxy regime needs for its artillery.

The U.S. plan to feed off the rest of the world parasitically requires a strong military, yet its military domination has sharply diminished. This was announced by its 2021 ignominious flight from Afghanistan after losing a 20-year war against poorly armed Islamic jihadists. It was underscored by Washington’s inability to defeat Russia in the U.S./NATO imperialist proxy war over Ukraine from 2022 on. It was also a factor in Hamas’ decision to launch a war against the Zionist occupiers in 2023, and in the U.S.’ Israeli ally and client state’s refusal to heed Biden’s pious entreaties in 2024 to use smaller (U.S.-supplied) bombs rather than larger (U.S.-supplied) bombs, for appearances’ sake, in their joint genocidal war on the Palestinians.

Then, the day after a U.S.-negotiated “ceasefire” in Lebanon, leaving the Israeli invaders in place, Turkey launched an offensive by its Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) Islamist clients in Syria – who over years received up to \$18 billion in “humanitarian” aid from the U.S. – that in one week toppled the al-Assad regime. So now the region is being carved up between a Greater Israel led by the fascist hardline Zionist Netanyahu and a Greater Turkey led by the would-be sultan Erdoğan with his ambitions to restore the “glory” of the Ottoman Empire. Contrary to illusions of a “multipolar” world, the intermediate powers of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) bloc played no role at all as the Middle East went up in flames.

## “Left” Electoralism and Coalitonism: A Dead End

In the 2024 U.S. elections, the left played a negligible role. The Green Party, a minor bourgeois party that exists mainly as a liberal pressure group on the Democrats, got 878,000 votes, while the reformist Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) got 171,000 votes, and rad-lib candidate Cornel West got 92,000. After a joint rally in Chicago the day before the Democratic convention there, on the eve of the November 5 election the three campaigns announced vote swap deals in several states. The votes for this de facto electoral alliance were 1,141,000, amounting to barely 7/10ths of 1 percent of the total of 155 million. Smaller groups that routinely run in elections like the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Equality Party got a little over 4,000 votes apiece.

The Spartacist League (SL), which three decades ago abandoned revolutionary Trotskyism, gave critical support to the PSL. In a November 3 statement, the SL called for “No Vote for West and Stein.” Twisting itself into a pretzel, the Spartacist statement admitted that the “opportunistic electoral deal” based on “shared values” was a “political coalition” that reflected how “the PSL has consistently obscured the necessity of class independence in their campaign,” but still called to vote PSL. Yet for Marxists, *class independence* is a precondition of giving critical support to any party or candidate. And giving electoral support to the PSL meant ditching the SL’s historic position of no support for any party of a class-collaborationist “popular front” alliance.

This was hardly surprising, as the latter-day and now born-again SL has junked almost every distinctive position of the Spartacist tendency when it uniquely upheld the Bolshevik program of Lenin and



**Party for Socialism and Liberation candidate Claudia de la Cruz formed a political alliance in the 2024 U.S. elections with Jill Stein, candidate of the Greens, a minor bourgeois party. Revolutionary Trotskyists call for no vote to any party in a “popular front” of class collaboration.**

Trotsky. Since September 2023 the “new” SL has proclaimed that the overriding task of the left for the last 30+ years has been to “break with liberalism.” So in the 2024 elections it called to vote for the PSL which it says is in “unholy alliance with the two liberal campaigns”?! Go figure. Now, in a post-election wrap-up, it declared that “Trump’s Comeback” marked “The Death of Liberalism” (24 November 2024). The logic of this position is that the victory of the racist, misogynist, xenophobic, narcissistic megalomaniac Trump is in some way a step forward.

As the gyrating SL now declares the need of a “rupture with both liberalism and right-wing populism,” this remains a totally idealist conception, floating above the material reality of the class struggle in the sphere of ideology. It bought the triumphalist line of Francis Fukuyama, the U.S. State Department ideologue who declared that the demise of the Soviet Union marked the victory of “liberal democracy” as the last ideology standing. Leaving aside that many of the U.S.’ allies in this “end of history” scenario are hardly liberal or democratic, and contrary to the SL’s embrace of the concept of the “pope” of social-democratic pseudo-Marxism Karl Kautsky, of an “ultra-imperialism” dominated by a single power, that whole construct just collapsed. ■

All of these developments – the economic and military weakening of U.S. imperialism, the economic ruin experienced by sectors of the middle class and working class in the U.S., the growth of far-right, fascist and fascist parties internationally, the crisis over mass immigration – as well as other phenomena such as the horrendous death toll of the COVID pandemic – are a reflection of the increasing decay of capitalism. And they are exacerbated by the absence of any militant opposition from the left and labor movements, which are beholden, body and soul, to the imperialist rulers. Whether it is leftists in Europe supporting Ukraine (and thus NATO) or unions in the U.S. going under without a fight, this opens the door to the reactionary right.

### Transitional Program for International Socialist Revolution

But what will unchallenged U.S. imperialist hegemony be replaced by? In the U.S., Trump and his mafia of “made men” (and women), wholly dependent on the whims of the Don, will be at odds with most of the government institutions they

now head. In spite of the Democrats’ demise (and depression), the new regime will be pushing policies that in many cases are opposed by half the country, and in some instances (over abortion, for example) by close to two-thirds of the U.S. population. The spectre of I.C.E. vans prowling the streets looking for immigrants to snatch will be deeply upsetting, and mass deportations on the scale he has proclaimed would cause the collapse of a number of industries, starting with the food supply. This is a recipe for one hell of a mess.

Internationally, the European imperialists are in no position to replace the U.S. in waging war on Russia. “Conservative populists” and fascists cannot produce stable rule on either side of the Atlantic. Much of Latin America may react against the aggressive “American” expansionism of the new “Trump Doctrine.” The Middle East is already exploding while the BRICS bloc is a cipher, internally divided and impotent. Trump and his imitators in Europe, Asia and Latin America may want to impose the police-state rule of a bonapartist “strong state,” but this cannot

<sup>11</sup> Quotes in David Sanger, *New Cold Wars* (2024).

be easily accomplished. As dying U.S. imperialism lashes out, the stage is set for chaos across the globe ... and for sharp class struggle.

The Biden administration, as we warned, has been hurtling toward a nuclear World War III targeting Russia and the bureaucratically deformed Chinese workers state, constantly escalating in Ukraine, where the League for the Fourth International calls to defend Russia and defeat the U.S./NATO imperialist proxy war. While Trump is reputed to be less of a war hawk against Putin's Russia, and has wined and dined China's president Xi Jinping, his foreign policy nominees are virulent anti-communist Cold Warriors. Their first targets could well be Venezuela, and the Cuban deformed workers state, both in precarious economic condition due to draconian U.S. sanctions. As over Ukraine, the LFI defends the targets of imperialist attack. And we call for an Arab/Hebrew Palestinian workers state in a socialist federation of the Near East.

The world situation of extreme danger cries out for *proletarian revolutionary internationalist leadership*. In such circumstances *transitional demands* come to the fore, "to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution" (Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program*). Thus in many industries, the fight for a *shorter workweek with no loss in pay* is posed, but also a struggle for *workers control of production*, starting with *union safety committees*. Against fascist gangs and racist attacks, *workers defense* is needed, for example to protect immigrant communities and abortion clinics. Against mass deportations, it is crucial to set up *committees to defend immigrants* in workplaces and schools as well as *rapid response teams* in the community.

The Internationalist Group calls for *workers and immigrants action to stop deportations*, for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*, and the right of everyone residing in the U.S. to stay here. Such demands, as well as for the *right to free abortion on demand* and for *free quality public education and health care for all*, are simply for democratic rights. Yet under conditions of decaying capitalism, when such rights are constantly being slashed, they can only be fully realized through *socialist revolution*. Building a *revolutionary workers party* is key not only to leading these struggles to their conclusion but also in today's battles where, for example, the fight for simple trade-union demands cannot be waged without breaking through the capitalist straitjacket of no-strike clauses or bans and the whole panoply of anti-labor laws.

The leadership we need must be a multiethnic, proletarian vanguard based on the Bolshevik program of Lenin and Trotsky. Donald Trump with his ravings may be one of a kind, but he's not the first would-be dictator the world has faced. Drawing on the lessons of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, Trotsky and the Trotskyists in the 1930s uniquely put forward a revolutionary program, against the betrayals of social-democratic and Stalinist misleaders, for united workers action to stop Hitler's Nazi fascists. Today as then, the program of intransigent class struggle is key to mobilizing the power of the working class to defeat the mortal threats, amid many unknowns, facing humanity. ■

## The Man Who Would Be "Dictator on Day One" Says Hitler Did Good Things

# Is Donald Trump a Fascist?

*A lot of people in the United States – and not only – are very afraid of what a second term for Donald Trump as president will mean. That includes many of those who have been targeted by his vitriolic rants and threats, including immigrants facing mass deportation, leftists, women's rights and black activists, transgender people, trade unionists ... the list goes on. At the same time, many want to fight the looming catastrophe. In order to do so effectively, it's important to have a clear understanding of the nature of the enemy we are confronting. The focus has been on the individual who will soon be in the White House, but that should not lose sight of the military and police apparatus, the most powerful in the world, of which he will be commander-in-chief.*

There is a lot of talk about Donald Trump as a "fascist." Kamala Harris toyed with it for a bit until her Democratic Party handlers decided it would scare suburban housewives, so she and her vice-presidential sidekick, Minnesota governor Tim Walz, settled on calling Trump "weird." Then, as the campaign was drawing to a close, General Mark Kelly, who was Trump's chief of staff for a year and a half, was so worried about a second Trump presidency that he went public. Asked if Trump is a fascist, he replied: "Certainly the former president is in the far-right area, he's certainly an authoritarian, admires people who are dictators – he has said that. So he certainly falls into the general definition of fascist, for sure" (*New York Times*, 24 October 2024).

Kelly said in a three-part on-the-record interview that what led him to speak out was the ex-president's threats of "using the military on – to go after – American citizens." He also found disturbing that Trump repeatedly said, "You know, Hitler did some good things, too," even after the general responded that "everything he [Hitler] did was in support of his racist, fascist life." The former and now future president, who at first talked of "my generals," didn't accept that top officials and military officers are sworn to defend the Constitution, instead of him personally, Kelly said. The next day, 13 former Trump administration officials issued an open letter backing the general and warning of Trump's "desire for absolute, unchecked power."

Kelly's definition of fascism, which he said he found on the internet, is "a far-right authoritarian, ultranationalist political ideology and movement characterized by a dictatorial leader, centralized autocracy, militarism, forcible suppression of opposition, belief in a natural social hierarchy." That sums up Trump's outlook, he remarked. Many liberals also call the president-elect a fascist, as do a number of left groups, notably reformists like the Communist Party USA, the RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party, or revcom. us) and sundry other Maoists and Stalinists. By this they mean "very repressive" or "very reactionary." They also referred to the military junta of General Augusto Pinochet (which seized power in Chile in a



Brandon Bell / Getty Images

**Donald Trump salutes jailed January 6 riot leaders singing U.S. national anthem, November 2023 in Houston, Texas.**

bloody coup in 1973) as fascist, for example, along with other military dictatorships around Latin America.

This loose use of the term mischaracterizes the fascist movement in Italy, Germany and elsewhere in the 1920s and '30s, and fascist groups today. It also builds illusions in bourgeois "democracy," which can be plenty repressive. At the same time, it misses what Trump and his MAGA movement are about. Donald Trump is a would-be strongman, aspiring to command a one-man regime that intimidates or crushes any potential opponents. He wants to be the CEO of America, Inc., with no bothersome board of directors, who rules by bellowing "you're fired!" The FBI, Justice Department, Department of Homeland Security, armed forces and police are to be his personal army. His talk of being a "dictator on Day 1" tells you all about Day 2, and after.

The fascist movements in post-World War I Europe were mobilizations of masses of despairing petty-bourgeois (middle-class) layers, ruined by the capitalist economic crisis, as well as despairing workers and unemployed, "a plebeian movement in origin, directed and financed by big capitalist powers" in order to obliterate and atomize a substantial radicalized proletariat, as Leon Trotsky explained at the time.<sup>1</sup> They could coexist, at first, with parliamentary norms – both Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany came to power "legally." But the paramilitary fascists were the battering ram of finance and industrial capital to head off and behead a looming potential workers revolution. Those conditions do not presently exist in the U.S. or Europe today, but there are nonetheless sizeable, and dangerous, fascist movements or parties, and politicians.

As Trotsky underlined in a 1934 essay on "Bonapartism and Fascism," the need for "a correct theoretical orientation is most strikingly manifested in a period of acute social conflict, of rapid political shifts" when "all sorts of *transitional, intermediate* situations and combinations

arise." In particular, he noted, that in the lead-up to the 1933 Nazi seizure of power in Germany, as was also the case with the installation of fascist rule in Italy in the 1920s, there was a "transitional governmental form" that the Bolshevik-Leninists (i.e., the Trotskyists) called *bonapartism*. A bonapartist regime, he wrote, would be "a military-police dictatorship ... barely concealed with the decorations of parliamentarism."<sup>2</sup> That is what Trump would like to see, and that is the looming danger we face today.

For liberals and reformist pseudo-socialists and -communists, labeling Trump and his MAGA movement fascist is in the service of building an "anti-fascist united front," that is to say, a "popular front" of class collaboration, chaining the left, labor and oppressed sectors of society to the supposed "democratic" sections of the capitalist rulers. As in the 1930s, the popular front is a ticket to defeat, because no section of the ruling class will go against the fascists if they perceive their class rule to be threatened. Fascism and the popular front, Trotsky wrote, are the last recourses of the bourgeoisie to stave off revolution. Trotsky's call was for a "workers united front" to combat fascism with its own class forces on the road to the working class taking power.

There are actual fascist action groups in the U.S., which have been getting ready for "Trump 47." In the 2020 presidential campaign, Trump told the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by," which they did, and in the January 6 (2021) storming of the U.S. Capitol, this gang of provocateurs was in the front ranks. Several Proud Boys were sentenced to multi-year prison terms for their role there. (Trump has vowed to pardon all those arrested for January 6.) They have not gone away. This past January 6 [2024], the news agency Reuters reported that "Dozens of Proud Boys – some in body armor and helmets" made a show of force at the statehouse in Colum-

<sup>2</sup> Leon Trotsky, "Bonapartism and Fascism" (July 1934), available in the Internationalist Group Class Readings pamphlet, *Marxism vs. Bonapartism* (September 2004).



**Fascist Proud Boys in the front ranks of pro-Trump rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol on 6 January 2021. What is key is fascists' connection to state repressive agencies.**

bus, Ohio.”<sup>3</sup> They were also out in force at Trump campaign rallies in Wilmington, NC, and Wildwood, NJ.

The fascist Proud Boys, who see themselves as Trump’s army, reportedly have 154 local decentralized chapters in 48 states. The Oath Keepers, a second far-right group prominent in the January 6 riot, claim over 500,000 followers on Facebook.<sup>4</sup> They and the III Percenters, a far-right militia grouping that also had several members indicted for the January 6 riot, showed up at anti-racist protests in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014 and in Minneapolis in 2020, trying to spark a civil war. Along with the far-right “sovereign sheriffs” movement, they are all itching to go after protesters. And local police and sheriffs’ departments are shot through with people who would love to use their power against leftists, immigrants and anyone designated an enemy by Trump.

There are also quite a few local and regional fascist squads.<sup>5</sup> But the main danger is not from these relatively marginal groups themselves, *but from their ties to the state*. A word from Trump could set this “army” in motion, *with the backing of “law enforcement” agencies*. In Nassau County on Long Island, NY, local officials have been forming an armed militia of “provisional special deputies,” for “emergencies.”<sup>6</sup> And far-right militias are

<sup>3</sup> “The Proud Boys are back: How the far-right group is rebuilding to rally behind Trump,” Reuters, 3 June 2024.

<sup>4</sup> “Is Trump Building an Army of Modern Blackshirts?” *The Nation*, 5 September 2024.

<sup>5</sup> After the vicious racist smear about Haitians in Springfield, Ohio was picked up by Trump and Vance, in mid-August a dozen members of a neo-Nazi outfit, Blood Tribe (which includes a number of former Proud Boys), marched in uniform with swastikas through the city. Earlier, in February, they had staged a provocation in Nashville, Tennessee, as did another fascist group, Patriot Front, in July. In New England, yet another Nazi group, National Socialist Club 131 (an alphanumeric code for Anti-Communist Action), has repeatedly held homophobic and racist events in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. On the West Coast there was the fascist Patriot Prayer outfit in the Portland, Oregon area. And the Boogaloo Bois, who in 2020 sought to bomb a Minneapolis courthouse, are still around.

<sup>6</sup> “A New York county with one of the nation’s largest police forces is deputizing armed residents,” AP, 11 June 2024. Nassau County already has a larger police force than Baltimore, Boston, San Francisco and other big cities.

pushing to become enforcers of Trump’s mass deportations.<sup>7</sup> The interpenetration of fascists, ultra-rightist militias and police is already pretty far advanced. At least 52 of those arrested over the January 6 riot were military, police or government personnel, and over 80 of the 700 indicted had military backgrounds.<sup>8</sup>

The various fascist and ultra-rightist action groups have been compared to the Italian *squadristi*, gangs of thugs in the early 1920s that attacked leftists and strikers, and became Mussolini’s fascist militia, as well as to Hitler’s SA (Storm Troopers) militia. There are some similarities, but the Italian Blackshirts and German Brownshirts were part of a mass fascist movement, unlike in the U.S. today. The ragtag outfits in the U.S. sporting Hawaiian shirts and military fatigues, or fake Nazi get-ups, are almost a caricature of those paramilitary units – but still deadly dangerous. And as with the interwar fascists, their strength derives from backing or tolerance by the bourgeois state, which holds them in reserve.

In Europe, where there is more of a history of leftist and rightist mass mobilization, there is a growth of fascist and fascist parties within the shaky framework

<sup>7</sup> “Far-Right Militias Seek Role in Trump Deportation Plan,” *New York Times*, 12 December 2024.

<sup>8</sup> ABC News, 23 April 2021; CBS News, 15 December 2021.



**Left) Italian fascist squadristi (known as Blackshirts) with Mussolini in 1922 March on Rome. Right: German SA stormtroopers (known as Brownshirts) with Hitler in Nuremburg in 1928. These were paramilitary action squads, part of a mass movement, for the purpose of smashing the left and radicalized workers movement**

of bourgeois “democracy.” Those who would minimize the danger call these parties “conservative populists.” They say “where are the concentration camps?” Oh sure, for immigrants, of course, but they don’t count for the pseudo-“democratic” bourgeois and petty-bourgeois (partly because they can’t vote). The outright fascist parties (Marine Le Pen’s National Rally in France, Giorgia Meloni’s Fratelli d’Italia in Italy, the Austrian Freedom Party, or FPÖ) have “security” squads, some deceptively labeled, of course. Fascistic parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD) have connections to fascist action squads, but generally at arm’s length.<sup>9</sup>

In the United States, the Republican Party remains a conservative bourgeois parliamentary party, although by now it has been thoroughly subordinated to the pseudo-populist politics of Trump’s MAGA movement. But here as well, there is a fascistic (or fascist-like) wing of the Republicans emerging, including the likes of Marjorie Taylor Greene in Georgia, Lauren Boebert in Colorado, Andy Biggs, Paul Gossar and Kerry Lake in Arizona, and others, who have ties to outright fascists and far-right militias, and several of whom were implicated in the January 6 fascist-led riot. Plus, there is now a soon-to-be vice president of the United States who is a certified fascist ideologue, and a president who spouts fascist language.

The ruling class does not at present need a militarized mass movement as a battering ram to smash a restive and potentially radicalized working class. So far, the sellout union bureaucracy has dutifully performed its task as “labor lieutenants of capital” of preventing workers’ struggles from breaking out, or keeping them in line when it’s deemed necessary to let workers blow off some steam. Trump’s regime of billionaire buddies is pushing up against any democratic restraints that would hinder its drive to privatize and milk the federal

<sup>9</sup> There is an actual fascist section of the AfD, “Der Flügel” (the wing), led by Björn Höcke, which represents about one-fifth of the party membership.



government to the extent possible to drive up the profit rate as decaying capitalism continues to shed any semblance of social welfare for those it exploits and oppresses.

Could this new “corporate government” writ large evolve into a full-fledged authoritarian “strong state”? Yes, it could, but it would be a wrenching process, not a smooth sliding over. To get there, it would have to undertake such drastic measures as would almost certainly provoke opposition and chaos. A president who demands personal loyalty of “his” generals, who told a Christian “Believers’ Summit” in July, hosted by the fascistic Turning Point USA outfit, that they “won’t have to vote again” in four years, who views the Supreme Court as his flunkies and who has repeatedly threatened to impose martial law against protests might demand the Constitution be amended to suit him ... or just overrule it by declaring a national emergency.

Yet the defeated and demoralized Democrats are not about to lead a struggle to defend democratic rights. Recall that their strategy to stop Trump in 2020 hinged on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and that to stop him in ’24 they tried to mobilize the courts, another pillar of the state repressive apparatus. They promoted the notorious CIA and FBI, together with the Cheneys and a raft of other infamous war criminals, spymasters and “dirty tricks” specialists in repression, as champions of “democracy.” Moreover, the Democrats have also imposed police-state measures such as Trump is threatening. Round up immigrants and put them in concentration camps? Liberal Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt did that to Japanese Americans in World War II. Use the Insurrection Act of 1807 against leftist and anti-racist protesters? The Biden administration used it against racist rightist rioters in the non-insurrection of January 6, a precedent that Trump might well invoke.

The fight against a lurch toward authoritarian, bonapartist rule (see “Trump 2: Gearing Up to Rule by Decree”) must be a *class struggle*, not a defense of threadbare bourgeois “democracy,” which (as we have just seen) is but a screen to mask a “battle of the billionaires.” Yes, some liberal Democrats committed to defending democratic rights will doubtless join in opposing Trump’s repression, but there must be *no political bloc with the Democratic Party*, its politicians or any other capitalist party. The huge demonstrations in Germany a year ago against the fascist AfD were *popular fronts* with the governing Social Democrats, Greens and Free Democrats, who are waging an imperialist proxy war against Russia over Ukraine and carrying out deportations “in a grand style.”

Can it happen here?<sup>10</sup> Yes. But the struggle to stop mass deportations of immigrants, to defend leftists, gay, lesbian and transgender people against Trumpian repression and rightist, racist and homophobic attacks, to repulse the fascist gangs and send them scurrying, and to resist an increasingly bonapartist regime ruling through police-state measures, must rest on the independent mobilization of the working class and oppressed people against all the exploiters and oppressors. And that requires a revolutionary workers party to take the fight forward to a workers government, here and throughout the world. ■

<sup>10</sup> In 1935, in the wake of Hitler’s seizure of power in Germany, Sinclair Lewis wrote a novel with the ironic title, *It Can’t Happen Here*, about the rise of an authoritarian government in the U.S. that morphed into a dictatorship.

Claims of Anti-Jewish “Pogrom” Are a Lie

# Operation Amsterdam: Zionist Soccer Hooligans Stage Racist Rampage

On Friday, November 8, “mainstream” media around the world exploded with a story of supposed “antisemitic attacks” on Israeli football fans in Amsterdam, Netherlands: “Violent Attacks in Amsterdam Tied to Antisemitism,” (*New York Times*), “Antisemitic Attacks in Amsterdam Prompt Tight Security at Jewish Sites” (*Wall Street Journal*), “Israeli football fans attacked by pro-Palestine mob in Amsterdam” (*Telegraph* [London]), and in the German tabloid *Bild*, “‘The Hunt for Jews Has Broken Out Again.’” The Israeli press labeled the incidents a pogrom, recalling murderous attacks on Jews in tsarist Russia and Nazi Germany: “The Mossad warned of a threat in the Netherlands ahead of the pogrom” (*Jerusalem Post*), “Israel decries ‘pogrom’ in Amsterdam as soccer fans come under attack by rioters” (*Times of Israel*).

The showpiece supposedly illustrating this was a video that indeed showed a mob hunting and attacking defenseless individuals. But what the video actually showed was the exact opposite of what has been claimed: the attackers were actually rioting Israeli “fans” of the Maccabi Tel Aviv soccer team, chanting anti-Palestine slogans, charging at and beating Arab local residents. There were no antisemitic mobs attacking Jews on November 7-8, there was no antisemitic pogrom. What there



Screenshot from video of “fans” of Israel soccer team Maccabis charging across downtown street in Amsterdam, Netherlands to beat someone in the early hours of November 8. The imperialist press lyingly used this image as supposed proof of an antisemitic mob attacking Israelis..

was, was an organized rampaging mob of Zionist hooligans marauding through central Amsterdam, tearing down Palestinian flags, spewing out racist filth, brandishing metal rods and makeshift clubs, throwing rocks at passers-by and buildings, threatening and assaulting Amsterdamers. And throughout this, they were escorted and protected by the police, who even led them to buildings with Palestinian flags.

This whole operation was a set-up from the beginning, taking the war on Gaza to Europe in order to provoke opposition from defenders of the Palestinians, which could then be portrayed as antisemitic. It was reported beforehand that Mossad (Israeli intelligence agency) agents would be accompanying the Maccabi Tel Aviv team and its fans to Amsterdam for a soccer match with a local Dutch team, Ajax, even though Dutch authorities found no specific threats.<sup>1</sup> Once the “Maccabi Fanatics” (the “fans” own term) – 3,000 of them – arrived in Amsterdam they immediately began congregating in huge groups of hundreds roaming around the city center. Many were reservists in the Israeli military (IDF), clearly in good shape physically, some no doubt recently back from participating in the genocidal war on the Palestinian people of Gaza.

On Wednesday, **November 6**, the Maccabi hooligans rallied at the city’s Dam Square, where a video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoqxanIK6OU>) captures a large crowd jumping up and down singing, and assaulting a person with a bicycle who got into an argument with them. The cops detain the victim while the hooligans chant “Olé, olé. Let the IDF win. We will f\*\*k the Arabs.” That evening, the

<sup>1</sup> In the Amsterdam daily, *De Telegraaf*, on 5 November 2024 and the *Jerusalem Post* of the same date.

Maccabis tear down and burn a Palestinian flag, throwing rocks at windows and chanting “F\*\*k you, Palestine.” Residents reported that the thugs tried to enter the building where the flag was hung, saying, “We’re going to kill you and we will come back.”<sup>2</sup> An Arab taxi driver was assaulted (as confirmed by the police), which led drivers (many of them Arabs) to mobilize in protest against hundreds of Maccabi supporters massed at a casino, but the cops blocked them.

The next day, **Thursday, November 7**, the authorities banned any protests near the soccer stadium, corralling a pro-Palestinian demonstration at the Amsterdam’s Anton de Kom Square, some blocks away. (Anton de Kom was an anti-colonialist communist from the former Dutch colony of Surinam and fighter in the Dutch resistance movement who died in a Nazi concentration camp.) The media later announced that 62 people were arrested that day, all detained when the pro-Palestinian protesters tried to march, long before the soccer match. On the way to the stadium, the Maccabi hooligans repeated their racist chants, including, “There are no schools in Gaza because there are no children left.” Once inside, they disrupted a minute of silence for flood victims in Spain, because the Spanish government has formally recognized a Palestinian state.

After the match, there was some skirmishing. The imperialist press showed snippets of videos with a chaotic swirl of images of two or three or four individuals being threatened, attacked and kicked while lying on the pavement. Five people were reportedly hospitalized, but quickly released, and about 20-30 “suffered light injuries, police said” (AP, 8 November). There are no videos or photos or any evi-

<sup>2</sup> *Het Parool*, 9 November 2024.

dence at all of crowds of Arabs, or of pro-Palestinian protesters, or taxi drivers or any other group now being blamed for the non-existent pogrom, only several handfuls of youth lashing out and then running off. Such acts of individual revenge against random Israelis will, course, achieve nothing for the embattled people of Gaza, and instead are being used by the imperialists and Zionists to discredit Palestinian solidarity protests.

But that is not the whole story, or even the main story – not by far.

The next day, **Friday, November 8**, Amsterdam mayor Femke Alsema labeled “boys on scooters” as “antisemitic hit-and-run squads,” grotesquely

Screenshot from Middle East Eye video



Maccabi hooligans tearing down Palestinian flag on November 6. Another video of the same scene shows a police car passing by, while a crowd stood around chanting, and doing nothing to stop this vandalism. The next night, Maccabis tore down more Palestinian flags.





**More lies: What the photo actually shows is Maccabi Tel Aviv Zionist fanatics celebrating Gaza genocide in Dam Square, Amsterdam, on November 6.**

saying this “brings back the memory of pogroms.” Even more obscenely, Israel’s genocidal war criminal prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu compared the events to *Kristallnacht*, the 10 November 1938 pogrom in Nazi Germany. In that “night of broken glass,” frequently cited as the start of the Holocaust, 91 Jews were killed and 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps. In fact, the anti-Zionist Jewish organization Erev Rav and the Stop Racism and Fascism Platform had to call off their scheduled *Kristallnacht* commemoration because “the mayor and police of Amsterdam allowed Israeli Zionists to wreak havoc, burn Palestinian flags, wish death to ‘Arabs’ and mistreat taxi drivers.”

While media reports regurgitated handouts from the police and Israeli embassy, lyingly portraying a video of Maccabi thugs attacking people as supposedly showing an antisemitic mob, the photographer who took that video, Annet de Graaf, posted an online letter (which quickly went viral) to CNN, BBC, the London *Guardian* and *New York Times*, calling on them to publish an apology and a correction.<sup>3</sup> They did not reply, although the *Times* later correctly described the video (and took it down so readers could not see it). Fortunately, there is an extensive (17-minute) video from a perceptive brash young (16-year-old) reporter on his YouTube channel “Bender,” which vividly shows the reality (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySHIOYyJ95A&t=450s>, with excellent English captioning). We urge our readers to watch it.

Accompanied by a cameraman, “Bender” follows the hooligans on the night of November 7-8 from the stadium to the central train station, where they march through downtown Amsterdam. He shows them ripping down yet another

<sup>3</sup> Segments of de Graaf’s video can be seen in an interview with her on the YouTube channel of British commentator Owen Jones, “Witness To Israeli Hooligan Rampage Exposes How Media LIED About Her Footage.”



**Screenshot from Bender video showing Maccabi “fans” marauding through Amsterdam in early morning hours of November 8, throwing paving stones and attacking bystanders.**

Palestinian flag, and arming themselves with metal pipes and wooden slats, while the Amsterdam police stand by. He notes that this crew acts very differently from the fans of local clubs, that they are very organized, moving in groups of 100 or more; his video shows them being briefed by an obvious leader, and he notes that many of them are presumably soldiers or ex-soldiers. He also shows

how the much-maligned taxi drivers were only able to honk their horns in protest against the Maccabi marauders. And the Bender footage shows even more close up how they charged across a street to beat someone.

Strikingly, even though their team, Tel Aviv Maccabi, lost 5-0 to Ajax, these “fans” are not at all dejected but energized. They are there on a mission to provoke. The Israeli press barrage about alleged knifings, attempts to run over Israelis with cars, Israelis cowering under siege in their hotels, etc., are without evidence, and the report of kidnappings was refuted almost as soon as it was issued by the conservative daily *De Telegraaf* (8 November). The Zionist state got full cooperation from the Netherlands in this propaganda ploy, of course. The right-wing Dutch government, which includes the fascistic PVV (Party of Freedom) of the Muslim-bashing racist demagogue Geert Wilders, wants to tear up refugee rights and maybe deport Africans to Uganda. It wants to implement Wilders’ program, while for appearances’ sake, not giving him a cabinet post (for now).

Prime Minister Dick Schoof is also seeking to overturn a court order blocking the Netherlands from sending F-35 fighter plane parts to Israel, and the government announced anti-immigrant police checks at the border starting on November 11. More insidious was the avid participation of Amsterdam’s mayor Halsema, a supposed “liberal” from the GroenLinks (Green/Left) party, in the “pogrom” frame-up. And the king of the Netherlands, parrot of the racist regime, drew a parallel with the fate of Dutch Jews in World War II. He wasn’t praising the Dutch workers’ strike of February 1941<sup>4</sup> against the Nazi deportations, but rather was providing window-dressing for support to Zionist genocide in

<sup>4</sup> See box on “The February Strike of 1941,” in our article, “Rotterdam Protest Calls for Workers’ Boycott of Weapons Transport, Strikes Against the War,” *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003.

Gaza. Against the pro-Zionist consensus, it was left to Amsterdam city councillor Jazie Veldhuyzen (from the small leftist De Vonk [The Spark] group) to insist in multiple interviews that the inhabitants of the city were responding to racist provocations.

Not all media joined the orchestrated chorus covering up the organized Israeli provocation with false claims about “antisemitic attacks.” *Al Jazeera* (8 November) quoted Veldhuyzen saying the police “acted only to protect the Maccabi hooligans when Amsterdammers stood up to defend their own people and defend their own houses.” It also ran a video of analyst Ori Goldberg from Israel saying that when “Israeli fans riot and rampage in Amsterdam, sing racist songs ... tear down Palestinian flags,” there is a sense of impunity and “complete rejection of the notion that actions have consequences.” *Middle East Eye* (8 November) headlined that “Israeli hooligans provoke clashes in Amsterdam,” and “Israeli football hooligans bring culture of genocide to Amsterdam,” adding that this reflects “a society that celebrates mass slaughter.” It certainly does.

Yes, there were some expressions of antisemitism on November 7/8 in Amsterdam – for example, as bystanders chanted *kankerjood* (“cancer Jew”) as a Maccabi supporter was chased into a canal – which Marxist internationalists resolutely oppose. But it is the horrific Israeli genocide in Gaza – and its deadly occupation of the West Bank, terrorist war on Lebanon, etc. – that is breeding antisemitism. When mobs of thugs glory in the killing of 45,000 Palestinians by the official count of Gaza health authorities, 70% of them women and children, mostly in air strikes on residential buildings, while medical teams from the U.S. who have visited the enclave put the number of dead at almost 100,000 – this has consequences. Striking back at the Maccabi marauders, even attacking a few of them individually, is an understandable reaction of impotence and rage in the face of an unspeakable crime. And the Zionists’ identifying opposition to the Gaza genocide as antisemitic, and equating the Israeli state with Jewish people in general, can only aid *genuine* antisemitism.

For all the cynical propaganda about a supposed “antisemitic pogrom” in Amsterdam, the police reported *no* (as in zero) attacks on Dutch Jews and *no* (zero) attacks on synagogues. While some agency dug up a call on a Telegram group for a “Jew hunt,” that is not what occurred. What actually happened was summed up by the Amsterdam for Palestine group on Instagram: “When people stand up against genocide and want to speak out against the Zionist state of Israhell, @burgemeesterfemkehalsema chooses to silence them and sends the riot police against demonstrators while IDF and the Mossad are given free rein in the city of Amsterdam.” Days later, the Zionist provocateurs are gone, but pro-Palestinian protests there are still banned.

The League for the Fourth International calls for an Arab/Hebrew Palestinian workers state in a socialist federation of the Middle East. Breaking the murder-



**This photo, portrayed as rioters attacking Israeli “fans” after November 7 Maccabi-Ajax soccer match in Amsterdam actually shows pro-Palestinian marchers being chased by police before the match.**

ous yoke of Zionist oppression requires a joint struggle of Arabs and Jews for a workers revolution, led by an authentically communist vanguard, to overthrow the religious-based, anti-democratic capitalist state of Israel. That may be difficult to imagine today amid the carnage and war hysteria that has seized Israeli Zionists, of both the “liberal” and fascistic “ultra” kind, but it is the only road to liberation of all the oppressed. Otherwise, while Israeli leaders seek to set off a general Middle Eastern war, the Zionist enterprise may become, in the warning words of Leon Trotsky some 85 years ago, a “bloody trap” for Jews<sup>5</sup> – and a holocaust for Arabs and other peoples in the region.

“Operation Amsterdam” – which is what this whole affair really is – was a Zionist psychological warfare ploy. Three thousand militarily organized Israeli men, complete with Mossad minders, showing up in a European country roiled with ethnic conflict, rampaging in disciplined mobs through the city attacking anything and anybody identified with Palestine, is not a bunch of soccer fans off on a jaunt who happen to run amok. They were on a mission, to provoke a reaction that could then be used to line up racist political forces to expel Muslim immigrants, even as the Zionist military are doing in Gaza (and fascistic settlers are itching to do in the West Bank). It was all about bringing the Gaza war to Europe.

This underscores the crucial importance of mobilizing mass opposition *in the imperialist centers* to the U.S./Israel war. As we have stressed, without U.S. military supplies (and the complicity of other NATO countries), the genocide now underway would not be possible.<sup>6</sup> The mass murder and deliberate starvation of the Arab population of Gaza continues. It is vital that the youth protests of this past spring spread to the working class, which has the power to put a stop to this monstrous crime. The focus must not only be against the Israeli Zionist war criminals but above all against the imperialist rulers, who have murdered over one million people in their Middle East wars since 2001, from Afghanistan and Iraq to Yemen, and are still at it in Gaza.

As Trotsky, the co-leader of the Russian October 1917 Revolution wrote 85 years ago, salvation for the peoples of the region is “bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system.” ■

<sup>5</sup> Leon Trotsky, “On the Jewish Problem” (1937-40).

<sup>6</sup> See “Gaza Genocide Made in USA” (August 2024), in *The Internationalist* No. 73, June-August 2024.

# ILA Longshore Workers: To Defeat Job-Killing Automation, Strike for Union Control of Tech!

**UPDATE, DECEMBER 24** – After the brief strike of port workers on the U.S. East and Gulf Coasts in October, the unresolved issue was automation. On December 12, Donald Trump met with International Longshoremen’s Association president Harold Daggett and his son and ILA executive vice president, Dennis Daggett, who made their pilgrimage to Mar-a-Lago to ask for the president-elect’s blessing. They were not disappointed. Trump issued a statement supporting the union’s opposition to the introduction of automated machinery on the docks, pointing to the “record profits” of “these foreign companies” and “the harm it causes for American Workers.”

Some trade publications initially expected the maritime bosses to fold. “Is it game over for U.S. East Coast port employers?” asked Freightways, noting that Canada and Mexico bowed to Trump’s wishes in days. But the shippers have not relented. Another industry outlet, Sourcing Journal, opined that the employers may decide not “to waste another minute negotiating with the ILA, because it will be pointless.” The real question, it wrote, is “how long will the port strike last,” and the maritime bosses may figure that “if they’re going to lose this battle, they could potentially benefit from a longer-lasting strike than the one we saw in early October.”

With no agreement in sight and the ILA saying talks are at an impasse, major shipping lines have issued advisories telling customers to anticipate that no cargo may move after the January 15 strike deadline. In one scenario, longshore workers walk out, a strike continues until Trump is inaugurated on January 20, whereupon he “bangs heads” and a face-saving deal is reached. But whatever the odds, any union “strategy” that banks on the whims of a multi-billionaire CEO of United States, Inc. can’t win lasting gains. With Trump, everything is “transactional.” There will be a quid quo pro. What will the unions give up?

While the Democrats like to posture as “friends of labor” even as they ban rail strikes (Biden) and send the Coast Guard to protect scab ships against a union protest (Obama), Donald Trump’s recent posture of being pro-“American worker,” is just that, a pose, that could change in a flash. In his first inauguration he appointed virulently anti-union management-side lawyers to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The co-leaders of Trump’s putative “Department of Government Efficiency,” Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, both sneeringly attacked the ILA, with the latter denouncing “union bosses’ efforts to coddle workers by limiting innovation.”

A real victory in the battle over job-killing automation will take an all-out fight for union control of technology, and a political fight against the politicians, parties and government of the bosses. No bargaining has been scheduled before the January 15 strike deadline. Now is the time to “get ready to rumble.”



**Striking ILA longshore workers at Seabrook, Texas on the first day of the East and Gulf Coast walkout. Strengthen the union, integrate the locals!**

**DECEMBER 8** – The October strike by the International Longshoremen’s Association was solid, shutting down all ports on the East and Gulf Coasts. It was effective: from Maine to Texas, the booms on all the container cranes were up, no cargo moved. And it was short, only three days. On October 3, the ILA leadership under Harold Daggett told the 45,000 dockworkers to go back to work. Daggett and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) port and shipping bosses issued a joint statement that there was a “tentative agreement on wages,” with pay hikes totaling 61.5% over six years. Sounds like a good deal, but there’s a catch. The raises don’t go into effect until an overall pact is reached. Deadline: January 15. And now it’s the big one: *automation*.

Why did the shippers give in so quickly on wages? Because for the USMX, and for the ILA, the key issue is the union’s demand for a ban on automating operations that would eliminate jobs. Meanwhile, the old contract has been extended. But by postponing the showdown until after the holiday shopping season, longshore workers lost potential leverage. Moreover, as the strike came on the eve of presidential elections, Democrats worried that if President Joe Biden banned the strike under the slave-labor Taft-Hartley Act, it could lose votes for their candidate, Vice President Kamala Harris. So the White House pressured both sides to come to a deal to end the walkout before it hit the economy hard. Daggett and the maritime bosses complied.

When it comes down to it, while the membership was fired up, for the longshore union leader, the October strike was largely a grandstand play, a chance to show some muscle without causing too much damage. The walkout, the first coastwise strike by the ILA since the 44-day strike in 1977, almost half a century ago, stopped container loading and unloading, and “ro-ro” cargo (roll on/roll

off the ships), on the East and Gulf Coast ports which handle 59% of containerized cargo and 30% of passenger cars entering the U.S. Had it continued, the walkout would have cost up to \$5 billion a day in lost production. Instead, the main event is now postponed to the dead of winter. On January 15, lame duck Biden will still be in office and Trump will be gearing up to be “dictator” on Day One.

Already, the day after the walkout was called off CNBC (4 October) headlined, “U.S. ports start 100-day countdown clock to new strike, and automation is poised to be the dealbreaker.”

In the October strike, the corporate media focused a lot of attention on the ILA chief, his “colorful language” (CNN), the high salaries for him (over \$900,000) and his son, ILA executive vice president Dennis Daggett (over \$700,000), his “sprawling mansion in New Jersey” and Bentley convertible (a *New York Post* favorite), and “questions about organized crime” (*New York Times*). Some have compared Daggett to Teamster leader Jimmy Hoffa, also dogged by accusations of mob influence

and racketeering. But Hoffa was a target of anti-labor witch-hunting (particularly by Democrat Robert F. Kennedy) for winning significant gains, notably the 1964 nationwide Master Freight Agreement (MFA). Harold Daggett is no Jimmy Hoffa.

In the lead-up to a possible second dock strike, capitalist hardliners are frothing about the ILA’s supposed “reckless gamble” that is supposedly threatening “the American economy for the benefit of a select few” (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 29 November). The Chamber claims that “average pay” at the New York/New Jersey ports, for example, is “\$350,000” a year. This is beyond absurd. Starting wages for ILA dockers under the existing contract are an outrageously low \$20 an hour. After six years on the job, they top out at only \$39/hr. Some may make six-figure annual incomes, but to get there they have to work enormous amounts of overtime. An ILA dock worker would have to put in 53 hours a week to break \$100,000 a year.

Just to make ends meet after the latest rounds of inflation, many longshore workers work so many hours they hardly see their families, some sleeping in campers at the docks. West Coast dock workers, organized in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) make considerably more than those on the East and Gulf Coasts, currently \$55/hr. reaching \$60.85 in 2027. By that point, even with the “tentative” raises, ILA dockers would still be making almost \$3/hr. less than their ILWU counterparts. Meanwhile, USMX bosses raked in record profits by raising rates during the COVID pandemic. In 2022, according to the web site *Statista*, the container shipping industry made \$208 billion net.

## Forward to a Single Port Workers Union

Daggett has listed the remaining issues to be negotiated as jurisdiction, automation and opposition to cuts in health care benefits or in royalty payments (for previous job losses due to containerization). *Not* on Daggett’s agenda are workers’ pensions,



**ILA president Harold Daggett (right) and executive vice president Dennis Daggett meet with U.S. president-elect Donald Trump, December 12.**

# Maritime Bosses Can't Automate Their Way Out of Port Bottlenecks

Internationalists, including youth from the City University of New York and trade-union supporters in Class Struggle Education Workers were present at New Jersey strike lines each day of the three-day ILA walkout. Automation was the main issue for most of the workers we talked to on the picket lines and at rallies. It threatens the jobs of all longshore workers, and has already led to sharp cuts of jobs at many ports around the world. The bosses dream of replacing workers – and busting the unions – with robot cranes, autonomous vehicles in port yards and processing trucks entering the port without labor. The Danish imperialist carrier Maersk has already done that last one at Mobile, Alabama and other ports, in violation of the current ILA contract.

The union's stand is categorical: no loss of jobs from automated machinery or processes:

"Furthermore, the ILA is steadfastly against any form of automation — full or semi — that replaces jobs or historical work functions. We will not accept the loss of work and livelihood for our members due to automation. Our position is clear: the preservation of jobs and historical work functions is non-negotiable."

—International Longshoremen's Association statement in response to USMX (1 October)

*Right!* And those words are going to require hard action come January 15. All labor must support the ILA to the hilt in this battle, which is in the vital interest of all working people. This means, first of all, the ILWU, which in its latest contract (which we opposed) greenlighted the Pacific Maritime Association shippers to introduce automated equipment, so long as the labor is performed by ILWU members. For years, sellout union leaders have let the bosses get away with slashing jobs and shutting down whole plants on the grounds that they can't violate capitalist legality. *Wrong!* It takes a fighting leadership with a *class-struggle program*.

In the big business media, there is a lot of talk that the U.S. is a "laggard" in terms of port automation. *Forbes* (3 October), which calls itself "the capitalist tool," claims "the U.S. risks becoming increasingly less competitive in the global shipping landscape." Hello?! When it comes to U.S. imports and exports, where else are the shippers going to unload or load cargo? Canada? Longshoremen in the Canadian East Coast ports of Halifax and St. John are organized by the ILA, and the West Coast ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert by the ILWU. And Montreal dock workers in CUPE were just locked out by the employers, and then forced into binding arbitration by the widely despised government of Justin Trudeau.

Besides, out of 1,300 global container terminals, only 62 (less than 5%) were automated or even semi-automated as of 2022, according to a paper in *Maritime Economics & Logistics* (August 2023). This fight has nothing to do with "competitiveness." It also is not about "increased import prices" due to dock workers' pay, which is a tiny part of final product cost. As for "inefficiency," a report to Congress by the U.S. Government Accountability Office on "Port Infrastructure" (March 2024) noted that "automated cargo handling equipment can slow operations, as the equipment may not move containers as quickly as conventional equipment." Also, automated equipment breaks down more often, is less able to work in rain or fog, and about 24/7 operations, truckers can't drop off boxes when offsite warehouses are closed.

Another report, the Container Port Performance Index 2023, by the World Bank and S&P Global, showed that of the top 100 top-ranked ports in terms of efficiency, those with the most experience with automated equipment going back to before 2000, are well down the list, with Singapore at 17 and Rotterdam at 91, just ahead of New York/New Jersey at 92. Then there's the cost. Automated gantry cranes, and other cargo moving equipment are hugely expensive, so much so that, according to the GAO report, some port operators "said it could take 10 to 20 years or more to recover the costs asso-

ciated with adopting automated cargo handling equipment, at which point the equipment would be reaching or exceeding its operational life expectancy."

So if it's not about competitiveness, efficiency, speed of operation or lowering costs, why are the USMX shipping companies insisting on the right to introduce automation? It's all about union-busting: the maritime bosses don't want to have powerful workers organizations at the pivotal point of world commerce. They want to break labor's power by eliminating jobs. And the capitalist governments don't want to disrupt commerce. Democrat Biden, the self-proclaimed most pro-union president in U.S. history, not only outlawed a rail strike in 2022, he didn't enact his Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, even as Dems led both houses of Congress. As for Trump, in August he praised his new "efficiency czar" Elon Musk for firing striking workers.

The capitalists' supposed knockout "argument" is that "Striking port workers are trying to fend off the inevitable" (*Axios*, 2 October). But even if technological advance is inevitable, the central issue in this struggle, as a *New York Times* (30 September) article pointed, is "Who controls the technology" and what is its impact on the workers. It's not just about retraining programs and the like. Longshore workers' jobs are grueling and dangerous, and they work insanely long hours to maintain their standard of living. *Any labor-saving technology in the ports should enable dock workers to earn more and work a lot less, so they can have a life. But that will never happen so long as the profit-gouging capitalists are in control.*

Automation has been at the core of dock workers' struggles for decades. ILWU founder leader Harry Bridges, although touted as a "progressive" and always under attack by the feds, signed a disastrous "mechanization and modernization" contract in 1961. The M&M deal gave the PMA pretty much a free hand to introduce containerization, in exchange for bonuses and a pay guarantee plan (PGP) for a week's pay even if insufficient shifts are called, *but only for the category of "A"*

members. As a result, ILWU membership fell from 65,000 in 1959 to 35,000 longshore workers in 1971 and barely 15,500 "A" and "B" workers today. This division greatly weakens the ILWU. *We say abolish the A/B and "casual" system now!* And in the ILA, the two-thirds of the members who work "on call" have no assurance of stable income at all.

In the 2022-23 ILWU bargaining, when the union worked for almost a year without a contract, the Internationalist Group wrote, in a leaflet distributed on the West Coast waterfront:

"Marxists do not oppose new technology as such. What we oppose is the companies seizing the fruits of technological advances — paid for with the sweat, blood and lives of workers — and then throwing the workers onto the scrap heap while the bosses rake in the profits.

"How can workers stand up to the maritime bosses' robo juggernaut? ... A shortened workweek with no loss in pay would create thousands more jobs. In addition, class-struggle militants would fight for *union control of technology*. For starters, this would include demanding that any steps to automate work be agreed to by the union, with full guarantees for workers' jobs."

—"Fight for Union Control of Tech," *The Internationalist* leaflet, 6 August 2022

By *union control of tech* we mean just that, the workers decide, not some "labor-management" committee to "consult," which the ILA and USMX already have. Along with the call for *union control of safety* by committees empowered to shut down unsafe operations, these "transitional demands" go beyond simple trade-unionism. As in Leon Trotsky's 1938 *Transitional Program*, calls for *workers control of production* point to a struggle for socialist revolution. Can such demands be won under capitalism? It depends on the balance of class forces overall, and forging a leadership with the program and determination to wage *all-out class struggle on the waterfront.* ■

which are negotiated on a company-by-company or port-by-port basis and are far inferior to the ILWU pension plan which is established on a coastwide basis. Philadelphia and Houston dockworkers have no pensions at all. *ILA workers should have a coastwide pension and medical plan.* Furthermore, ILA and ILWU should have their *contracts expire at the same time*, preparing for a powerful *nationwide dock strike* that could lay the basis in struggle for a *single national port workers union.*

In October, ILWU president Bobby Olivera brought a contingent to show solidarity, pledging not to handle cargo diverted to the West Coast during the ILA strike. Daggett brags about how in '77 he went to the West Coast to set up picket lines at diverted ships that the ILWU honored. But two years ago, when ILWU locals took job actions during contract negotiations, causing cargo to be diverted to the East and Gulf Coasts, the ILA chief ignored pleas not to handle the cargo. While Daggett is currently

posing as a militant, he is a business unionist at core, inviting the USMX chairman to ILA conventions and hobnobbing with capitalist politicians, in particular with Donald Trump, with whom he says he has "a long relationship going back decades" (CNN).

The *New York Times* (4 October), house organ of the liberal capitalist establishment, wrote that "The Union Leader Who Shut Down the Ports Is Playing Hardball." Not really. *The Internationalist* has long insisted that "Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win!" But that's not Daggett's game: he has headed the union since 2011, yet the pay for ILA longshore workers is still miserable. Instead, he is playing the angles. He sees an opportunity and is taking it. A year ago, Daggett visited Trump in the latter's Mar-a-Lago resort, where the ILA leader says they talked about the threat of automation to union jobs. Now, in keeping with Trump's "America First" agenda, Daggett is railing against "foreign-owned" shipping lines. In fact, the USMX is greatly

influenced by American terminal operators like Carrix (parent of SSA Marine).

More than any other industry, shipping has always been international in nature, going back to ancient times. Therefore, any struggle against the maritime bosses cannot be won on the basis of a nationalist appeal, but only with an internationalist program. That program must take aim at the capitalist system as a whole, not just an individual employer, or port, or limiting the struggle to a national framework. That is especially true of the main issue in this fight: automation of the ports. The pressure for this is intensified because of the huge expansion of international manufacturing under the guise of "globalization," where a final product may have components made in multiple countries, all dependent on shipping, and on their on-time arrival.

The supply-chain bottlenecks during and after the COVID-19 pandemic led governments as well as maritime monopolies to push for automation of port operations.

Yet various studies and surveys show that introducing automated equipment is hugely expensive, and is not necessarily more efficient in terms of speeding up loading and unloading. What it does do is slash labor costs, and jobs. The industry has been growing steadily, with cargo moved by ship nearly tripling from 1990 to 2021 (from 4 to 11 billion tons). Especially because of the requirements of "just-in-time" manufacturing, port workers have tremendous potential power to defend their livelihoods. What's required is a fighting leadership with a program to use that power.

## Forge a Class-Struggle Leadership

In the pandemic, as white-collar employees worked from home, dock workers braved the elements, often with inadequate or no protective equipment. The shippers, for their part, netted \$400 billion in profits in 2020-2023, more than in the entire

*continued on page 17*

# Deep-Sixing Their Own History SL's Latest Longshore Lies

We print below a letter by Jack Heyman, the longtime waterfront militant and retired member of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in the San Francisco Bay Area, to *Workers Vanguard*, the newspaper of the Spartacist League. For the last several decades, the latter-day Spartacist League has pursued an unrelenting vendetta against Heyman. Almost without fail, whenever he was leading struggles, and they were numerous, the “post-revolutionary SL,” shall we say, would slander and/or boycott them.

To enumerate the examples would take many pages, but a case in point was the October 1997 Oakland picket by militant ILWU members and other labor activists of a ship, the *Neptune Jade*, in solidarity with the 500 dockers in Liverpool, England fired for honoring a picket line two years before. The picket was successful, and the ship was not unloaded, nor was it in other ILWU-organized ports as it moved up the West Coast, nor again in Japan. The Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) bosses were so incensed that they sued the ILWU locals, picket organizers (including Robert Irminger and Heyman) and individual picketers, seeking to squelch labor militancy on the docks. After many protests, including a July 1998 Local 10 port shutdown, in November 1998 the PMA dropped the last charges. The SL’s “contribution”? It blamed the militants for provoking the PMA’s witch hunt, by organizing a picket when the bureaucracy wouldn’t. And the SL didn’t lift a finger to help mobilize in defense of the militants against the maritime bosses’ attack.

Even more egregious was the SL’s reaction to the April 1999 port shutdown for Mumia Abu-Jamal referred to in the letter below. That coastwide action was the result of a motion, presented by Heyman and approved by the ILWU Coast Caucus, to shut down all West Coast ports to demand freedom for the foremost class war prisoner in the U.S. It was carried out in conjunction with a work stoppage the day before by teachers in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, calling to free Mumia. These were the first major labor actions for Mumia, something the SL had long called for. But when they happened, the SL badmouthed the 24 April 1999 ILWU port shutdown, refused to march in a Mumia demonstration in San Francisco that day, and has never even mentioned the Brazil stoppage that the ILWU cited announcing the shutdown (*The Dispatcher*, March 1999).

In response to a letter by Heyman setting the record straight and our article “WV Blames Victims, Distorts April 24 Shutdown for Mumia” (*The Internationalist*, No. 7, April-May 1999), the SL labeled Heyman a “bureaucrat” (because of his unpaid position as an elected member of the Local 10 executive board), claiming his motion endorsed the illusory reformist call for a “new trial” for Mumia (*Workers Vanguard*, 28 May 1999). It did not. On the contrary, it called the work stoppage to demand his freedom, saying that he could not get a fair trial in the courts. Years

later, a 2004 conference of the SL cited its policy on the April 1999 ILWU port shutdown for Mumia as an example of its “stodgy, demoralized sectarianism,” saying it should have “commended the ILWU stop-work action.”

But the SL/WV kept up the smears and slanders, notably over the 2011-12 struggle to unionize the scab Export Grain Terminal being built in Longview, Washington. When Heyman and four other ILWUers spoke at a rally at the AFL-CIO Labor Temple in Seattle, a bureaucratic goon squad busted up the meeting, physically attacking supporters of Longview Local 21. *Workers Vanguard* (17 February 2012) positively grooved on this assault, saying the ILWU activists on the stage had “invited the disruption” by goons brandishing a letter from union president McEllrath opposing any work stoppage on West Coast ports. The Internationalist Group, which was there supporting Local 21, published a video on our site which documents this brutal attack. The SL added that those “like Heyman, the IG and others” fighting for militant labor action over Longview “reaped the fruits of their own grotesque opportunism at the Seattle meeting” (see “SL’s Wrong Lessons of Longview,” *The Internationalist* supplement, March 2012). What was truly grotesque was the SL/WV defense of this vile assault on workers democracy.

Today, as the latter-day Spartacist League has now become the born-again SL that dismisses almost its entire past as “sectarian,” it has taken a new tack: to feign approval while continuing to seek pretexts for slamming Heyman. His latest “crime”? A letter to the SL paper from a supporter excoriates “Heyman’s resolution,” passed by ILWU Local 10 (and actually voted for by that supporter), calling to “hot cargo” arms to Israel. The letter claims that the resolution whitewashed the ILWU’s history of boycotting ships with cargo for military dictatorships in El Salvador and Chile! Even after tossing out just about every distinctive policy of the Spartacist League when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism, it is still fixated on demonizing Jack Heyman.

There is a straightforward reason for this vindictive and seemingly bizarre behavior. As he demonstrates in his letter below, in order to attack the Local 10 resolution, *Workers Vanguard* contradicts the policy of the Spartacist League at the time of those historic boycotts. And that is no accident. A main reason for the vitriol is the fact that, inspired by the revolutionary program the Spartacist League used to stand for, Heyman kept organizing class-struggle actions as the SL used to do. The vehemence and obstinacy with which the latter-day and now born-again SL demonizes Jack Heyman come from the fact that it is polemicizing against its own, once-revolutionary self.

Interestingly, there is another actor which has taken a similar tack on Jack Heyman: the sellout ILWU bureaucracy.



Internationalist photo

**San Francisco, 24 April 1999: As the ILWU shut down every port on the West Coast, longshoremen in San Francisco marched chanting, “An injury to one is an injury to all, Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!” the latter-day SL refused to march.**

## Letter to the Editor of *Workers Vanguard*

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to Emily Turnbull’s letter to the editor printed under the title “Report from the Convention: ILWU Rejects Boycott of Military Cargo to Israel” in your September 28 issue. Yes, as she wrote, I initiated the resolution calling for the ILWU to refuse to handle war cargo to Israel, but once it was passed (unanimously) at the May Day union meeting, it became Local 10’s resolution. Referring to it as “Heyman’s resolution” throughout her long letter is a not-so-subtle attempt to make it appear as one person’s opinion.

The letter’s claim that the resolution “was not handed out for members to read” is, typically, bogus. Not only was it distributed at the main entrance to the union hall, and a stack placed with other union literature by the podium, as it was being handed out, she came up to get a few more copies. The claim that there was no serious discussion of what it would take to implement the resolution is just as bogus. The resolution was to be submitted to the ILWU Convention. As for the all too typical arrogant dismissal of it as one more “paper resolution” which are “a dime a dozen in Local 10,” this is downright ludicrous. The motion said specifically “the ILWU will refuse to handle military cargo to Israel” and “will honor picket lines protesting the war on Gaza.” The ILWU International leadership led by retiring president Willie Adams mobilized to defeat it precisely because it was a call for very definite action. So instead, he got the Convention to pass a motion calling for a ceasefire, which really was a meaningless paper resolution.

It’s obvious that if it had passed the Convention, the resolution approved by Local 10 could have sparked “hot cargo” solidarity actions of dock workers around the world refusing to load arms to Israel, as requested by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, Gaza. On top of that, for you to claim that this was an empty resolution is an affront to the former Militant Caucus of the ILWU, supported by the

then-revolutionary Spartacist League (SL). In that tradition I fought for international union action in solidarity with the fired Liverpool dockers in 1997 and with the Charleston, South Carolina longshoremen (2000) battling a scab operation. As business agent I defended our union against a PMA lock-out and the government threat to occupy West Coast ports in 2002, in the run-up to the Iraq invasion. But the in numerous key longshore struggles the SL was AWOL, or outright denounced them (as you did in the battle to unionize a scab facility in Longview, Washington). And you know it.

The May 2024 Local 10 Caucus resolution calling for refusal to handle war cargo to Israel cited the ILWU’s own actions in solidarity with the besieged working class in Chile (1978) and El Salvador (1980) by refusing to load weapons for the military dictatorships. The letter claims that by citing these examples, “Heyman significantly underplayed the obstacles to his resolution’s implementation.” So referring to the ILWU’s past actions refusing to handle war cargo is some kind of cover-up? What cynical, twisted reasoning! This is the rationale of defeatists and betrayers who have no confidence in the power of the working class to fight back against capitalism and imperialism. Yet another example of how, while your line keeps on changing, your modus operandi has not. The letter’s author maligned these historic actions as “one time actions taken in conjunction with a section of liberal Democratic Party opinion.” What does that even mean, that some liberal Democrats said they liked them? (Meanwhile, it is your organization that calls to “bring pressure down” on “liberal and progressive politicians.”)

The letter printed in your paper also smears *Workers Vanguard*’s coverage of those powerful actions at the time they occurred. Take the June 30, 1978 *WV*. The headline is “First U.S. Union Action Since ’73 Coup, *ILWU Stops Bombs to Chile!*”. It states: “The refusal of ILWU longshoremen to load the deadly cargo on any ship marks the first time since the





Jack Heyman at December 2023 “Labor for Palestine” march.

CIA-backed Pinochet junta overthrew the democratically elected Allende government, outlawed trade unions, and jailed and killed tens of thousands of Chilean workers that an American trade union has implemented such a genuine act of solidarity with their Chilean class brothers.”

On the ILWU’s 1980 boycott of arms to the blood-drenched Salvadoran junta, look at the January 2, 1981 *WV*, headlined: “ILWU Boycotts Military Shipments to El Salvador!” It states: “This boycott is thoroughly needed and can be a powerful act of labor solidarity with the EI Salvadoran workers and peasants.” As we say in Local 10: ‘Nuff said. (Since you have wiped out years of articles from your web site, your readers can at least find older issues on the Marxist Internet Archives at <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspaper/workersvanguard/index.htm>).

The letter claims that Local 10’s May 2024 call for the union to boycott military shipments to Israel was, supposedly, “the kind of action that the ILWU has *never* [emphasis in original] undertaken because its leadership has always backed the liberal wing of U.S. imperialism.” Is that so? What about the April 1999 march in San Francisco of 25,000 protesters, headed up by an ILWU Local 10 contingent chanting, “An injury to one, is an injury to all – Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!” It was liberal Democrats who framed Mumia and have kept him in jail for the last 43 years for a crime of which he is innocent. Why this omission? Oh, that’s right, because the Spartacist League ostentatiously didn’t march and then arrogantly dismissed that remarkable action.

Yes, the ILWU has had paper motions, like when it passed a resolution against the Vietnam War in 1971, but continued to load military cargo for that war, a betrayal that I criticized at the time as a supporter of the SL and have continued to do so. When I was a seaman in the SL-supported Militant-Solidarity Caucus of the National Maritime Union, we opposed the Vietnam War and called on seamen and other maritime workers to take actions against the war. *Workers Vanguard* No. 2, November 1971, headlined “For Labor Political Strikes Against the War,” and called for workers boycotts of war cargo. But

when the basic issue was posed point-blank in late 2002 in the run-up to the Iraq War at the time of the lockout of the ILWU by the shipping bosses, you suddenly *dropped* the call to “hot cargo” war material and didn’t call to strike in defiance of the Taft-Hartley injunction. Too hot to handle, apparently.

And then there was the historic May Day 2008 shutdown of all West Coast ports in the U.S. and Canada protesting the imperialist war in Afghanistan and Iraq. With the initiative of the Internationalist Group, which I support, a resolution calling for that was hammered out and passed by Local 10, and then later by the ILWU Coast Caucus. But in an ostentatious display of abstentionist disdain, the SL again refused to join the union march calling for an end to the imperialist war as demonstrators proceeded along San Francisco’s Embarcadero, with the Brass Band playing the *Internationale*. You did nothing to build the first workers strike action in 90 years against a U.S. imperialist war.

In her letter/report, your supporter Emily Turnbull says she went to the ILWU convention in Vancouver last June “to fight for the resolution” calling for the union to refuse to handle war cargo to Israel. Except according to her verbatim account in the letter of her remarks at the Resolutions Committee, she talked about Biden and the war, but made no mention of the resolution or the call for the union to refuse to handle war cargo to Israel. I wonder why not. Was it because, as her letter said, she “knew there was little chance of the resolution passing”?

More recently, in the October three-day strike by the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) on the East and Gulf Coasts, a September 17 *Workers Vanguard* leaflet/supplement says nothing about a union boycott of arms to Israel. Even after ILA president Harold Daggett ostentatiously declared that the union would “proudly continue to work all military shipments” during the impending strike, an October 12 *WV* leaflet could only muster a statement that longshoremen not handling military cargo would be a nice thing, without actually calling for it in the series of demands the leaflet raised.

Nor in Turnbull’s October 30 campaign flier for president of Local 10 was there any call for labor boycotts of war cargo to Israel. No mention of capitalism, either. As for the ILWU contract which gave the maritime bosses a green light to introduce job-killing automation so long as the work is under ILWU jurisdiction, her flier says the union should have “fought for better.” Sounds very much like the labor faker head of the old AFL Samuel Gompers who, when asked what he wanted, replied “More!” I.e., don’t abolish capitalism, just beg for higher wages. The Internationalist Group put out a leaflet calling to fight for union control of technology, a transitional demand. In contrast, recent SL-supported campaigns in union elections are a retreat into the old “mini-max” reformist model of a minimum program of strictly trade-union demands with general calls for a maximum program (workers party, black liberation) tacked on at the end.

To actually fight the trade-union bureaucracy, “the labor lieutenants of

capital,” requires class-struggle caucuses or tendencies in the trade unions to oust the labor traitors, in conjunction with building a revolutionary workers party to fight against capitalist exploitation, racism and war, and for a workers government. That won’t be done by an outfit that keeps changing its spots but not its methods, while inventing excuses for not calling to “hot cargo” arms to a genocidal war.

Jack Heyman  
retired member, ILWU Local 10  
23 December 2024

## Longshore...

*continued from page 15*

60+ years since containerization was introduced (CNN, 27 September). Their push to bring in job-killing technology is part of that profit-gouging, which continues today as the container shippers have raised rates as Houthis in Yemen attacked shipping in the Red Sea in solidarity with the Palestinians under siege in Gaza. But it’s not just about money. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, every class struggle is a political struggle.

As the U.S. poured deadly munitions into Israel and dispatched the Navy to ride shotgun for maritime companies in the Red Sea, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions called on labor internationally to refuse to transport war cargo to Israel. On the West Coast, ILWU Local 10 passed a motion to refuse to handle military cargo to Israel. (The resolution was shot down by the union bureaucracy at its convention in June.) Under Harold Daggett, the ILA did the exact opposite, pledging on September 25 that “we will proudly continue to work all military shipments beyond October 1st, even if we are engaged in a strike.” This *betrayal* undermined the effectiveness of the strike and aided the imperialists and Zionists in their genocidal war on Gaza.

Likewise with military cargo to Ukraine in support of the imperialist U.S./NATO proxy war against Russia. Class-conscious workers call on longshore unions worldwide to “*hot cargo*” (*refuse to handle*) *military goods to Israel and Ukraine!* In 2019 Dennis Daggett became general coordinator of the International Dockworkers Council (IDC), which was once the organization of more militant port unions. In the 2021 war on Gaza, the IDC issued a statement “strongly condemn[ing] the massacre that is taking place against the Palestinian people at the hands of Israel” and called on dock workers not to handle war materiel. But under the Daggetts, even as the dock union in Barcelona, Spain – headquarters of the IDC – declared it would refuse to handle war cargo, the IDC has done zero against the slaughter in Gaza.

To win important union battles and organize the unorganized, labor must wage sharp class struggle, using tactics like *mass militant picket lines* that *no one dares cross* (or work behind) and *solidarity strikes* that defy Taft-Hartley, other anti-labor laws and/or “no strike”

contract clauses. The ILA historically has been weakened by racial divisions within the union. In Southern locals, dockers are overwhelmingly black, while better-paid checkers are mainly white and are in separate locals. Even in Newark/Port Elizabeth, New Jersey ports, longshoremen doing the exact same work have two different locals, one mainly “white” and the other mainly “black.” We say: *Integrate the locals and the leaderships!*

The ILA, with a majority black membership, should *take the lead in defending black people under attack*. In the 2020 eruption of mass protest against racist cop terror after the cop murder of George Floyd, the ILWU shut down all the West Coast ports on Juneteenth as a powerful action against racial oppression. The ILA tops, in contrast, refused appeals for a shutdown, instead took a knee for nine-and-a-half minutes (the time Minneapolis killer cop Chauvin had his knee on George Floyd’s neck), in a measly lunch hour “protest,” along with the USMX bosses! This also raises the role of the police. After the three-day October strike, Daggett praised port police for maintaining “peace and safety.” In a hard-fought strike, those cops would do the bidding of the bosses in herding scabs, and attacking those defending the picket line.

Another major issue is *organizing port truckers* and the *warehouses* to which they transport containers. As the maritime bosses seek to slash longshore jobs, it is vital for the dock unions to extend their reach to these key sectors in the logistics supply chain. Around the country, truckers are overwhelmingly non-unionized, and a large proportion work for trucking companies; even owner-operators could be organized in a union-linked cooperative. And in order to survive and strengthen, the port unions must take the lead or join with other unions in organizing the giant non-union warehouses, like Amazon and Walmart. The book by Harvey Schwartz, *The March Inland* (1978) spells out the importance of the ILWU organization of warehouses in the 1940s.

In an all-out ILA strike over automation these kinds of militant tactics and labor solidarity will be all the more important. To ensure the mobilization of the membership, and its role in winning a contract that meets their demands, there should be *elected strike committees* and an *elected negotiating committee*. If cargo is diverted, the ILWU must refuse to handle it. If an ILA strike is hit with Taft-Hartley or court injunctions or police violence, the ILWU must shut down the West Coast ports in solidarity! And rather than kneeling before the bosses’ parties, workers and the oppressed need a *class-struggle workers party*, an internationalist party fighting for a workers government. *An injury to one is an injury to all!* ■



Internationalists at ILA picket line in Port Newark, NJ, on October 3.

# Bring Out All Labor to Win Teamsters Amazon Strikes!

DECEMBER 20 – Yesterday, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) launched strikes at seven Amazon facilities around the U.S. after giving the company a December 15 deadline to agree to begin negotiations for a union contract. Amazon is the world's third largest corporation whose executive chairman, Jeff Bezos, is the third richest man in the world. The e-commerce giant is a hard-line anti-union employer. It has refused to bargain with the Teamsters-affiliated Amazon Labor Union (ALU) after the ALU won a representation election in April 2022 at the massive JFK8 warehouse in Staten Island, NY. Overcoming the Amazon bosses' opposition will take hard class struggle, mobilizing the power of the entire labor movement.

The strike was kicked off at 6 a.m. Thursday by drivers at the DBK4 facility in Maspeth, Queens, New York, and then by Amazon workers at three locations in southern California, as well as in Atlanta, San Francisco and Skokie, Illinois. Tonight, it will extend to JFK8 and other facilities, at the peak of the holiday delivery season. Having invested millions in union-busting and surveilling workers, Amazon is unlikely to fold anytime soon. What's posed is a showdown between labor and capital that could influence the future of unions for years to come. It is urgent that all labor – as well as students, immigrants and other union supporters – come out in large numbers to **build mass picket lines to shut down the warehouses and stop the deliveries!**

**A real show of labor's power will inspire workers at Amazon and elsewhere.** Supporters of the Internationalist Group reported from several strike locations yesterday. At DBK4 in New York, there were upwards of 200 people on the picket lines, including a number of drivers in their blue vests. There was also a large and heavy-handed police presence, to prevent picketers from stopping Amazon vans. At one point, the scabberding cops prevented a driver leaving the warehouse from getting out of his van to join the pickets, shoving him back in from both doors, and then yanking him out to arrest him. They also arrested Anthony Rosario, a Teamster organizer and activist, for "blocking a roadway."

At the DCK6 facility in San Francisco, delivery vans were only stopped for a couple of minutes, tops, more often stopped for a few seconds and then waved through. Several workers we spoke with were quite upset with this, but others said that legally they couldn't stop fellow workers from scabbing. But that depends on the balance of class forces. At one point, the company tried to open up a second gate from vans to drive out, but we joined a squad of picketers who showed up at the gate. For a few minutes there was a standoff, and then the vans turned around.

At DAX5 in City of Industry, Los Angeles, at the main gate the Amazon 18-wheelers were held up, sometimes for 30 minutes, as sheriff's deputies at



Internationalist photo

**Scabberding cops, enforcers for the bosses, enemies of the workers. Police out in force on Day One of the Teamsters Amazon strike to stop pickets from blocking exit from DBK4 facility in Maspeth, Queens, New York.**

one point saw there weren't enough of them compared to 75 militant Teamsters and drove off. This put a crimp in Amazon's operations, but at another entrance, picket leaders just let scabs go through. A militant L.A. transit worker from ATU Local 1277 spoke on the picket line saying that the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is not neutral, you can't trust capitalist politicians and we need to "make Teamsters like 1934 again," referring to the historic Minneapolis strikes, led by Trotskyists, that laid the basis for Teamster power. A key lesson for today: to win a strike, **picket lines mean don't cross – period!**

From coast to coast, we're hearing a lot of illusions in the NLRB, which many workers are looking to for support. Yes, a 2023 ruling by the Labor Board established that when an overall employer sets essential conditions for workers, they can be considered "joint employers" and their employees have the right to unionize. Last August, the NLRB recognized Amazon's 280,000 drivers – formally hired by Amazon's "Delivery Service Partners" – as Amazon employees. But the Board is an agency of the capitalist government. It was set up in 1935 to regulate and stifle class struggle. Companies like Amazon rely on the NLRB to crush, postpone or hogtie union organizing with a web of bureaucratic processes.

Recently various liberals and reformists, like the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America (DSA), campaigned for people to call Senate majority leader Democrat Chuck Schumer to fast-track Democrat Joe Biden's nominations to the NLRB before Trump gets into office. It failed. Looking to Biden, who banned a rail strike in 2022, to appoint "labor-friendly" members to a board that was set up to keep labor in check is a dead end. Democrats are not "friends of labor," but enemies who are in Wall Street's pocket. Strikes, unions and contract gains are not won by relying on the bosses' govern-

ment or the bosses' parties. **Class-struggle trade unionists oppose all government control of the workers movement.**

As for Donald Trump, Teamsters president Sean O'Brien sought to play both sides in this past presidential election, speaking at the Republican National Convention. This is not something new. After being targeted by Democrat Robert Kennedy, who went after Jimmy Hoffa in the 1950s and '60s (because Hoffa won the first nationwide Master Freight Agreement), the IBT endorsed war criminal Richard Nixon in 1972, and supported Republicans for years. But this is self-defeating. It should be obvious to everyone that Trump will be very bad news for labor, and now he has brought in Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, for the dirty work of mass firings and busting unions.

A key focus for labor in the coming months must be to fight Trump's plans to carry out mass deportations, the biggest in U.S. history, of millions of immigrants, and not only those who lack the documents the government demands of them even as the employers viciously exploit their labor. Immigrant workers are a backbone of key sectors of the working class, from agriculture and packing houses to restaurants, taxis, health care and construction. Recently, on the West Coast, Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP) has won approval for motions in a number of area unions to **mobilize union memberships to defend immigrants** against deportations and racist attacks.

In Trump's first presidency, hundreds of unionists came out to a June 2017 Portland Labor Against Fascists mobilization, initiated by the CSWP, to stop a fascist provocation. Recently, several of these unions, including in the construction trades, have passed resolutions for **workers actions against the U.S.-Israeli genocidal war on Gaza**. This underlines the need for labor, in its defense

of union rights, to defend all the down-trodden, from immigrants to transgender people, and to oppose U.S. imperialist wars abroad. For all his rhetoric against a "Deep State," and posturing as a champion of peace in Ukraine, Trump's plans to build more concentration camps for immigrants, to use the military to carry out deportations are a threat to all.

The same military using the same police-state laws will be used to arrest "rioters," whether pro-Palestinian demonstrators or striking unionists. His vow to be a "dictator" on "day one" and to issue hundreds of executive orders is a further escalation of the actions of Barack Obama and Joe Biden, who also governed by executive orders, used the courts to go after opponents and built up the immigration police. Trump's threats cap a decades-long drive by both bosses' parties in the direction of a strong state to roll back social gains and basic democratic rights in sweeping repressive fashion. The Internationalists call to **break with all capitalist parties** and to **build a workers party to fight for a workers government.**

Amazon strikers are going up against a giant corporation with 1.5 million employees worldwide, headed by labor-hating mega boss Jeff Bezos (net worth: \$246 billion), and will soon face a government of billionaires, with Elon Musk (\$454 billion) as hatchet man who revels in breaking strikes and busting unions. The present strike may be intended as a time-limited action, but to take on and defeat these powerful forces will take a lot more than business-as-usual unionism. It will require the kind of class-struggle methods – flying pickets, plant occupations and workers defense guards – which built the industrial unions in the 1930s.

This poses the need for a concerted national effort of a major union or coalition of unions. The Teamsters are in a strong position to lead such a drive, but to win will take solidarity action by key sectors of the working class. In particular, dock workers in the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) on the East and Gulf Coasts and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) on the West Coast are key. The ILA shut down the ports in a three-day strike in October, and is fighting the threat of automation that also faces warehouse workers. The largely immigrant and un-unionized port truckers are another vital link in the supply chain, which if joining in common union action can shut down the profit-greedy bosses.

Labor needs to use its muscle in the Amazon strike as part of defending our basic rights against the coming onslaught from the White House against our rights on the job and those of all the groups on Trump's hit list. The working class has the power. The issue is to use it or lose it, now more than ever. **Victory to the Amazon Teamsters Strike! Unionize Amazon with class struggle! Organize the unorganized!** ■

Forge A Revolutionary Workers Party! Fight for a Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Government!

# Mexico's López Obrador: A Nationalist Populist in the Service of U.S. Imperialism

The following article is translated and slightly abridged from *Revolución Permanente No. 13, October-November 2024*, the newspaper of the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International.

SEPTEMBER 25 – The June 2 Mexican elections were noteworthy in at least three respects. First, for being the most extensive ever in the history of the country, encompassing all 500 deputies of the federal Chamber of Deputies, all 128 senators and the governors of nine states, in addition to the presidency of Mexico. Second, for the landslide victory of the bourgeois populist National Regeneration Movement (Morena) at every level. And third, because the winner of the presidential race, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, will be the first woman head of state of Mexico.<sup>1</sup> But beyond the bombastic rhetoric of the campaigns, it is clear that the overall condition of this semi-colonial capitalist country has not changed.

Sheinbaum, who will take office on October 1, won nearly 35 million votes (60 percent of the total), more than double the 16 million (27 percent) of her main challenger, Xóchitl Gálvez. The new president represents Morena and its satellites, the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM), always adept at forming alliances to hang on to a slice of power; and the Labor Party (PT), a party created by former Maoists. For her part, Gálvez was the standard bearer of a coalition of the three historic parties of the Mexican bourgeoisie, the National Action Party (PAN), with its rancid clerical roots; the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the government party for seven decades; and the remnants of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Each of these movements, parties, alliances and coalitions are representatives of the bourgeois ruling class.

Both supporters and opponents of the capitalist government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (universally known by his initials, AMLO) characterized these elections as a “plebiscite” on his vaunted “Fourth Transformation.”<sup>2</sup> Sheinbaum promised to continue the work of AMLO, who has a 70 percent approval rating in the polls, while Gálvez fiercely attacked it. Although they savaged each other on the campaign trail, their differences were, at most, tactical, over the respective proportions of stick and carrot to be used in keeping capitalist businesses running. Their common goal is to prevent an eruption by “those at the bottom” from getting out of



President Andrés Manuel López Obrador reviews the National Guard on the day it entered operations, on 30 June 2019. The Guard, a militarized police force, was formed as part of an agreement with the U.S. government of Donald Trump to block and hunt migrants to prevent them from reaching the U.S. border.

hand. These bourgeois parties and politicians are united on the basics: safeguarding the interests of the national exploiters and their imperialist senior partners. For this reason, the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International, called for *not one vote to these capitalist coalitions and parties*.

Our position was not widely popular, shall we say, among some historically combative union sectors, which voted overwhelmingly for Sheinbaum. Even if they accepted that Morena and its electoral alliance “Juntos Haremos Historia” (We Will Make History Together) are capitalist political organizations, some leaders argued that the different coalitions “are not equal.” Faced with this logic of voting for the “lesser evil,” we reiterated that any vote for the Morena coalition and candidates would result in the strengthening of capitalist domination over the exploited and oppressed. We insisted on the need to fight for the construction of a revolutionary workers party, which would serve as the tribune of the oppressed and fight for a workers and peasants government in Mexico, as well as for extension of the socialist revolution to the rest of Latin America and to the North, inside the U.S. imperialist stronghold.

This is the programmatic perspective of Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, elaborated on the basis of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, which remains fully valid today: in Mexico, the democratic tasks, which have not been achieved in no less than three failed bourgeois revolutions, cannot be resolved by an imaginary bourgeois “Fourth Transformation” but can only be completed through the seizure of power by the working class. To make rights like education and health care accessible to all, to ensure

that the land belongs to those who work it, to break the chains by which U.S. imperialism keeps Mexico as a semi-colony in its “backyard” will take a revolution to overthrow capitalism. To lead it requires a workers party like that of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks. Forging the nucleus of this party is our task.

## The “Fourth Transformation”: A Marxist X-Ray

The promise repeated over and over by Claudia Sheinbaum during her campaign was that, if she became president, she would guarantee the continuity of the Fourth Transformation (or “4T”). In November of last year (2023), at the rally that enshrined her as the “only candidate” of Morena and its allies, Sheinbaum vowed that President López Obrador’s projects will continue to go forward, in order to build “the second floor of the Fourth Transformation” (*El País*, 19 November 2023). And in one of her last campaign events, in Villa Hermosa, Tabasco, she proclaimed: “Let the people of Mexico know from here, dear President, that we will keep your legacy, that we will not betray, that corruption will not return, that privileges will not return, that we will lead our nation, our homeland on the path of social justice, peace, security and shared prosperity” (*Reforma*, 27 May).

But what is this Fourth Transformation, what is the “legacy” that Sheinbaum promises to safeguard and continue? Answering these questions is key, since both AMLO’s supporters and detractors have systematically contributed to mystify the nature of his mandate.

“Fourth Transformation” is the name that López Obrador has given to his government and his “nation-building project.” The number refers to the “three moments of

profound transformations” through which Mexico has passed in the course of its history: Independence from Spain and the abolition of slavery, as a result of a revolutionary war begun in 1810; the War of Reform from 1857 to 1861, which separated church and state, establishing the predominance of the latter, and restored the republic after defeating the French invasion of Emperor Louis Napoleon Bonaparte; and the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910. The assertion by AMLO and Morena that a new “transformation” is needed recognizes – albeit implicitly – that, despite its three predecessors, involving tenacious and bloody struggles of the plebeian sectors against the oppressors, fundamental unresolved tasks are still pending.

In AMLO’s inauguration speech on 1 December 2018, he proclaimed that “we begin today the fourth political transformation of Mexico,” which will be “peaceful and orderly,” and in which “we will put an end to the corruption and impunity that impede Mexico’s rebirth.” After reviewing the three previous “transformations,” he affirmed that “Mexico’s crisis arose, not only because of the failure of the neoliberal economic model applied in the last 36 years,” but also because of the predominance throughout this period of “the most filthy public and private corruption.” He stressed that “nothing has damaged Mexico more than the dishonesty of the rulers and of the small minority that has profited from patronage,” which he pointed to as “the main cause of economic and social inequality, and also of the insecurity and violence we suffer.”

“Eradicating corruption” has always been a banner of reformers and there is no doubt that in matters of corruption, and also electoral fraud, Mexico has been a world champion. But to present this as the main cause of the poverty afflicting Mexico’s working population hides its true origins: capitalism and imperialist domination. AMLO makes a great show of the contrast between the country’s economic growth rate of 5 percent a year from the 1930s until 1958, and then 6 percent until 1982, compared to the meager results (2 percent a year) since the beginning of “neoliberal” policies. The truth is that even in the supposed golden age of the “PRI-government”<sup>3</sup> with its “developmentalist” economic policies, there was a lot of poverty, inequality and corruption. Those afflictions are not going to be eliminated with a program of infrastructure works and a campaign of moralization of bourgeois politics.

<sup>3</sup> That is, the seven decades, from 1929 to 2000, when Mexico was effectively a one-party state, and the government and party were basically one and the same.

<sup>1</sup> See “Claudia Sheinbaum, Mexico’s First Woman President: New Face, Same Old Ploy of the Bourgeoisie,” in *The Internationalist* No. 73, June-August 2024.

<sup>2</sup> The “Fourth Transformation” is AMLO’s designation for the program of his administration.

Under the rubric of fighting “neoliberalism,” supposedly “progressive” bourgeois politicians and reformist pseudo-socialists attack economic measures implemented since the 1970s throughout the capitalist world. They began in Chile when the Pinochet dictatorship adopted the “shock treatment” of brutal austerity and extreme privatization, advised by the “Chicago Boys” economists, led by Milton Friedman. In the 1980s, there was talk of “Reaganomics,” referring to the austerity and union-busting policies of Ronald Reagan in the U.S. and Margaret Thatcher in Britain. In Mexico, under the last PRI presidents (Miguel de la Madrid, Carlos Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo), who ruled the country from 1982 to 2000, large sectors of the highly stratified economy were privatized at bargain prices as a result of the government’s construction of infrastructure for which the weak national bourgeoisie did not have sufficient resources of its own. Out of this plunder emerged tycoons like Carlos Slim (who for a number of years was the world’s richest man).

Posing the need for political struggle against “neoliberalism” expresses the idea of replacing one capitalist model with another. In reality, the various “neoliberal” policies are nothing more than attacks on workers’ rights, their living standards and the social services to which they had access. They are not the result of the implementation of one doctrine in place of another, but of a worldwide offensive by the bosses to increase the exploitation of workers. This offensive began immediately following the defeat of the U.S. war on Vietnam in 1975, and its first targets were U.S. workers themselves. Hundreds of factories were shut down, thousands of public workers were laid off, and quotas were introduced at public universities to limit enrollment.

In the imperialist countries, this offensive was aimed primarily at the trade unions, whose fate was epitomized by the destruction of the U.S. air traffic controllers’ union by Reagan in 1981, and the defeat of the British miners’ strike of 1984-85 by Thatcher. In the United States, in the late 1960s one-third of private sector workers were unionized; today barely 7 percent are. At the same time, imperialist economic and military pressure against the Soviet Union increased drastically, leading to counterrevolution and the destruction of the bureaucratically deformed workers states of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe. And then, since they no longer had to deal with a “communist threat,” the bourgeoisies in almost all capitalist countries unleashed an offensive against social services.

### AMLO’s “Social Programs”: Capitalist Welfare Statism

The onslaught against workers internationally was the result of the capitalists’ economic need to counteract the falling rate of profit and not of sudden infatuation with a different capitalist “model.” Thus the so-called “neoliberal” attacks cannot be countered with a “progressive” bourgeois policy or a program of reform of the capitalist state. In Mexico, the slogan of a struggle against neoliberalism was the basis for forming a class-collaborationist popular front around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and later Andrés Manuel López Obrador (both of whom split from the PRI),

which sought to divert the struggles of the exploited and oppressed into the sterile channels of bourgeois parliamentarism and to bind the “independent” unions once again to the state through the corporatist regimentation on which the PRI-government regime was based.<sup>4</sup>

The corporatist regime of the PRI and its social security system were aimed at lowering the cost of labor for the bosses. This system did not result from the triumph of the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910, but on the contrary, from the abortion of that revolution by the victorious Constitutionalist generals from northern Mexico. The “agrarian reform” distributed only the worst lands to the poor peasants, while encouraging large capitalist agro-industrial enterprises of a few big landowners. The collapse of this corporatist regime and the adoption of “neoliberal” policies beginning in the 1980s, culminating in the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. and Canada in 1994, resulted in a precipitous fall in workers’ living standards. The purchasing power of the minimum wage in 2014 was barely a quarter of what it was in 1978.

This disastrous situation cannot be reversed by returning to a previous “model” for which the economic underpinnings no longer exist. Yet AMLO’s supporters argue that “neoliberalism” has been “abolished” in Mexico with the new economic policy with a plethora of social programs aimed at combating poverty. American leftist scholar Edwin Ackerman, in an article in the *New Left Review* blog, says that [AMLO’s] “overarching project has been to move away from neoliberalism towards a model of nationalist-developmental capitalism” (*Sidecar*, June 5, 2023). Ackerman cites as an example the variety of social programs consisting of cash transfers to needy sectors of the population. According to him, “Cash transfers now reach 65% more people than under previous governments. In 2021, despite the economic crisis, social spending as a percentage of total government expenditure reached its highest level in a decade.” Ackerman argues that this “model of welfare measures” points to a new (capitalist) “welfare state.”

In Ackerman’s view, AMLO’s social programs operate under a different logic than the “poverty-fighting” programs of previous six-year terms due to their “more universal approach.” Of the various direct cash transfer programs, some are, in fact, “universal,” such as the pensions for senior citizens, which today amount to 6,000 pesos bimonthly (the equivalent of US\$170 per month) for every adult 65 and older. Increases in the minimum wage, which one-third of Mexican workers receive, have more than doubled it, and in the northern border zone it is already more than three times what it was, in terms of purchasing power (i.e., adjusted for inflation), in 2018. Many other programs are targeted payments: to single mothers, poor students, etc. But the changes

<sup>4</sup> Corporatism consists in the organic integration of all types of organizations, in particular those claiming to represent workers, into the bourgeois state apparatus. This was the mechanism of social control that sustained the regime of the PRI-government during its seven decades of rule. It corresponded to a one-party system with a heavily state-owned capitalist economy. But in an increasingly privatized economy beginning in the late 1980s, the abundant wellspring of money that lubricated this machinery began to dry up and the system fell into crisis.

are merely quantitative. For those earning the minimum wage, even with the increases they would only have managed to move from utter destitution to poverty.

In any case, direct cash transfers, whether universal or targeted, are part of a regimen of social welfare measures that free-marketeers have used to eliminate social security benefits. Put another way, these policies are not only *not* “anti-neoliberal,” they are an integral part of that “model.” In fact, they were formulated and implemented by the “Chicago Boys” in Pinochet’s Chile. Friedman, the architect and father of “neoliberalism”, with his “reverse income tax” program, is considered the intellectual author of programs such as the “Bolsa Familia” (family stipends) in Brazil. Beyond the fact that cash transfers are the other side of the coin of the elimination of social security (with the privatization of health and education services, for example) they have the effect of atomizing the oppressed sectors that receive the money individually and as handouts, and not as a result of the conquest of genuine democratic rights. Such welfare policies go hand in hand with the destruction of workers’ unions and measures to defeat the collective mobilization of workers and the oppressed.

### The “4T” in the Service of Imperialism

Edwin Ackerman, like many AMLO supporters, argues that the government of the Fourth Transformation has sided with the workers and seeks to implement a “nationalist model.” He suggests that this represents some kind of break with imperialist dictates. It does not.

AMLO’s nationalist credentials have indeed caused irritation among imperialist sectors, as in his recent spat with the U.S. Embassy over the ambassador’s criticism of his judicial reform. During the election campaign, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial



Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador greets U.S. President Joe Biden at a North American economic supply chain summit in Mexico City, 9 January 2023. AMLO highlighted the comparative advantage for the U.S. of importing lower-cost cars from Mexico (due to the low wages of the Mexican workers who build them).

(May 20) came out for Xóchitl Gálvez for president because the focus of her campaign are “entrepreneurial spirit, competency, solid property rights and open markets.” This crass spokesman for imperialism complains about AMLO’s “nationalist and leftist” economic vision, which restricts the sacrosanct “right” to invest (i.e., to plunder in a semi-colonial manner) in sectors of the Mexican economy such as electric power production and the exploitation of oil and lithium. Extreme imperial arrogance prevents the mouthpiece of Wall Street from seeing the obvious: AMLO’s government (and that of his successor Sheinbaum) is nationalist, but firmly subordinated to imperialism.

Two elements demonstrate the above: first, López Obrador’s policy with respect to Central American and Caribbean migrants has met, point by point, the anti-migrant demands of the Trump and Biden administrations. Trump has boasted time and again that he succeeded, by threatening to impose tariffs on Mexican exports, in getting AMLO to deploy 28,000 National Guard troops to carry out anti-immigrant patrols on the country’s southern and northern borders to prevent migrants from advancing towards the U.S. border. The success of AMLO’s National Guard in the role of “immigration wall” for the U.S. has been resounding.

It is in the area of the economy where AMLO’s subordination to the imperial-



AMLO acts as a border guard for the U.S. Above: National Guard (left) and Immigration official detain migrants in Ciudad Hidalgo, January 2020.

ists can best be seen. Far from satisfying the hopes that many leftists placed in him, AMLO did not pull Mexico out of the North American Free Trade Agreement (now TMEC), but instead maintained the semi-colonial subordination under this imperialist plundering treaty. Moreover, with the policy shared by Sheinbaum and Gálvez of “taking advantage” of the “relocation” of maquiladora plants from China that the US government is demanding, AMLO says he is making use of Mexico’s “competitive advantage.” And what would this be? The brutal exploitation of Mexican labor. As the recent strike by workers at the Audi assembly plant in San José Chiapa, Puebla, made clear, Mexican autoworkers earn barely a tenth of what their U.S. and Canadian counterparts earn.<sup>5</sup>

By offering the Transisthmus Corridor for establishing maquiladora plants in new industrial parks, AMLO is not only offering imperialist investors a real estate portfolio, but also a cheap and regimented labor force for their brutal exploitation. Investors have responded with an unprecedented level of investment in the country. The figures do not lie. The total annual foreign direct investment in Mexico rose from \$9.5 billion in the first half of 2018 to \$20.3 billion in the same period of 2024. What’s more, 97 percent of those investments were from profits of foreign investors that were not repatriated. This is a clear vote of confidence by big capital in the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

### The Mexican Working Class: A Sleeping Giant

The imperialists are confident that the “Fourth Transformation,” both in its first term and in its “second floor,” understands how to deactivate social discontent. They are aware that the working class is a sleeping giant. Both the Mexican bourgeoisie and their bosses in Wall Street and Washington fear that a social earthquake will awaken it. The task of López Obrador and Sheinbaum is to keep it dormant. The task of the proletarian revolutionaries is to awaken it to activate its strength.

After the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre, since the 1970s Mexico became the scene of a whole series of defensive struggles of the industrial working class, the poor peasantry, independent unions of teachers and various oppressed groups. The erosion of the traditional system of corporatist control over the labor movement was on full display (and intensified) during the so-called “Labor Insurgency” of the 1970s. At the same time, guerrilla groups exposed the unrest in the countryside, as did the land occupations in various parts of the country in the 1980s. The Zapatista indigenous uprising of 1994 exposed the vile anti-indigenous racism built into the DNA of capitalist Mexico. But the political program of Stalinists and social democrats at the time argued that Mexico needed a “democratic revolution” to open the way for the country’s full development.

Amid these upheavals in Mexican society, a group of old guard PRI members around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo split from the state party seeking to tame social discontent and channel it into the electoral process. López Obrador joined them, as did what was left of the Communist Party, to form the Party of

<sup>5</sup> See “Audi Strike: Crucial Test for The Mexican Working Class” (in Spanish) in *Revolución Permanente* No. 13, October-November 2024.



**Labor solidarity caravan initiated by the Grupo Internacionalista traveled to the Audi factory at a remote area of the state of Puebla where they met with striking auto workers, members of the SITUADI union, 10 February 2024.**

the Democratic Revolution in 1989. However, after Cárdenas’ electoral defeats in the 1988 fraud (the famous system failure) and the likewise fraudulent 1994 presidential election, followed by the coming to power of Coca-Cola magnate Vicente Fox in 2000 and Felipe Calderón in 2006, plus the intensified repression – it all served to inflame and radicalize social struggles.

In the first three six-year presidential terms of the 21st century, plebeian rebellions broke out everywhere. Workers’ struggles against the counter-reforms to the pension system in 2004, the steel workers’ strike in the city of Lázaro Cárdenas in 2006, as well as mobilizations against the brutal repression of the people of San Salvador Atenco and the occupation of the capital of Oaxaca by the impoverished population in support of the teachers’ strike, which the murderous governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz tried to crush with blood and fire, brought the country to the brink of an explosion. The huge demonstrations of workers in defense of the SME (Mexican Union of Electrical Workers) against the decree dissolving it dictated by Calderón in 2009, the struggles of teachers college students and teachers of the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (CNTE) in Michoacán, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Chiapas, as well as the popular outcry against the kidnapping and disappearance of the students of Ayotzinapa in 2014, made Mexico a powder keg, a country on the verge of exploding.

The existence of the popular front, chaining the “independent” workers organizations (which had broken, although only partially, the shackles of corporatist “unionism”) and the working masses to bourgeois parties like the PRD first, and Morena later, was key in diverting these struggles to the point of neutralizing them. However, the bourgeoisie wanted to deactivate any struggle that would make possible a workers mobilization at the head of the oppressed. This is what AMLO’s government achieved: the level of social protest was reduced to historic lows. The combative and untiring mobilizations of the CNTE practically ceased. After the mobilization of Matamoros maquiladora workers in 2019-2020, workers strikes were reduced to practically zero, until the Audi workers in Puebla raised the red-and-black strike banners last February. Even in this case, the urgently needed worker solidarity by extending the strike to other auto plants, such as Volkswagen in Puebla, simply did not materialize.

AMLO achieved this by using a resource that the bourgeoisie seemingly could no longer imagine: reinvigorating the moldy mechanisms of corporatist regimentation. With the acquiescence of the leaderships of “independent” unions like the CNTE, AMLO implemented a pro-

gram of re-corporatization by which he brought the unions that had managed to escape from *charro*<sup>6</sup> control back into the corporatist fold. An intelligent bourgeois commentator put it with crystal clarity: in a column in *Milenio* (28 May 2024), Jorge Zepeda Patterson suggested to the Mexican bourgeoisie that a vote for Sheinbaum might defend their interests better than one for Gálvez:

“Let’s suppose for a moment that Carlos Slim is right in asserting that López Obrador bought the country six more years of political stability, by providing an outlet for the discontent of the majority in 2018. Mexico is not now at risk of an insurgent social explosion (...). What [AMLO’s government] was able to avoid or, at least, diminish, was the immediate impact of the gap between popular sectors, on the one hand, and the country’s rulers and elites, on the other (...) And that is precisely what Xóchitl Gálvez cannot guarantee. That is to say, the risk of political and social instability is greater with a triumph of the opposition.”

AMLO did indeed come through for the bourgeoisie by demobilizing the perennial protests in Mexico of workers, indigenous people, students, teachers and others.

### Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

In the months since the June 2 elections, the two chambers of the new Congress have been installed, where Morena and its allies now have a super-majority needed to make constitutional reforms. At the beginning of September, López Obrador sent to the Chamber of Deputies an initiative for the “reform of the judiciary” which has become the main focus of the right-wing bourgeois opposition’s onslaught against the outgoing government. Since the outset of his six-year term, judges and magistrates became an huge obstacle to the implementation of AMLO’s policies, granting dozens of injunctions and “suspensions” to his opponents on issues like energy policy, construction of the Tren Maya and implementing the Transisthmus Corridor.

The core of the reform to the judiciary, approved in a fast track process by the federal Congress and an overwhelming majority of state congresses, is centered on the election by popular vote of judges and magistrates as a way to supposedly exercise “democratic control” over this power. The right-wing opposition and its acolytes in the media have been up in arms, accusing AMLO of carrying out a “technical coup d’état” on the road to establishing a “tyranny.”

The democratic election of judges and magistrates is not an exceptional measure. In Mexico, it was standard practice during

<sup>6</sup> *Charro* is a term referring to the corrupt leaders of the corporatist pseudo-unions.

the 19th century, as it is also in a good part of the state courts in the United States. As revolutionary Marxists we would vote in favor of such a measure, but we clearly point out that it will not represent any important change and that “justice” in this country will continue to be that of the capitalists. The judiciary is one of the pillars of the capitalist state, along with the army, police and, in general, the repressive apparatus used by the ruling class to crush the exploited and oppressed when they put their property regime at risk. This essential nature will not change: the state invariably obeys the class that created it. AMLO’s reform guarantees that the judiciary will continue to fulfill its role in the service of the bosses and their imperialist masters, only now under the cloak of “popular approval.”

More than a century after the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917 was aborted, the slogans of the revolutionaries of that time have yet to become a reality: the land does not belong to those who work it (especially to the impoverished indigenous peasants in the south of the country) and the latifundia are still just as much an ominous reality as in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; elections in Mexico continue to bear the mark of fraud, now technically organized by the National Electoral Institute and by bourgeois politicians of all stripes who avail themselves of money, threats and violence to “win” elections; democratic rights such as universal access to education, health and housing are still on paper. Instead, the gains of the past are being undermined and gutted, while Mexico remains a semi-colony, perhaps even more intensely plundered by imperialism.

There will not be a bourgeois “Fourth Transformation” in this country that will resolve these unfinished democratic tasks, much less eliminate the poverty that is an inherent feature of the economy of a semi-colonial capitalist country. This can only be accomplished by a workers and peasants government that fights to extend the socialist revolution to the south and north. The task today is to forge the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party to guide and lead that struggle, which can be seen on every front of the class war.

Such a party would act as the tribune of all the oppressed, fighting for the emancipation of women through the socialist revolution that would lay the basis for the socialization of domestic labor. Only an internationalist communist party can lead the struggle to realize the autonomy of indigenous peoples and their control over natural resources, impossible under capitalism; also the struggle to eliminate age-old poverty in the countryside which requires the expropriation of agribusiness and the voluntary collectivization of agriculture, and the struggle against the grinding exploitation of the working class -- all these require a socialist revolution that opens the way for a planned world economy serving the interests of humanity. This is the path to finally and forever abolishing all forms of slavery, racism and the other scourges of capitalism in this stage of its imperialist decay.

The Grupo Internacionalista and the League for the Fourth International fight to build revolutionary Leninist and Trotskyist workers parties in the crucible of the class struggle, as national sections of a reformed Fourth International that fights for the socialist revolution and its extension to the whole world. Join the struggle! ■

# AMLO...

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En los años 1980, se hablaba de la “Reaganomics”, en referencia a las políticas de ajuste y rompesindicatos de Ronald Reagan en EE.UU. y Margaret Thatcher en Gran Bretaña. En México, bajo los últimos gobernantes priístas (de la Madrid, Salinas y Zedillo) se privatizó a precios de ganga a grandes sectores de una economía altamente estatizada que había sido resultado de la construcción por parte del estado de la infraestructura para la que la débil burguesía nacional no tenía los recursos propios. De este pillaje surgieron magnates como Carlos Slim.

Plantear la necesidad de una lucha política contra el “neoliberalismo” expresa la idea de sustituir un *modelo* capitalista por otro. En realidad, las múltiples políticas “neoliberales” no son otra cosa que ataques contra los derechos de los trabajadores, sus niveles de vida y los servicios sociales a que tenían acceso. No resultan de la implementación de una *doctrina* en lugar de otra, sino de una ofensiva patronal en todo el mundo para aumentar la explotación de los trabajadores. Este curso se inició justo después de la derrota de Estados Unidos en su guerra contra Vietnam en 1975, y sus primeros blancos fueron los propios trabajadores estadounidenses. Cientos de fábricas cerraron sus puertas, se despidió a miles de trabajadores públicos y en universidades públicas se introdujo cuotas para limitar la matrícula.

En los países imperialistas, esta ofensiva apuntó primordialmente a los sindicatos, cuya suerte tuvo como epítome la destrucción del sindicato de controladores aéreos de Estados Unidos en 1981 a manos de Reagan, y la derrota de la huelga de los mineros británicos de 1984-85 infligida por Thatcher. En Estados Unidos, a finales de los años 1960 la tercera parte de los trabajadores del sector privado estaban sindicalizados; hoy en día apenas lo está el 7 por ciento. Al mismo tiempo, la presión económica y militar del imperialismo contra la Unión Soviética se incrementó drásticamente, lo que llevó a la contrarrevolución y la destrucción de los estados obreros

burocráticamente deformados del bloque soviético en Europa Oriental. Y luego, ya que no tenían que lidiar con una “amenaza comunista”, las burguesías en casi todos los países capitalistas desataron una ofensiva contra los servicios sociales.

## Los “programas sociales” de AMLO: asistencialismo capitalista

La arremetida contra los trabajadores a escala internacional resultó de la *necesidad* económica de los capitalistas de contrarrestar la caída de la tasa de ganancia y no de una súbita infatuación por otro “modelo” capitalista. En consecuencia, los ataques denominados como “neoliberales” no pueden ser combatidos con una política “progresista” burguesa o mediante un programa de reforma del estado capitalista. En México, la divisa de una lucha contra el neoliberalismo fue la base para formar un frente popular de colaboración de clases alrededor de Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, y luego de Andrés Manuel López Obrador (ambos escindidos del PRI), que buscó desviar las luchas de los explotados y oprimidos hacia los canales estériles del parlamentarismo burgués y atar nuevamente a los sindicatos “independientes” al estado mediante la reglamentación corporativista en que se asentó el régimen del PRI-gobierno.

El régimen corporativista del priato y su sistema de seguridad social estaban orientados a abaratar el costo de la mano de obra para los patrones. Este sistema no resultó del triunfo de la Revolución iniciada en 1910, sino al contrario, del aborto de dicha revolución a manos de los generales constitucionalistas del norte del país. La “reforma agraria” distribuyó entre los campesinos pobres solo las peores tierras, mientras que fomentó las grandes explotaciones agroindustriales capitalistas en manos de un puñado de grandes magnates. El desmoronamiento de este régimen corporativista y la adopción de las políticas “neoliberales” a partir de los años 1980, que culminó en el Tratado de Libre Comercio con EE.UU. y Canadá en 1994, resultó en una caída estrepitosa de los niveles de vida de los trabajadores. El poder adquisitivo del salario mínimo llegó en 2014 a apenas la cuarta parte de lo que era en 1978.

Los partidarios de AMLO sostienen

que el “neoliberalismo” ha sido “abolido” en el país con la nueva política económica que radica en la plétora de “programas sociales” dirigidos al “combate de la pobreza”. El académico izquierdista norteamericano Edwin Ackerman, en un artículo en el blog de la *New Left Review*, dice que el “proyecto fundamental [de AMLO] ha sido alejarse del neoliberalismo para aproximarse a un modelo de capitalismo nacionalista-desarrollista” (*Sidecar*, 5 de junio de 2023). Ackerman cita como muestra la variedad de programas sociales que consisten en transferencias de dinero a sectores necesitados de la población. Según él, las transferencias de dinero “llegan ahora a 65 por ciento más personas que bajo los gobiernos previos”.

Según Ackerman, los programas sociales de AMLO operan bajo una lógica distinta a la de los programas de “combate a la pobreza” de los sexenios previos debido a su “aproximación más universal”. De los diversos programas de transferencia directa de efectivo algunos son, en efecto, “universales”, como las pensiones a adultos mayores, que ascienden hoy a 6 mil pesos bimestrales (el equivalente a 170 dólares mensuales) para cada adulto de más de 65 años. Los aumentos del salario mínimo, que gana la tercera parte de los trabajadores mexicanos, se han más que duplicado, y en la zona fronteriza del Norte ya superan el triple de lo que valían en poder adquisitivo (o sea, ajustados por la inflación) en 2018. Muchos otros programas están focalizados: a madres solteras, a estudiantes pobres, etc. Pero los cambios son meramente cuantitativos. Para los que ganan el salario mínimo, aun con las alzas sólo habrían logrado pasar de la miseria a la pobreza.

En cualquier caso, las transferencias directas de efectivo ya sean universales, ya sean focalizadas, forman parte de un esquema de medidas de *asistencia social* que los libremercaderistas han empleado para *eliminar* las medidas de *seguridad social*. Para decirlo de otra manera, estas políticas no sólo no son anti “neoliberales”, sino son parte integral de ese “modelo”. De hecho, fueron formuladas e implementadas por los “Chicago Boys” en el Chile pinochetista. Milton Friedman, el artífice y padre del “neoliberalismo”, con su programa de “impuesto inverso sobre la renta”, es considerado el autor intelectual de programas como la “Bolsa Familia” en Brasil.

Más allá de que las transferencias de efectivo sean el otro lado de la moneda de la eliminación de la seguridad social (con la privatización de los servicios de salud y educación, por ejemplo) tienen el efecto de *atomizar* a los sectores oprimidos que reciben el dinero de manera individual y como dádivas, y no como resultado de la conquista de genuinos derechos democráticos. Tales políticas asistencialistas van de la mano de la destrucción de los sindicatos obreros y de medidas para derrotar la movilización *colectiva* de los trabajadores y los oprimidos.

## La “4T” al servicio del imperialismo

Edwin Ackerman, lo mismo que muchos partidarios de AMLO, sostiene que el gobierno de la Cuarta Transformación se ha puesto del lado de los trabajadores y que busca implementar un “modelo nacionalista”. Sugiere que esto representa una suerte de ruptura con los dictados imperialistas. No es así.

Las credenciales nacionalistas de AMLO sí han causado irritación entre sectores imperialistas, como en su reciente desajustado con la embajada estadouni-

dense por las críticas del embajador a su reforma judicial. Durante la campaña electoral, un editorial del *Wall Street Journal* (20 de mayo) expresó su apoyo a Xóchitl Gálvez a la presidencia, debido a que los ejes de su campaña son el “espíritu empresarial, la competencia, los sólidos derechos de propiedad y los mercados abiertos”. Estos ramplones portavoces del imperialismo se quejan de la visión económica “nacionalista y de izquierda” de AMLO, que restringe el sacrosanto “derecho” a invertir (o sea, a expropiar en forma semicolonial) en sectores de la economía mexicana como la producción de energía eléctrica y la explotación del petróleo y el litio. Su extrema arrogancia imperial les impide ver lo obvio: el gobierno de AMLO (y de su sucesora Sheinbaum) es nacionalista, pero firmemente subordinado al imperialismo.

Dos elementos prueban lo anterior: la política de López Obrador con respecto a los migrantes centroamericanos y caribeños ha respondido, punto por punto, a las exigencias *antiinmigrantes* de los gobiernos de Trump, primero, y Biden después. Trump se ha jactado una y otra vez de haber logrado mediante amenazas arancelarias a las exportaciones mexicanas que AMLO desplegara a 28 mil efectivos de la Guardia Nacional para la realización de patrullajes antiinmigrantes en las fronteras sur y norte del país para impedir el avance de los migrantes hacia la frontera con Estados Unidos. El éxito de la GN de AMLO en las funciones de “muro migratorio” para los EE.UU. ha sido contundente.

Es en el ámbito de la economía en donde mejor se puede apreciar la subordinación de AMLO a los imperialistas. Muy lejos de satisfacer las esperanzas que muchos izquierdistas depositaron en él, AMLO no hizo que México saliera del Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte (ahora TMEC), sino que mantuvo la subordinación semicolonial de este tratado de expropiación imperialista. Además, con la política compartida por Sheinbaum y Gálvez de “aprovechar” las ventajas de la “relocalización” de las plantas maquiladoras que el gobierno norteamericano exige sacar de China, AMLO ha insistido en aprovechar la “ventaja competitiva”. ¿Y cuál sería ésta? La brutal explotación de la mano de obra mexicana. Como dejó de manifiesto la reciente huelga de los trabajadores de la armadora Audi en San José Chiapa, Puebla, los trabajadores automotrices mexicanos ganan *apenas la décima parte* que sus contrapartes de Estados Unidos y Canadá.

Al ofrecer el Corredor Transístmico para el establecimiento de plantas maquiladoras en los nuevos parques industriales, AMLO no sólo ofrece a los inversores imperialistas un catálogo de bienes raíces, sino también una mano de obra barata y regimentada para su brutal explotación. Los inversores han respondido con un nivel de inversión en el país sin precedentes. Las cifras no mienten. El monto de la inversión extranjera directa anual en México subió de 9.5 mil millones de dólares en el primer semestre de 2018 a 20.3 mil millones en el mismo lapso de 2024. Es más, el 97 por ciento de esas inversiones eran utilidades de inversores extranjeros que *no* se repatriaron. Es un claro voto de confianza del gran capital en el gobierno de Andrés Manuel López Obrador. En vista de las airadas quejas que contra él que abundan en la prensa burguesa, calificándolo de autoritario, comunista o algo peor,

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hay que preguntarse cómo se explica esta disyuntiva aparente.

## La clase obrera mexicana: un gigante dormido

Los imperialistas confían en que la “Cuarta Transformación”, tanto en su primera temporada como en su “segundo piso”, sabe cómo desactivar el descontento social. Están conscientes de que la clase obrera es un gigante dormido. Tanto los burgueses mexicanos como sus jefazos en Wall Street y Washington temen que un temblor social la despierte. La tarea de López Obrador y Sheinbaum es mantenerla somnolienta. La tarea de los revolucionarios proletarios es despertarla para activar su fuerza.

Luego de la masacre de Tlatelolco en 1968, México pasó a ser escenario desde los años 1970 de toda una serie de luchas defensivas de la clase obrera industrial, el campesinado pobre, el magisterio independiente y diversos grupos oprimidos. El desgaste del sistema tradicional de control corporativista sobre el movimiento obrero quedó a la vista de todos (y se intensificó) durante la llamada “Insurgencia Sindical” de los años 1970. Grupos guerrilleros daban muestra en esa misma época de la efervescencia en el campo, lo mismo que las tomas de tierras realizadas en diversas partes del país en los años 1980. El levantamiento indígena zapatista de 1994 exhibió el asqueroso racismo antiindígena inscrito en el ADN del México capitalista. Pero el programa político de estalinistas y socialdemócratas de aquella época sostenía que en México hacía falta una “revolución democrática” que abriera la vía para el pleno desarrollo del país.

En medio de estos trastornos de la sociedad mexicana, un grupo de viejos priístas alrededor de Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas y Porfirio Muñoz Ledo se escindió del partido de estado con el propósito de domar el descontento social y canalizarlo hacia la contienda electoral. López Obrador se unió a ellos, así como lo que quedaba del Partido Comunista, para formar en 1989 el Partido de la Revolución Democrática. Sin embargo, sin embargo, tras los fracasos electorales de Cárdenas producidos por el fraude de 1988 (la famosa caída del sistema) y la también fraudulenta elección presidencial de 1994, la llegada al poder del magnate cocacolero Vicente Fox en 2000 y Felipe Calderón en 2006, y la intensificación de la represión, todo esto sirvió para azuzar y radicalizar las luchas sociales.

En los tres primeros sexenios del siglo XXI estallaban rebeliones plebeyas por doquier. Las luchas de trabajadores contra las contrarreformas al sistema de jubilaciones en 2004, la huelga de los trabajadores siderúrgicos de Lázaro Cárdenas en 2006, lo mismo que las movilizaciones contra la brutal represión de los pobladores de San Salvador Atenco y la ocupación de la capital de Oaxaca por la población empobrecida en respaldo a la huelga magisterial, que el asesino gobernador Ulises Ruiz Ortiz intentó aplastar a sangre y fuego, llevaron el país al borde del estallido. Las enormes movilizaciones de trabajadores en defensa del SME (Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas) contra el decreto de extinción dictado por Calderón en 2009, las luchas de normalistas y maestros de la CNTE en Michoacán, Oaxaca, Guerrero y Chiapas, lo mismo que el clamor popular contra el secuestro y desaparición de los normalistas de Ayotzinapa en 2014, hicieron de este país un verdadero polvorín, un país a punto de reventar.

La existencia del frente popular, que

encadena las organizaciones obreras “independientes” (que habían roto, aunque sólo parcialmente, el grillete del corporativismo sindical) y las masas trabajadoras a partidos burgueses como el PRD primero, y Morena después, fue clave en desviar estas luchas hasta neutralizarlas. Sin embargo, la burguesía quería desactivar toda lucha que posibilitara una movilización obrera a la cabeza de los oprimidos. Es esto lo que logró el gobierno de AMLO: el nivel de protesta social se redujo a mínimos históricos. Las combativas e incansables movilizaciones de la Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE) prácticamente cesaron. Tras la gran movilización de los trabajadores de las maquiladoras de Matamoros en 2019-2020, las huelgas obreras se redujeron prácticamente a cero, hasta que los trabajadores de Audi en Puebla izaron las banderas rojinegras en febrero pasado. Aún en este caso, la urgente solidaridad obrera que se requería mediante la extensión de la huelga a otras plantas automotrices, como la de Volkswagen en Puebla simplemente no llegó.

AMLO logró esto valiéndose de un recurso que la burguesía no parecía imaginar ya: el insuflado de fuerza a los enmohecidos mecanismos de regimentación corporativista. Con la anuencia de las direcciones de sindicatos “independientes” como la de la CNTE, AMLO implementó un programa de *recorporativización* mediante el cual llevó de vuelta a los sindicatos que habían logrado escapar del control charro al redil corporativista. Un comentarista burgués inteligente lo planteó con claridad meridiana: en una columna, Jorge Zepeda Patterson (*Milenio*, 28 de mayo) le recuerda a la burguesía mexicana que un voto por Sheinbaum posiblemente acomode mejor a sus intereses que uno por Gálvez:

“Supongamos por un momento que Carlos Slim tiene razón cuando asegura que López Obrador ofreció seis años más de estabilidad política a nuestro país, al dar salida a la inconformidad de las mayorías en 2018. México no está en riesgo de una explosión social de carácter insurgente (...). Lo que evitó [el gobierno de AMLO] o, por lo menos, disminuyó, fue el impacto inmediato de la fractura que se ha abierto entre sectores populares, por un lado, y gobernantes y élites del país, por el otro. (...) Y justamente eso es lo que Xóchitl Gálvez no puede garantizar. Es decir, el riesgo de inestabilidad política y social es mayor con un triunfo de la oposición.”

En efecto: AMLO cumplió con la burguesía al desmovilizar las sempiternas protestas en México de trabajadores, indígenas, estudiantes, maestros.

## ¡Forjar un partido obrero revolucionario!

En los meses transcurridos desde las elecciones del 2 de junio, se ha instalado las dos cámaras del nuevo Congreso, donde Morena y sus aliados ahora cuentan con la mayoría necesaria para hacer reformas constitucionales. Apenas comenzando septiembre, López Obrador envió a la Cámara de Diputados una iniciativa para la “reforma al poder judicial” que se ha convertido en el principal foco de la arremetida de la oposición burguesa derechista contra el gobierno saliente. Desde el principio de su sexenio, jueces y magistrados se erigieron en un enorme obstáculo para la implementación de las políticas de AMLO, concediendo decenas de amparos y “suspensiones” a sus opositores en asuntos como la política energética, la construcción del Tren Maya

y la puesta en marcha del Corredor Transistmico en Tehuantepec.

El centro de la reforma al poder judicial, aprobada en fast track por el Congreso federal y una aplastante mayoría de congresos estatales, se centra en la elección por voto popular de jueces y magistrados como una vía para, supuestamente, ejercer un “control democrático” sobre este poder. La oposición derechista y sus acólitos en los medios han puesto el grito en el cielo, acusando a AMLO de haber dado un “golpe de estado técnico” en la vía hacia la instauración de una “tiranía”.

La elección democrática de jueces y magistrados no es ninguna medida extraordinaria. En México, fue práctica usual durante el siglo XIX, como lo es también en buena parte de los tribunales estatales en Estados Unidos. Aunque como marxistas revolucionarios votaríamos a favor de una medida tal, señalamos con claridad que no va a representar ningún cambio importante y que la “justicia” en este país seguirá siendo la justicia de los capitalistas. De hecho, el poder judicial es uno de los pilares del estado capitalista, junto con el ejército, la policía y, en general, el aparato represivo de que se vale la clase dominante para aplastar a los explotados y oprimidos cuando ponen su régimen de propiedad en riesgo. Esta naturaleza esencial no va a cambiar: el estado obedece invariablemente a la clase que lo creó. La reforma de AMLO garantiza que el poder judicial siga cumpliendo su cometido al servicio de la patronal y sus amos imperialistas, sólo que ahora bajo el manto de la “aprobación popular”.

A más de un siglo de abortada la Revolución Mexicana de 1910-1917, los lemas de los revolucionarios de entonces siguen sin hacerse realidad: la tierra no es de quien la trabaja (especialmente de los empobrecidos campesinos indígenas del sur del país) y el latifundio sigue siendo una realidad tan ominosa como a finales del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX; las elecciones en México siguen llevando la marca del fraude, ahora técnicamente organizado por el Instituto Nacional Electoral y por los políticos burgueses de uno y otro signo que se valen del dinero, las amenazas y la violencia para “triunfar” en las elecciones; los derechos democráticos como el acceso universal a la educación, la salud y la vivienda siguen siendo tinta sobre el papel. Más bien se está socavando y destripando las conquistas del pasado. Además, México sigue siendo una semicolonía, acaso aún más estrechamente expoliada, por el imperialismo.

No será una “Cuarta Transformación” burguesa en este país la que

resolverá estas tareas democráticas inconclusas, y menos aún eliminará la pobreza que es parte integral de la economía de un país capitalista semicolonial. Esas tareas se lograrán solamente mediante un gobierno obrero y campesino que luche por extender la revolución socialista al sur y al norte. La tarea de hoy es forjar el núcleo de un partido obrero revolucionario para orientar y dirigir esa lucha, que se puede constatar en cada frente de la guerra de clases.

Un partido tal haría las veces de tribuno de todos los oprimidos, luchando por la emancipación de la mujer mediante la revolución socialista que sentaría las bases de la socialización del trabajo doméstico. Sólo un partido comunista internacionalista puede encabezar la lucha por hacer realidad la autonomía de los pueblos indígenas, y su control sobre los recursos naturales, imposible bajo el capitalismo; la lucha por eliminar la secular pobreza en el campo que requiere la expropiación de los agronegocios y la voluntaria colectivización del agro; y la lucha contra la espeluznante explotación de la clase obrera mediante una revolución socialista que abra la vía para una economía mundial planificada que sirva a los intereses de la humanidad. Es así como se puede abolir, de una vez y para siempre, toda forma de esclavitud, el racismo y los demás males que engendra el capitalismo en esta su etapa de decadencia imperialista.

El Grupo Internacionalista y la Liga por la IV Internacional luchamos por construir, en el crisol de la lucha de clases, partidos obreros revolucionarios, leninistas y trotskistas, como secciones nacionales de una IV Internacional reforjada que pelee por la revolución socialista y su extensión a todo el orbe. ¡Únete a la lucha! ■

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¡Forjar un partido obrero revolucionario! ¡Luchar por un gobierno obrero y campesino!

# AMLO: populista, nacionalista, súbdito del imperialismo yanqui

Publicamos a continuación una versión abreviada del artículo de portada de Revolución Permanente n° 13, octubre-noviembre de 2024, publicación del Grupo Internacionalista, sección mexicana de la Liga por la IV Internacional.

CIUDAD DE MÉXICO, 25 de septiembre – Las elecciones mexicanas del 2 de junio fueron notables en al menos tres aspectos. Primero, por ser las más amplias de la historia del país, al abarcar la totalidad de los 500 diputados de la Cámara de Diputados federal, los 128 senadores y los gobernadores de nueve estados, además de la presidencia de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos. Segundo, por el triunfo aplastante del populista burgués Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional (Morena) en todos los niveles. Y tercero, por ser la ganadora de la disputa por la presidencia, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, quien será la primera mujer jefa de estado de México.<sup>1</sup> Pero más allá de la rimbombante retórica de las campañas, es claro que no se han alterado los contornos de este país capitalista semicolonial.

Tanto partidarios como opositores del gobierno capitalista de Andrés Manuel López Obrador calificaron estas elecciones como un “plebiscito” sobre su cacareada “Cuarta Transformación”. Sheinbaum prometió continuar la obra de AMLO, que goza de hasta 70 por ciento de aprobación en las encuestas, mientras su contrincante, Xóchitl Gálvez la fustigó. Aunque en la campaña se atacaron con ferocidad, sus diferencias eran, si acaso, de táctica, sobre las proporciones respectivas de garrote y zanahoria que hay que emplear para mantener en funcionamiento los negocios capitalistas. Su meta común es evitar que un estallido entre “los de abajo” pueda salirse de su control. Estos partidos y políticos burgueses están unidos en lo esencial: la salvaguarda de los intereses de los explota-

<sup>1</sup> Véase “Claudia Sheinbaum presidenta: nueva cara, viejo truco de la burguesía”, en *The Internationalist* n° 73, julio agosto de 2024..



AMLO y los militares: López Obrador pasa revista a la tropa en el Día de la Independencia, 16 de septiembre de 2019.

dores nacionales y sus socios mayores imperialistas. Por ello, el Grupo Internacionalista, sección mexicana de la Liga por la IV Internacional, llamó a **no dar ni un voto a estas coaliciones y partidos capitalistas**.

Nuestra posición no era muy popular que digamos en algunos sectores sindicales históricamente combativos, que votaron abrumadoramente por Sheinbaum. Aunque aceptaran que Morena y su alianza electoral “Juntos Haremos Historia” son formaciones patronales, algunos dirigentes sostuvieron que las diferentes coaliciones “no son iguales”. Ante esta lógica de votar por el “mal menor”, nosotros reafirmamos que cualquier voto por la coalición y candidatos morenistas redundaría en el fortalecimiento del dominio capitalista sobre los explotados y oprimidos. Insistimos en la necesidad de luchar por la construcción de un partido obrero revolucionario, que funja como el tribuno de los oprimidos y que luche por un gobierno obrero y campesino en México, así como por la extensión de la revolución socialista al resto

de América Latina y al norte, al interior del baluarte imperialista norteamericano.

Se trata de la perspectiva programática de la teoría de la revolución permanente de León Trotsky, elaborada en torno a las revoluciones rusas de 1905 y 1917, que mantiene plena validez hoy: en México, las tareas democráticas no realizadas por no menos de tres revoluciones burguesas fallidas no podrán resolverse por una imaginaria “Cuarta Transformación” burguesa, sino que sólo podrán completarse mediante la toma del poder por parte de la clase obrera. Para que derechos como la educación y la salud sean accesibles para todos, para que la tierra sea de los que la trabajen, para romper las cadenas con las que el imperialismo norteamericano mantiene a México como una semicolonía en su “patio trasero”, se requiere una revolución que derribe al capitalismo. Para dirigirla hace falta un partido obrero como el de los bolcheviques de Lenin y Trotsky. Forjar el núcleo de este partido es nuestra tarea.

## La “Cuarta Transformación”: una radiografía marxista

La promesa reiterada una y otra vez por Claudia Sheinbaum durante su campaña fue que, de llegar a la presidencia, garantizará la continuidad de la Cuarta Transformación (o “4T”). En noviembre del año pasado, en el mitin que la consagró como “precandidata única” de Morena y sus aliados, aseguró que los proyectos del presidente López Obrador seguirán avanzando para construir “el segundo piso de la Cuarta Transformación” (*El País*, 19 de noviembre de 2023).

¿Pero qué es esta Cuarta Transformación? ¿En qué consiste el “legado” que Sheinbaum promete salvaguardar y continuar? Responder estas preguntas es clave, toda vez que tanto partidarios como detractores de AMLO han contribuido sistemáticamente a mistificar la naturaleza de su mandato.

“Cuarta Transformación” es la denominación que López Obrador ha impuesto a su gobierno, y su “proyecto de nación”. El ordinal hace referencia a los “tres momentos de profundas transformaciones” por los que ha pasado México a lo largo de su historia: la abolición de la esclavitud y la Independencia con respecto a España, conseguida tras una guerra revolucionaria iniciada en 1810; la Guerra de Reforma de 1857 a 1861 que separó la iglesia y el estado, estableciendo el predominio de éste, y restauró la república tras vencer la invasión francesa del emperador Louis Napoleón Bonaparte; y la Revolución Mexicana iniciada en 1910. La afirmación por parte de AMLO y Morena de que hace falta una nueva “transformación” reconoce –así sea implícitamente– que, pese a que las tres previas, que implicaron luchas tenaces y sangrientas de los sectores plebeyos contra los opresores, siguen pendientes tareas fundamentales no resueltas.

En su discurso de toma de posesión del 1° de diciembre de 2018, AMLO proclamó que “iniciamos hoy la cuarta transformación política de México”, que será “pacífica y ordenada”, en la que “se acabará con la corrupción y con la impunidad que impiden el renacimiento de México.” Después de hacer un repaso de las tres “transformaciones” anteriores, afirma que “la crisis de México se originó, no solo por el fracaso del modelo económico neoliberal aplicado en los últimos 36 años”, sino también por el predominio en este periodo de “la más inmundada corrupción pública y privada”.

“Erradicar la corrupción” ha sido siempre una bandera de los reformadores y no hay duda que, en materia de corrupción, igual que en fraude electoral, México ha sido campeón mundial. Pero presentar esto como la causa principal de la pobreza que aflige a la población trabajadora en México esconde sus verdaderos orígenes: el capitalismo y la dominación imperialista. AMLO hace gran alarde del contraste entre el ritmo de crecimiento económico del país de un 5 por ciento anual de los años 1930 hasta 1958, y luego de 6 por ciento hasta 1982, con las raquíticas cifras (2 por ciento anual) desde el momento en que se inician las políticas “neoliberales”. La verdad es que también en la supuesta época dorada del PRI-gobierno con su política económica “desarrollista” hubo mucha pobreza, desigualdad y corrupción.

Con el mote de “neoliberalismo”, políticos burgueses supuestamente “progresistas” y seudosocialistas reformistas arremeten contra medidas económicas implementadas a partir de los años 1970 en todo el mundo capitalista. Se comenzó en Chile cuando la dictadura de Pinochet adoptó la política de “shock”, de austeridad brutal y privatización a ultranza, bajo la asesoría de los economistas “Chicago Boys”, liderados por Milton Friedman.

*sigue en la página 22*



López Obrador con los jefes de las centrales corporativistas (CTM, CROC, CROM, FSTSE) y semicorporativistas (STPRM, SNTMMSRM) el Primero de Mayo del 2023. La recorporativización sindical en marcha.